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Python Attacks And Hysterical Politicians.

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Every time there is a tragic or unusual accident, the media gets into heated hysteria to milk the story. Meanwhile uninformed legislators are happy to appease many special interest groups by proposing to [pass feel-good bans](#), based on pure emotion and hysteria, instead of science and facts, mostly resulting in the waste of tax payers' money and not increasing public safety .

These Neanderthals especially love the fatal exotic animal mauling accidents, with python attacks being some of their favorite lately.

Over one week ago, one kid in Florida was killed by a pet python, which was kept illegally. Just few days earlier in June, two kids were killed by dogs, one in Illinois and one in Texas. Numerous other children died in car or swimming pool accidents, yet, their story is not turning into hysterical circus. Dead is dead, why does it matter how the kid died? The family misses them no matter how they died, so why is one killed by python getting more public sympathy?

The reason is simple: private owners of captive exotic animals have been coming under ever increasing attacks from the media bandwagon, mostly fueled by the agenda of the AR (animal rights) activists groups. These organizations, under the guise of pretending to care for public safety, hide their real agenda: [to end the captive keeping of all animals](#).

The best method of discrediting the claim that captive reptiles are a public safety issue, and to show no need for additional regulation is to look at the real numbers. Facts don't lie.

Since 1990, captive non-venomous (constrictor) snakes in the USA killed 0.47 people per year (9 killed in the last 19 years, all of them owners, handlers,



Boa Constrictor Photo © Zuzana Kukol

keepers, family, NOT the general public).

Three of the deaths caused by large constrictors occurred to the children of the snake owners, at their own home. That is 0.15 kid killed per year by captive constrictor in the USA since 1990. In the older cases, the parents were charged with child endangerment, some also with reckless endangerment and involuntary manslaughter.

It doesn't matter if the child died as a result of an animal attack or by other everyday activity, like drowning in the pool. The parents are responsible for their children and other responsible legal owners of exotics should not be punished with unfair bans, because of parental mistakes of others, who just happened to be fellow exotic animal owners.

None of these deaths were the result of the snakes being unsupervised off the private owners' property. Instead, all victims were voluntarily on the property where the animal was kept, be it owner(s) or family members. Captive keeping of exotic animals might be a slight voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, but it is NOT a public safety issue.

It never ceases to surprise me how people fear exotic animals, and react to their fear of the unknown with hysteria, instead of educating themselves. In comparison, [45,343 people died in 2005 in traffic accidents](#), 48 by lightning, 1,690 by falling down the stairs and 16,692 by murder or involuntary manslaughter.

For more detailed info see the 1990-2008 statistical tables on [human fatalities caused by captive constrictors](#) in PDF format.

Table 3: Captive Constrictor Snake Related Human Fatalities in the USA by the Type of the Snake: 1990 - 2008

YEAR STATE	2008	2006	2002	2001	1999	1996	1993
CO			Owner, Burmese python				Owner's brother, Burmese python
IL					Owner's son, African rock python		
IN		Owner, Reticulated python					
NY						Owner, Burmese python	
OH		Owner, Boa or Python*					
PA				Owner's daughter, Burmese python			
VA	Owner, Reticulated python						

*There were conflicting reports identifying the OH snake as a Boa constrictor, while some called it a python.

Table 4: US Captive Constrictor Snake Related Human Fatalities by Type of the Snake and Percentage: 1990 – 2008

TYPE OF SNAKE	BOA CONSTRICTOR OR UNKNOWN PYTHON	AFRICAN ROCK PYTHON	BURMESE PYTHON*	RETICULATED PYTHON	TOTAL
HUMAN DEATHS	1	1	4*	2	8
PERCENT OF TOTAL	12.5 %	12.5 %	50 %	25 %	100 %

*The larger number of Burmese python related fatalities doesn't mean that Burmese python is more dangerous than other large constricting snakes. More people likely keep and interact with captive Burmese pythons in the USA than with other large constrictors.