

A Summer Afternoon

Heidi Stevenson Rothenberg, M.D.

22 February 2016

The Chicago Literary Club

It actually began on a sunny summer afternoon: a young man bypassed the front desk of the Evanston Emergency Department and walked into the patient care area, stating “I’ve been bitten by a rattlesnake”. Everyone basically looked at him like he was crazy— except that I asked him “where?” And he showed me his hand—all swollen and ecchymotic to above his wrist. Clearly this was not a “dry bite”!

I asked him “What?” and his response was: “A 14 inch Eastern Massasauga with 2 rattles and a button.” “What did you do to the snake?” “I jumped at it!” “What on earth did you expect it to do?” Followed by “When did this happen?” “About an hour and a half ago” “Where?” “The Des Plaines River Valley” “What took you so long?” “I wanted to see what would happen.”

The obvious question is--what is a nice young man doing in the Des Plaines River Valley looking for--and jumping at--an Eastern Massasauga.

And why.

But first—some basics: What IS a snake and what makes a snake different from other reptiles?

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum – Chordata

Subphylum- Vertebrata

(So far we’re all in this together!)

Class—Reptilia

(We’ve all known people whom we’ve thought were reptilian but that doesn’t make them so.)

Order --Squamata

Suborder –Ophidia

In other words, snakes have no legs and no vestigial pectoral limb girdles, they do have overlapping and tile-like scales but they have no eyelids; They also have a single row of wide, ventral scales. And most snakes have unique skulls in which the bones of the upper jaws are not united at the snout but are free to move away from one another in order to allow the passage of large prey items.

All snakes are carnivores. The range of prey is very wide –preferred is what is most frequent or most easily caught in the areas which the snake frequents. This will include insects and other invertebrates (including snails) as well as amphibians, mammals large and small, eggs, birds and, for enormous snakes, larger creatures of wide variety.

Although all snakes are predators their organs of sight are not very efficient; this is thought to stem from their origins as burrowing reptiles.

Though snakes have been thought to be deaf and lack external ears they do retain the vestiges of sound-transmitting equipment in the form of the stapes, in humans a bone of the middle ear which contacts the oval window which is the vibrating surface of the cochlea or inner ear. In snakes the stapes is in contact with the quadrate bone which in turn articulates with the lower jaw. As the lower jaw is often in contact with the ground the snake is acutely sensitive to vibrations. As a result snakes do not communicate with each other vocally; the sounds produced are used as a warning to other kinds of animals.

Because of lack of keen sight and sensitive hearing the snake has developed other, more sensitive sense organs, one of which is Jacobson's organ which works in conjunction with and in addition to the nostrils utilizing the olfactory part of the brain and is a pair of sacs lined with sensory cells located in the front of the palate. The tongue flicks out and picks up scent in the form of airborne molecules, is withdrawn and the forked tips are inserted into the opening ducts of Jacobson's organ which passes the information to the

olfactory part of the brain. When at rest the tongue rests in a sheath on the floor of the mouth.

It should be noted that snakes are also prey, being hunted by birds of prey, mammals such as skunks and foxes, raccoons and mongooses, reptiles such as crocodiles as well as other snakes.

For the purposes of this paper the snakes which are discussed are pit vipers, particularly Crotalid and Sistrurus. The “pit”, an additional heat-sensitive organ, is found in boas and pythons as well as pit vipers. In pit vipers the pit is more sophisticated than it is in the other two species: it consists of a depression lined with a layer of epithelial cells containing a number of thermoreceptors. In pit vipers there are two compartments divided by a membrane. The inner chamber is connected to the outside through a pore-like channel which opens just in front of the eye and serves to equalize pressure (on the membrane) as well as to record ambient air temperature. The outer surface of the membrane detects only heat originating from a warm-blooded animal. Thus, the snake is able to differentiate between prey and a warm breeze and can, by moving its head, accurately locate its prey, enabling it to strike accurately, even in total darkness.

