

Veazie couple finds 3-foot python in shower

BY DAWN GAGNON
OF THE BDN STAFF

A Veazie couple woke up Wednesday morning to a shocking surprise slithering around in their shower.

The unwelcome sight was a 3-foot-long ball python.

Ashley Harnden said Wednesday evening that her boyfriend, Dana Kenney, found the snake as he was getting ready for work around 4 a.m.

"He came out of the bathroom and said, 'Stay on the bed -- don't move' and he searched around trying to find something. He didn't want to tell me what it was because he knew I'd freak out," Harnden said. Ken-

ney later told her there was a large snake in the bathroom and that he wasn't sure what to do.

"So he got a bat and another stick and held it down and he grabbed it," she said. The snake then was put into a mesh laundry basket for the time being.

Meanwhile, Harnden recalled that a neighbor might have a snake and called her at work.

The snake's owner, Lorelei Coburn, answered and confirmed that her snake, named Elsa, had escaped its tank a month earlier.

Coburn said that she tore her apartment apart looking for the snake, which had escaped once

before but was found shortly afterward. Despite her efforts to locate Elsa, the snake could not be found anywhere.

"I thought she was dead," Coburn said. She said that she inherited the roughly year-and-a-half-old snake after the roommate who originally owned Elsa moved away and was not able to bring it with her.

Harnden admits that she is no fan of snakes, especially large ones like pythons.

"Those get huge. They can eat your cats," she said.

"We have two cats and I don't know how they didn't see it," she said. "They

both sleep with us, so they get up with us in the morning. We have a cabinet under the sink in our bathroom and the only thing I can think of is that there's a small square around where the pipes go down and she must have crawled up through. It was crazy. Who does this happen to?"

Harnden and Coburn met later in the morning so Coburn could bring Elsa back home.

Coburn said that Elsa was in good shape and appeared to have eaten during her month on the lam.

"I've very glad she's home. She seems fine. She wrapped herself around my arm like she usually does," she said.

The snake, however, was thirsty and drank a good amount of water once it was home, she said.

Coburn said Wednesday evening that Elsa usually stays in a 100-gallon glass tank with a cover on it. She said she had put a heavy book on the cover but that the snake apparently was strong enough to wriggle out anyway.

"Apparently I need a cinder block to keep her in," she said.

Coburn said Elsa temporarily is being kept in a smaller, more secure cage until she she can come up with a way to keep the snake in her regular tank.

CBS 13 contributed to this report.

Troop

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"If nothing is done, all of this is eventually going to be put in boxes and stored and the story won't be told," said Cory.

To prevent that from happening, the troop greeters have teamed up with a museum architect out of Portland to design the museum which is tentatively scheduled to open in November 2017.

"All in all, it has been an experience. If someone were to say to me, you can't do this anymore, it would break my heart because it's a passion," explained Czarnecki. "People say, 'Why do you do it?' That's not a question you can answer. Unless you actually stand in line with us and welcome these heroes home I can't tell you what it's like. It's amazing but that doesn't say it."

The troop greeters hope the museum will be able to capture the pride, feelings and emotions that so many of them have felt each and every time a military flight has passed through the airport.

"If you don't get affected by it, you don't have a pulse," said Cory.

So far over 260 donors have generously stepped forward to support the project. But many more donations are needed.

"I think the museum will speak for itself when it is finally done. It will be the Maine Troop Greeters Museum, and it will be dedicated to those who served. And I think people, just out of curiosity, are going to want to check it out," said Czarnecki.

For more information or to make an online donation, log onto www.mainetroopgreetersmuseum.org. Donations by check can also be mailed to Maine Troop Greeters, 287 Godfrey Boulevard, Box 6, Bangor.

Maine AG office warns of 'government grant' scam

BY DAWN GAGNON
OF THE BDN STAFF

Maine Attorney General Janet Mills is reminding Mainers this summer to be on guard against "government grants" being offered through instant messenger programs and social media programs such as Facebook.

Typically the scammer poses as a government of-

ficial -- they may even have an account with a name and photo that matches one for a real office or public official.

The scammer tells the potential victim that they have qualified for a free monetary grant from the government that does not have to be paid back. All the victim has to do is pay a small processing fee and the larger sum of money will be released.

No matter how much money is sent to the scammers, no grants are ever released.

"Scammers are always coming up with new ways to convince you to part with your hard-earned money," Mills said. "If anyone tells you that you can have something for nothing, they are lying to you."

"No governmental agency conducts business

or financial transactions via Facebook or instant messenger, and they will never demand you wire money or make a payment by a prepaid money service or any card you can buy in a convenience store," she said. "If you receive one of these offers, ignore it, delete it or block the sender. If you send them a dime, you may never see it again."

Anyone who receives

such a message should report it to the service provider, Facebook, for example, as they may be able to shut down the suspect account.

