

The Barbados Advocate

For the cause that lacks assistance; 'Gainst the wrongs that need resistance; For the future in the distance; And the good that I can do.

Snake captured

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By Sherlock Small

A beautiful seven-foot long Peruvian Red Tail Boa is now in captivity, following a chance encounter and quick thinking by a Soil Conservation employee working at Morgan Lewis Hill, St. Andrew yesterday morning.

It was the first successful capture of a snake, since concerned Barbadians began reporting sightings of the large reptiles, and leaves Barbadians with one less snake in the grass to worry about. However, according to experts, it is the snakes that need to worry.

The non-venomous snake captured yesterday was fortunate, as St. Elmo Taylor, a caring Soil Conservation employee, in accidentally uncovering it, quickly regained any lost composure, as he thought of a way to hold the animal. Taylor, who was operating a backhoe at the time, said his initial apprehension quickly disappeared.



Geoffrey Browne of SecureRM Inc., (right) places the captured snake in the metal cage, while fascinated onlookers watch closely.

"I was up here clearing terraces and I just butt up on it. I pushed forward the blade and when I pulled back, and saw it, I was looking to run, then I said he can't get to me, so I lowered the blade on it. I just wanted to trap it. Then I called Soil Conservation," Taylor told the Barbados Advocate at the scene.

Taylor's first assistance came from fellow employees of Soil Conservation after word got out, and it was young Corey Williams who told this newspaper that he had some experience with pet snakes, who was quickest to remove the trapped Boa, and get it to safety.

"I held it below the head and got another fellow to hold the tail. It was strong, though, and he dropped the bag and ran after it started to coil. I spawned below the head with one hand, and then somebody else held the tail and we stretched it and put it in a crocus bag," Williams said.

Noting that there was a reported sighting of a red and black snake in the same general area of St. Andrew,

Williams said people did not have to be afraid, since the snakes were not aggressive and will avoid people.

Alerted by Soil Conservation, and quickly responding to the call, a team from the Government Veterinary Services department arrived with other members of Government's recently appointed task force, and took charge. Several curious Barbadians also began arriving at the scene, just to get a look at the exotic reptile.

The animal was then transported from Morgan Lewis to Veterinary Services, Pine, St. Michael, where Senior Veterinary Officer Dr. Mark Trotman arranged for the animal to be moved to "a secure environment", where he said it would remain for the rest of its life.

"This is a typical example of what happens when people bring in animals illegally and then allow them to escape," Trotman stated.

Assessing any possible danger from snakes, Trotman said these non-venomous types were not generally dangerous to humans. He said any constrictor type animal would only constrict what it perceived as being food, adding that the Red Tail Boa was not uncommon as a pet in several countries.

Herpetologist Damon Corrie was out of the island yesterday, but Geoffrey Browne of SecureRM Inc., who assists Corrie in snake tracking, said that while there were snakes out there, Barbadians need not fear them and should follow instructions, keep them in sight and call the authorities.

Government recently assembled a task force to deal with snake capture which include Damon Corrie of the Caribbean Herpetological Society; Wayne Norville of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Dr. Julia Horrocks, a Herpetologist from the University of the West Indies; a representative of the Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; representatives of the Barbados Defence Force; and staff of the Ministry of the Environment.

A 24-hour hotline, 467-5757, was also established for people to report sightings of snakes. In addition, cellular numbers 231-2975, 262-9984 or 233-8740 can also be called.

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