A blind rattlesnake scored direct hits 48 out of 49 times, comparable to rattlesnakes which could see. However, when its pits were covered the blind snake’s success rate fell to 4 out of 15 attempts.

Birds can evade a strike unless they’re surprised because their reaction time is comparable to that of snakes.

Also, strikes are costly to snakes in terms of energy as well as the risk of injury. A snake will not strike at potential prey once the snake has been discovered. A bird will engage in complex behavioural rituals such as facing the snake, repeatedly pointing to it with beak, head crest or wings to let the snake know it’s been seen.

Interestingly enough complex interactions with other species have been observed in Western Diamondback

rattlesnakes: for example—when the prey is mammalian the venom alters the scent so that when the snake strikes and releases its prey it can be tracked by scent

The approach of striking and releasing a bird wouldn't work because of the bird's flying prior to collapsing thus leaving no scent for the snake to follow.

Adult rock squirrels, a species native to the American Southwest, are immune to diamondback venom though their juveniles are not. As a result the rock squirrel can serve as an unwitting accomplice to the snake in its search for avian food.

When a rock squirrel discovers a hunting rattler its reaction is to wave its tail while throwing dirt and rocks onto the snake.. If the rattler is a mammal hunter it will slither away having lost the element of surprise. However, a rattler adapted to hunting birds won't react, throwing the squirrel into a frenzy. The squirrel will then keep throwing dirt until the snake is completely covered, excellent camouflage allowing an unsuspecting bird to wander very close. The snake will strike from a short distance, aiming high and dropping its weight onto the bird which will pin it down until the venom takes effect.

Further interesting behavior—male Western Diamondback rattlesnakes establish hierarchies during elegant but energetically demanding bouts of wrestling in which the male who stays off the ground the longest wins. One inventive male used a dead tree as a crutch to allow him to remain in the upright position. The writer of this source and his colleagues carefully marked the territories of local snakes and found that this snake, for a few years, was able to monopolize the breeding territories of several neighboring females, “likely enjoying exceptional fecundity”!

We should note that in the US there are actually only 2 families of poisonous snakes

- 1) Pit vipers
- 2) Elapids

Of the pit vipers the genus *Agkistrodon* includes copperheads and water moccasins.

The genus *Crotalus* is rattlesnakes.

The genus *Sistrurus* includes the Massasaugas, also rattlesnakes.

Of the elapids—in the US resides the coral snake—shy, and confined to the warm areas around the Gulf of Mexico. Its fangs are very short but its venom is neurotoxic. Elapidae include cobras, mambas and kraits.

In the Chicago area only the Eastern Massasauga is indigenous..

Meanwhile, back to our story.....

The senior herpetologist at the Lincoln Park Zoo told me that there is a group of young men who gather on Saturdays at the snake house of the Lincoln Park Zoo. Because of the variety of snakes, their intense interest, as well as their lack of experience, the senior herpetologist informed me that they mistakenly think that only the Eastern Diamondback has “serious” venom. Clearly not true!

Venom is fascinating stuff! The snake uses it for defense: to deter predators as well as tormentors. It is also used for food gathering: The venom facilitates retrieval of prey by altering

scent as well as immobilizing the prey and facilitating its digestion. The amount of venom alters from bite to bite using factors such as prey size and species, duration of fang contact and time elapsed since the last meal. In comparison studies venom expenditure of North American pit vipers appears to be greater in defensive than in predatory bites.

A popular belief is that juvenile rattlesnakes are more dangerous for two reasons: 1) their venom is more toxic and 2) they are unable to control the volume of venom released.

The venom of some juvenile rattlesnakes may be more toxic: In one small study juvenile prairie rattlesnakes have been shown to possess venom 2 to 3 times more toxic than that of adults. However, larger snakes are capable of delivering much greater volumes of venom in a bite.