Consumers can contact the Maine attorney general's Consumer Protection Division with questions, complaints or concerns about these kinds of scams, or other problems they have had with a business.

Cole Museum to give out 10,000th walking stick to vet

BY MARISA HIGGINS
SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

The Cole Museum is expecting to present its 10,000th veteran walking stick this summer and is adding a special gift package for the recipient of the milestone walking stick.

Inspired by a presentation to Pearl Harbor survivors, museum founder and World War II veteran Galen Cole worked with Peavey Manufacturing Co. in Eddington to produce walking sticks for a one-time gift to the World War II veterans expected to attend the museum's 1999 Memorial Day commemoration. After an unexpected 1,200 World War II veterans attended the ceremony, the museum

decided to make the walking sticks a permanent program and expanded it to include Korean, Vietnam and Global-War-on-Terror-era veterans in the late 2000s. Today, veterans with decorated walking sticks are a feature at the area parades, and the program is well known throughout the state.

"I've lived in 12 different states and never seen anything like it," said Jim Neville, museum director of operations and a veteran. "I've been all over Maine and I see these walking stick everywhere." According to him, the program is a unique and practical way to thank the veterans of Maine for their service, and the museum is now

looking forward to presenting the milestone veteran with both their walking stick and a gift containing museum memorabilia and a lifetime pass.

To the veterans, the walking sticks are often symbols of pride and of their neighbors' appreciation for their service. As a Vietnam-era veteran, Marty Bell said the walking stick was the first thank you he received for his service, and he appreciates the opportunity to speak with and thank other veterans while presenting the walking sticks as a museum volunteer.

"To me the stick is more than a piece of memorabilia," said TSgt Joshua Gray, Global-War-on-Terror veteran and volunteer

whose grandfather donated a restored Chevrolet log truck to the museum. "It is about thanks for my service and it's about the time given to the museum."

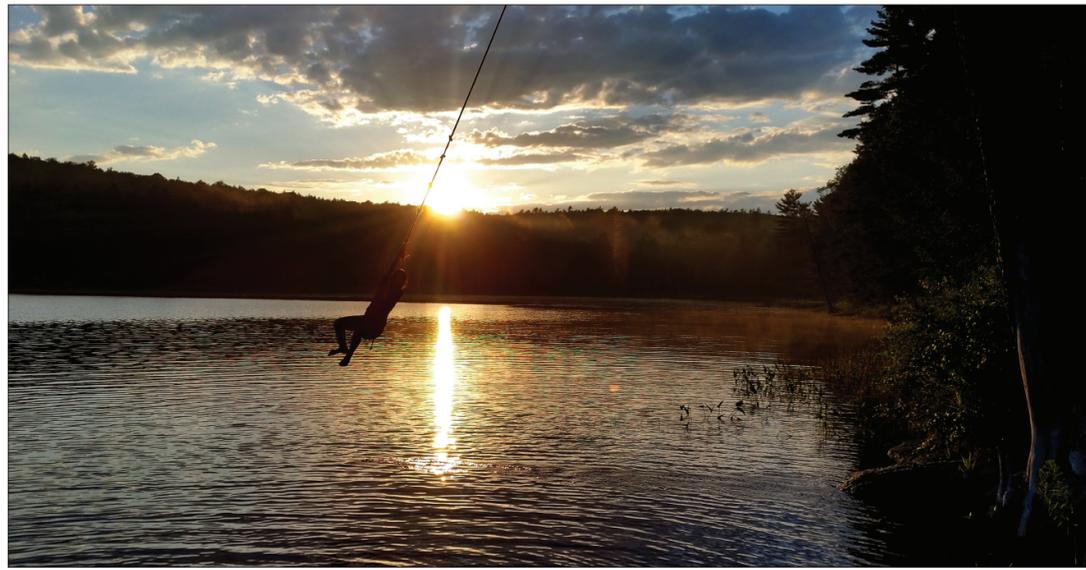
The program's success is largely due to the generosity found in the Maine community. From Peavey Manufacturing donating and selling the walking sticks at-cost, to the thousands-of-hours contributed by the museum's dedicated volunteers, reaching 10,000 veterans is a milestone that all involved can be proud of and will look forward to surpassing.

Maine veterans -- current residents and those who entered the service in Maine -- who served dur-

ing World War II or an era recognized by the National Defense Service Medal are eligible for a museum walking stick. The veteran must personally visit the museum with his or her DD-214 (required for those now living out-of-state) or qualifying military ID, and the museum staff will make accommodations for any physical limitations preventing a veteran from entering the museum but will only present walking sticks to veterans.

The Cole Museum is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. seven days a week, through Nov. 11. Admission is free to children under 19. For information, visiting cole-museum.org or call 990-3600, ext. 13.

LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER



LINDA COEN O'KRESIK/BDN

Hailee Dearborn, 8, sails on a rope swing while enjoying a beautiful sunset swim at Hurd Pond in Dedham over the weekend of Aug. 6.

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