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Dead alligator found by Oregon boy

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Associated Press

MELROSE, Ore. -- A Melrose boy, near Roseburg, used to joke that cougars and alligators lived in his back yard. Nobody's laughing now.

Fifteen-year-old Scott Jeffredo was crossing a creek last week with the family goat when he saw what looked to be a fake 3-foot-long alligator in the water.

The dead animal, he said, looked too leathery to be real. Neighbors and friends walked over to take a look at the creature which was identified by an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife game biologist as an alligator -- not a crocodile which would have had a longer snout.

The Oregon Legislature has drafted a bill to make the sale of alligators and crocodiles in pet stores illegal in the state.

But for now the gators are not considered exotic species.

<http://www.newsreview.info/article/20070318/NEWS/70317004>

See you later, little alligator

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MELROSE — All Scott Jeffredo was looking for was a place to cross the creek with his family goat when he spotted a 3-foot dead alligator.

“It looked fake when I first looked at it,” the 15-year-old said Friday. He discovered the alligator in the creek behind his house Wednesday evening.

He realized soon enough that it was undeniably real — it was too leathery, he said — however he had no idea if it was an alligator or a crocodile.

On closer inspection he determined it to be an alligator. Its snout was short and blunt, but not elongated and gnarled with teeth like a crocodile's.

“It didn’t smell or anything, but the goat was sniffing at it,” he said.

Soon, everybody was coming to get a better look.

Neighbors down his street on San Souci Drive stopped by for a visit. Friends came by. And everyone had a theory on where it had come from, including his sister, who claimed she once saw someone with a pet alligator years ago on a road up the creek.

“Those are things that you can get in pet stores and off the Internet,” said Tod Lum, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Umpqua District big game biologist. “They’re not a prohibited species.”

Nor are they regulated by ODFW.

But Jeffredo is going to wonder a little more about his backyard. After all, he used to tell his friends cougars and alligators lived there.

So what would’ve happened if Jeffredo had come across a live 3-foot alligator?

Lee Bartholomew, animal control deputy with the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office, said that since the animal doesn’t fall under ODFW’s jurisdiction, he’d consult Wildlife Safari to help him capture the reptile.

Bartholomew said if a person was caught releasing an alligator or crocodile into a creek because it had grown too large to be a pet, he or she could be cited with a Class B misdemeanor for abandonment, just like for any other animal.

Bartholomew added that the Oregon Legislature has drafted a bill to make the sale of alligators and crocodiles in pet stores illegal in the state.

“They’re trying to make it a law because there’s a loophole for reptiles and spiders that doesn’t make them exotic,” he said.

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Scott Jeffredo, 15, stands near the alligator he found in the creek near his home on San Souci Drive west of Roseburg on Wednesday evening. Everybody in the neighborhood seemed to have a theory as to where the alligator had come from, but nobody knows for sure.
Andy Bronson / N-R Staff photo