As to controlling the volume released: in a series of first exposures to different-sized prey “naive” juveniles injected similar quantities into all size classes. However, in the second series of exposures, the now “experienced” snakes injected significantly more venom into larger prey.

In many species venom composition appears to change as the snake ages. Proteolytic activity, defined as destruction of protein, increases with age, possibly to aid digestion of larger prey eaten by older, larger snakes.

Venom characteristics can also vary with geographic origin of the snake. For example, certain populations of the Mohave rattlesnake cause human neurotoxicity while causing minimal local tissue destruction and no hemorrhagic effects. The venoms of these snakes possess a neurotoxin

designated “Mojave toxin” and are classified as Venom A populations. Venom B populations lack Mojave toxin and are less toxic resulting in consequences more typical of most rattlesnake envenomation with soft tissue swelling, necrosis, which is defined as death of a circumscribed piece of tissue, and coagulopathy, which is defined as alteration of the ability to clot. In the context of snake bite the alteration is in the direction of preventing clot formation.

Venom A populations are found in California, western Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Texas. Venom B populations are found in eastern parts of Arizona. A zone of intergradation between Venom A and Venom B populations occurs along a line between Phoenix and Tucson. Envenomations manifesting both Venom A and Venom B effects have also been observed in inland southern California.

Toxins with structures and physiologic effects similar to Mojave toxin have been isolated from venoms of other species of rattlesnakes; geographic variability has also been observed.

Venoms are extraordinarily variable and complex chemical cocktails of approximately 100 distinct molecular moieties: for example:

Phospholipase A2 neurotoxins: block neurotransmission by binding to calcium channels. This will inactivate muscle which can cause, for example, paralysis of the muscles of respiration. It can also damage muscle cell membranes leading to release of creatine, a nitrogenous organic acid, and creatine kinase, an enzyme found in muscle destruction. Both are compounds which can lead to rhabdomyolysis (muscle breakdown) and muscle death.

Enzymes which require a metal molecule for activity cause much of the locally destructive effects of pit viper envenomation and intensify inflammation. Certain of these compounds can cause leakage of red blood cells out of the vasculature leading to ecchymosis (a bruised appearance) and fluid shifts.

Thrombin-like enzymes cause a consumptive coagulopathy, defined as progressive inability to clot.

Disintegrins bind to the proteins on platelets blocking their ability to form clots.

Bradykinins cause hypotension, vomiting and pain

Hyaluronidase decreases the viscosity of connective tissue allowing the venom to spread.

Lysolecithin damages mast cell membranes and results in histamine release, histamine being a substance which plays a key role in the body's reaction to inflammation.

But while the chemical composition of venom and its effects are fascinating to me—I think that we need to explore more possibilities as to why my patient was out looking for snakes.

Throughout the history of humankind the serpent has been associated with dual expression, i.e. good and evil.

The serpent has nearly always been regarded as phallic. In some cultures snakes were fertility symbols, a creative life force. As snakes shed their skins they were symbols of rebirth, transformation, immortality, and healing.

In some Abrahamic traditions the serpent represents sexual desire, sexual passion.

The Hopi performed an annual snake dance to celebrate the union of the Snake Youth (a sky spirit) with the Snake Girl (an underworld spirit). The dance was felt to renew the fertility of nature—at the end of which the snakes were released into the fields to guarantee good crops.

Other cultures felt that the snake was an umbilical cord joining all humans to Mother Earth.

Serpents are also represented as guardians of temples and other sacred spaces. This connection may be grounded in the observation that when threatened some snakes will hold and defend their ground. Examples of guardians are the nagas seen in sculptures in Cambodia where they are protecting the Buddha..

The mythology of the serpent varies with locale:

In Africa Dahomey was the chief center of serpent worship. However, the cult of the python seems to have been of exotic origin dating back to the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In many parts of Africa the serpent is looked upon as the incarnation of deceased relatives.

In the ancient Near East snake cults were well established in the Canaanite religion in the Bronze

Age. Serpent cult objects have been uncovered in Bronze age strata.

