



Press Release – For Immediate Release – August 5, 2014

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Pet Snake Causes Media Sensation



Photo of the resident's red-tailed boa. The Police Department is advising all residents who see the snake to contact the department at 609-886-2711 and then animal control at 1-800-351-1822.

An escaped pet, a red-tailed boa, in Lower Township has been the cause of a lot of media attention this week. Although residents and visitors should supervise children and pets when they are outdoors, the red-tailed boa is not aggressive and unlikely to be found wanting anything other than amphibians, rodents, rabbits and birds.

"No one should feel unsafe in their own backyard," said Township Manager Mike Voll. "This was an unfortunate case of a pet snake that wasn't being watched properly and it caused concern when it got away. The bottom line is that people don't have to be afraid."

Lower Township Police located the original owner, a resident of Villas, and determined the species. This particular snake is a red-tailed boa, approximately six-feet long and eight-pounds and about as wary of humans as they are of it.

According to Chief William Mastriana, the owner is not facing any criminal charges since it is not illegal to own the snake in New Jersey. The species can be found at pet stores, nationwide. However, the owner is

accepting responsibility for not keeping a careful watch on the snake when he had it out of its aquarium for cleaning and exercise.

According to Dr. Nick Holland of Shore Animal Control Services, boas are normally shy and are primarily nocturnal, doing most of their movement during the dawn or dusk hours. Boas are native to South America and some areas of Mexico and are a popular item at pet stores. However, some owners, while well-intentioned, are not prepared to properly care for an exotic snake.

Holland said the snake won't survive in cool weather and could also die from eating wildlife that carries bacteria that the snake is not immune to.

The snake was last seen eating a bird around the 200 block of Arbor Road this week and is expected to retreat to a cool, dark place for what could be three weeks to a month to digest the meal.

"Residents don't have to be afraid," said Chief Mastriana. "Even though this isn't an aggressive snake, we want people to exercise caution and take the time to check their property, their sheds and crawl spaces. If you see something, give the police department a call."

While, common sense and caution is best when dealing with a snake, residents and visitors have found humor in the story. Many have taken to Twitter to talk snake facts with not one, but two parody accounts, @VillasSnake or @CapeMayPython. Even snake-themed souvenirs at local businesses are a hot item as the search for the snake gained popularity.

Holland also thanked the residents, police department and the state department of Fish and Wildlife for their continued help.

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