In the Gospel of John Jesus makes direct comparison between the raising up of the Son of Man and the act of Moses in raising up the serpent as a symbol associated with salvation.

Ancient Egyptian mythology has the serpent appearing from beginning to end of their mythology. Their god Atum was associated with earth animals including the serpent. The two-headed

serpent deity who guarded the entrance to the underworld was often seen as the son of the snake goddess who was later absorbed by their primal snake goddess Wadjet, the Egyptian cobra who was the patron and protector of the country, other deities and the pharaohs. She was depicted as the crown of Egypt, entwined around the staff of papyrus as well as having the all-seeing eye of wisdom and vengeance.

The serpent, when forming a ring with its tail in its mouth, is a clear and widespread symbol of the totality of existence, infinity and the cyclic nature of the cosmos. The most well-known version is the Aegypto-Greek Ourobouros, believed to have been inspired by the Milky Way.

Serpents figured prominently in archaic Greek myths. Rather than list all the monsters I shall mention Python, the earth-dragon of Delphi who was the chthonic enemy of Apollo, not to be confused with the python cult in Africa. Apollo slew her and remade her former home his own oracle. There is Medusa, a vicious monster with sharp fangs and hair of living venomous snakes. And Asclepius, son of Apollo and Koronis, who learned the secrets of keeping death at bay after

observing one serpent bringing another back to life with healing herbs. Zeus killed him with a bolt of lightning to prevent his care from making the entire human race immortal.

Multiple myths relate the chthonic serpent—or occasionally a pair—living in or coiled around a tree of life situated in a divine garden. Examples: Genesis: The Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life and the Serpent. Greek mythology speaks of Ladon coiled around the tree in the garden of the Hesperides protecting the golden apples which were thought to bring on an altered spiritual state. An Icelandic manuscript tells of Niohoggr gnawing the roots of Yggdrasil—similarly in Norse mythology the dragon eats from the roots of the World Tree.

When a storm arose as Buddha was meditating under the Bodhi Tree the serpent king Mucalinda rose from beneath the earth and enveloped the Buddha in seven coils for seven days so as not to break his ecstatic state. Mayans conceived the Vision serpent lying at the center of the world atop the World Tree, creating the center axis which communicates between the spiritual and the earthly worlds.

Sometimes the Tree of Life is represented by a staff and coiled snakes: examples: Caduceus of Hermes, the Rod of Aesclepius, the Staff of Moses.

We also have the phenomenon of snake worship—AKA Ophiolatry—as well as the usage of snakes in the process of worship. As stated before, in Africa the centre of snake worship was Dahomey, on the coast of West Africa where Benin is now. The ancient Egyptians worshipped snakes, especially the cobra which was eventually a part of the Pharaoh's crown when Upper and Lower

Egypt were united. In Ancient Europe serpent worship was well known—in Italy the worship of Angitia, whose name was derived from the word for “serpent”, was located in the Central Apennine region. Serpent worship was a feature of local religions in Iberia prior to the Roman invasions.

Korean mythology identifies Eobshin, the wealth goddess, as an eared, black snake. In Cheju (the island off the southern coast of Korea) she and her seven daughters are all snakes—it is felt that the reason for the symbolization of worth was because snakes eat rats and other pests.

In Mesoamerica the Mayan and Aztec deity (Kukulcan and Quetzacoatl, respectively) was a feathered serpent.

Contemporary Christian culture identifies the snake as symbol of evil but snake handling is a religious ritual in a small number of Christian churches, usually characterized as rural and Pentecostal. The practice began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Appalachia and the snake handling plays only a small part in the church service. The snakes are not worshipped but are used to show non-Christians that God protects them from harm.

Although exact records are difficult to substantiate it is believed that at least 71 people have been killed by venomous snakebites during religious services in the United States. The founder of snake handling died of snakebite in 1955. And one preacher was convicted of attempted murder of his wife with a rattlesnake!

That being said, those who die from snakebite are never criticized for lack of faith. It is believed that it was simply the deceased's time to die.

As to Ireland and St. Patrick all evidence suggests that post-glacial Ireland never had snakes.

Extensive search through Irish fossil collections and records reveals that there has never been any suggestion of snakes in Ireland. The only biological candidate species for appearing like a native snake in Ireland is the slow worm, actually a legless lizard, a non-native species found in the Burren region of County Clare, recorded in the early 1970s. The possibility is that this species was deliberately introduced in the 1960s.

Also, there is no record of a serpent's having successfully migrated across open ocean to a new terrestrial home, such as from Scotland, at one point only some 12 miles from Ireland.

Occasionally serpents and dragons are used interchangeably, having similar symbolic functions. The dragon Fafner, having slain his brother Fasolt prior to assuming the form of a dragon, can represent multiple aspects of opisthology, specifically, passion—Fasolt was killed over the gold which was paid to ransom Freya, and then we see the more human—translate that as seven deadly sins—aspects of being: betrayal and greed, lust, hoarding and we can progress from there,

There are the dragons in Harry Potter, as well as the basilisk whose glance can kill. And Nagini in the form of a very large snake which represents rebirth, death and mortality in Hinduism and Buddhism but in Harry Potter Nagini contains a portion of Voldemort's soul,

supposedly to ensure his immortality. As an aside—if you haven’t read the Harry Potter series it’s a wonderfully written metaphor. And great fun to read!

However, let us return to our young man who jumped at the snake and to the six T’s of snakebite:

- 1) Teeth—or lack thereof
- 2) T-shirt—or wife-beater
- 3) Truck—as in pickup
- 4) Tattoo—quantity is included
- 5) Tequila—or other 2-carbon-chain compounds
- 6) Testosterone.

My patient really didn’t fall into any of these categories except the last as he was kempt, sober, appropriately clothed without the requisite ink and had been raised with taste and dental care. (I didn’t ask about his mode of transportation!)

Having decided to wait “to see what happened” when his hand began to swell he decided to come in.

At the moment he arrived the emergency room was packed but the patient in bed #8 had just left so I ripped off the soiled sheet, made the bed under his nose and told him to get onto it, at the same time asking the nurse assigned to that bed to start IV fluids and to get bloods drawn—which included appropriate studies for coagulation factors.

And then I began my search for antivenin—not an easy task as it’s expensive, expires, and most places don’t carry it—that included my own hospital pharmacy..

At the present time there are basically two kinds of Crotalid antivenin, Polyvalent and Polyvalent Immune FAB, AKA Fragment Antigen Binding. The former, polyvalent, is a concentrated preparation of serum globulins obtained by fractionating blood from healthy horses immunized with various snake venoms. The globulins react with and neutralize the venom. This antivenin has better efficacy against the lethal aspects than against the myotoxic or muscular-destructive components of venom. The latter, Immune FAB, is a venom-specific antigen binding fragment of immunoglobulin which binds and neutralizes the venom toxins facilitating their redistribution and ultimate elimination from affected body tissues. It is derived from immunized sheep, one difference being that the immune serum is subjected to papain digestion following which the nonspecific fab fragments are removed.

At the time of this patient the party line was that everyone had one or 2 vials of antivenin and hospitals shared if needed. It was indeed a party line—no one had anything and I found myself calling what seemed like the entire world, finally getting half of what I needed from Cook County Hospital and paying the cabby myself as it was driven up during rush hour—the remainder was obtained from the Lincoln Park Zoo.

In the interim the patient’s arm had swollen to above his elbow and his urine was already bloody. I would later learn that immediately after the envenomation he had had sweating and belly cramps, both having been described by bitten individuals immediately following envenomation..

My patient was admitted, required 8 vials of antivenin, was very well managed and after several days of fluids and blood transfusions left “Paradise East” (my descriptor of the Evanston Hospital) in excellent condition—he did so well that he was “lost to followup”..(translation: didn’t follow up with his physician!)

Years later I learned that his mother worked in our lab and that for a brief time he did also—which led to several most interesting middle-of-the-night-when-it-wasn’t-too-busy conversations regarding adventures in herpetology culled from his own adventures which I verified from others over the years.

One verification source was a most interesting gentleman whose wife was my patient. As is usual for me, I did my best to interact with both in an attempt to help them to feel more comfortable. He himself was wearing a jacket with “herpetologist” embroidered on the left front and began to explain what that meant—in the course of our conversation I learned that he and his wife—and, when they were sufficiently older and more responsible, their sons—were rattlesnake hunters, locating and capturing specimens for zoos and then releasing most of the snakes which they caught.

When I mentioned the person who, without looking, reached into a sack and sustained a krait bite—Krait venom being extremely neurotoxic and causing ventilatory failure—and his colleagues, horrified, actually did their best to ventilate him in an attempt to keep him alive long enough to get him out of the jungle in Southeast Asia to medical care—but he died—my patient’s husband not only knew the story but knew the bitten person himself.

It should be noted that Cleopatra’s asp is thought to have been a krait.

Frederick Forsyth has written a short story entitled “There are No Snakes in Ireland” which involves a krait. For those interested it’s in his collection “No Comebacks” which I highly recommend. And if you want I’ll tell you my favourite stories in the book!

But back to the topic at hand: This paper was complete and ready for submission when I learned yesterday from my favourite attorney who argues before the Federal Bench that there is a small breeding colony of Eastern Massasaugas in a carefully non-disclosed location in one of our locally protected areas. I had been informed that they were extinct in this area and was delighted to learn that my information is no longer correct!

And have no qualms. Like so much in our world—the non-human part—wildlife, be it mammalian, reptilian, furry or with those lovely, cool, sleek scales—they know we’re there before we know they’re there..... and they give us a wide berth.

So ---

Vive la Difference!

Use judgement—

And don’t jump at a Massasauga!

Sources include:

Wilderness Medicine, Sixth Edition—Paul Auerbach

The New Encyclopedia of Snakes—Chris Mattison

Micromedex

Don Wheeler

Alexander V. Badyaev, PhD

Captain Chris Smith, MD, USN

Keith D and Peggy R Kunkel

John M. Kenney, Jr., Esq.



Addendum

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Heidi Stevenson Rothenberg M.D.

22 February, 2016

I Meant to Do My Work Today

by

Richard Le Gallienne

I meant to do my work today—  
But a brown bird sang in the apple tree,  
And a butterfly flitted across the field,  
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,  
Tossing the grasses to and fro,  
And a rainbow held out its shining hand—  
So what could I do but laugh and go?

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Subphylum: Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Ophidia

The six T's of snakebite:

- 1) T-shirt (or wifebeater)
- 2) Teeth—or lack thereof
- 3) Tattoo
- 4) Truck (as in pickup)
- 5) Tequila—or the equivalent 2-carbon chain compound
- 6) Testosterone

Incidentally, the Navy physicians have a tattoo/teeth ratio. But that's another story!

# The Snakes of Riverwoods

*By Don Wheeler, Riverwoods resident and author  
of Tales From the Golden Age of Rattlesnake  
Hunting*

We have lived in Riverwoods for over 41 years, throughout this time, and before, our avocation had been herpetology.

Over the years we received many calls from residents and the Lake County Sheriff's Department about snakes. The Riverwoods police department now has our phone number and we have responded to their calls.

There are seven species of snakes in this area, six are harmless, two of these are quite common.

The following is a list and brief description of the reptiles found in Riverwoods:

The Plains Garter Snake and the Eastern Garter Snake are very similar. Their average length is two-feet-long and they have a black or brown with a yellow or orange stripe down their back.

The Northern Brown Snake is up to twelve inches long. It is light tan with a double row of small spots on the back.

The Red Bellied Snake is eight to twelve inches long, gray to black in color with a red belly.

The Eastern Milk Snake has a slender body, two to three feet long. It is gray with dark brown blotches on the back.

The Northern Banded Watersnake is two feet long. It is gray with redish brown bands across the back.

The only other indigenous snake in Riverwoods is the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake. It is stocky in appearance with an average length of two feet. It is gray with dark brown blotches on the back and a rattle on the tail. This snake is venomous and should not be molested! There have been no sightings of this snake for several years. It is quite possibly extirpated from this area. The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is an endangered species protected here and in several states.

**Other reptiles found in our area.**

The Snapping Turtle is ten to twelve inches long with a heavy body. This turtle is dangerous if handled and can bite off a finger.

The Painted Turtle has red edge marks on a black shell and is four to seven inches long. This turtle was recently voted the Illinois State Reptile by school children throughout the state.

If anyone sees a reptile they are unsure of or uneasy about, we welcome all inquiries directly (847) 945-2576 or through the Riverwoods Police Department. We have found some calls to be non-native species, either escaped or released.

*Common cGarter snake*



The mother rock squirrel brings shed rattlesnake skin for her pups to play with so that they can learn the scent of rattlesnakes.



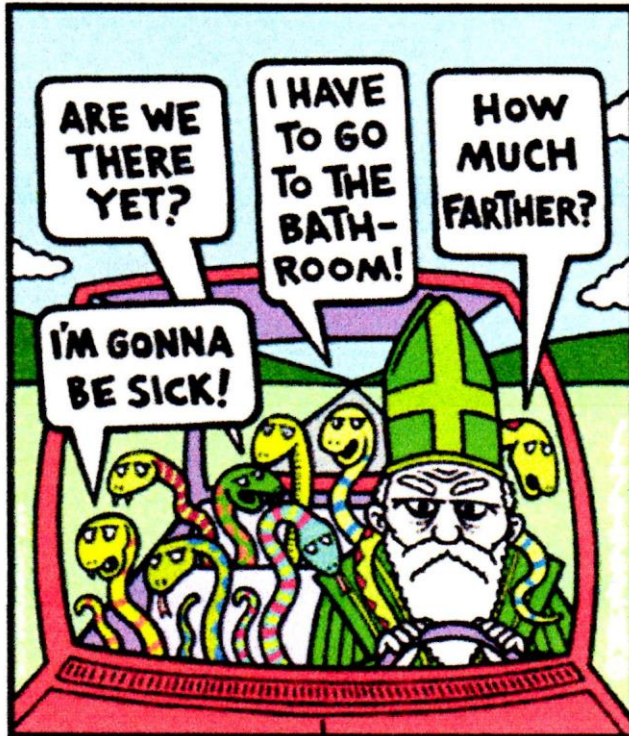
The rattler has struck--  
but missed-- the dove



The element of surprise is gone



Elegant and energy demanding---note the log!



St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland.



So you have a problem: You need to transport your four-foot-long boa constrictor but you don't have a car. (Only one? That sounds like at least two different problems...) What do you do? Well, if you're Philly resident and snake owner Koron Riley, you [drape](#) it around your neck and take a ride on a public bus.

There was only flaw with that grand plan. (Again: Only one?) See, that snake, well, he kinda got loose on the bus... (Although, it's Philly, so things slither around there all the time. Frankly, we're surprised anybody noticed.)

Obviously panic/hilarity followed. The bus had to be evacuated when nobody could find the snake. It was eventually found, coiled under a seat. Not even delicious dead mice could coax out the boa, so the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority had the fun and rewarding job of dismantling the seat so a transit cop could retrieve the beast.

So, it's a "happy" ending. No one was hurt, not even the boa. Police are still deciding whether to file charges against Riley (But really, hasn't he suffered enough?) and New Line Cinema may or may not be in talks to buy the rights for a [movie](#).

From the Daily Shot--Ricochet