

Ripped from the ROUNDUP

Ripped straight from the pages of old Space News Roundups, here's what happened at JSC on this date:

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Speaking at a press conference held recently at JSC, John Young, acting chief of the Astronaut Office, said he believes the space shuttle orbiter will "revolutionize the United States and the world."

"The shuttle will open new avenues to science and will stimulate the development of advanced technology in the 1980-1990 time-frame," he said.

According to Robert F. Thompson, shuttle program manager, the first manned orbital flight is scheduled to take place by the second quarter of 1979. The system is expected to be completely operational in 1980.

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Derelict space station Skylab continues to drop lower in its orbit despite force fields sent out by psychokinesis buffs, and suggestions by callers to capture Skylab with "huge magnets" or to shoot it down with a surface-to-air missile. This week's prediction for 50% probability of Skylab entry from NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) is for July 16, with a 95% probability of entry between July 4 and July 28. NORAD updates its predictions weekly based upon skin tracking of Skylab.

Abnormal solar flare activity during the six years since the Skylab Workshop was launched has caused "bulges" in the Earth's atmosphere to reach out to the space station's altitude, forcing Skylab's orbit to wear out faster. When launched in May 1973, Skylab was predicted to have an orbital lifetime of 10 years.

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NASA Contracting Officer Lee Evey, at JSC from NASA Headquarters, and Russian Space Agency representative Nikolai Zhulin sign an agreement for the two countries to work together on Phase I Russian Program science and research aboard Mir and some Phase II International Space Station development activities. The contract was delivered to Washington, D.C. for final signatures by NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin and RSA Director Yuri Koptev.

Employees empowered for safety

S-s-s-s-summer is here...

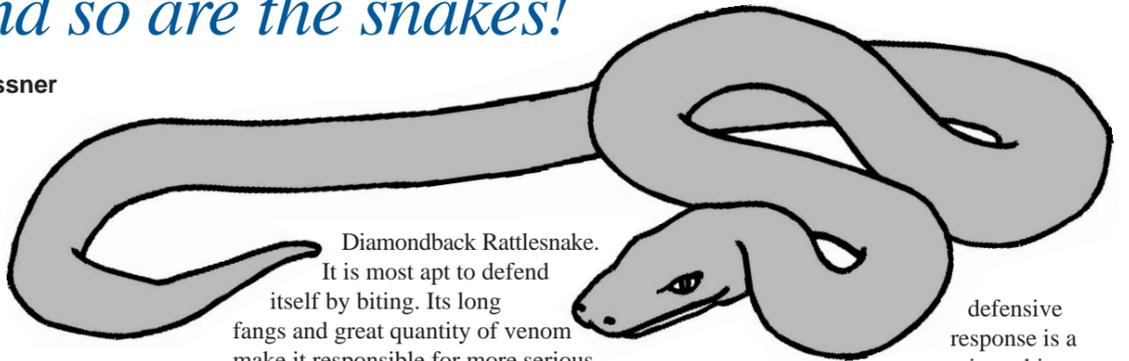
and so are the snakes!

By Mary Alice Pruessner

In the last few weeks, several close call reports of snake "sightings" on site have been reported. The sightings have occurred close to various buildings and outlying parking lots. This has triggered some concern and questions about how to identify whether a snake is venomous or non-venomous.

Below is a quick reference for snakes most common to the local area. For more detailed information and pictures, visit the Houston Zoo Web site at: <http://www.houstonzoo.org/reptiles/snakeset.htm>.

If you encounter a snake, make no sudden moves and avoid the area. If the snake is in a high traffic area and could cause a threat call JSC Security at x34658.



Diamondback Rattlesnake. It is most apt to defend itself by biting. Its long fangs and great quantity of venom make it responsible for more serious bites and fatalities than any other snake in the U.S.

Habitat: Heavily wooded areas.

Description: This is a large, heavy-bodied pit viper ranging from 3 to 7 feet that can be identified immediately by the alternating black and white rings of about equal width on the tail. These rings resemble the ones on a raccoon's tail, so it is sometimes called the "coontail rattlesnake." The back is patterned with light-bordered dark diamonds, and there are two light diagonal lines on the side of the face.

defensive response is a gaping white

mouth. A desperate snake may rear its forebody into an elevated, S-shaped curve, hiss vigorously, vibrate its tail, and eventually fling itself toward its assailant. Much of the posture is a bluff to allow the snake to escape; unfortunately the display often causes the snake to be misidentified as a venomous species and killed.

Habitat: Habitats range from bayous, swamps and wooded areas.

Description: The average length of this slim, wiry-trunked snake is 3.5 to 6 feet; the record length is more than 7 feet. It may exhibit a strongly blotched pattern, or be almost solid dark grey to black. Blotches are brown to blue-black and the background color is gray to yellowish-orange. Rat snakes have a distinctive body shape; a cross section resembles a loaf of bread. The belly is pale and generally blotched with dark squares and a gray overwash. The underside of the tail tip is usually solid gray.

Western Cottonmouth (Water Moccasin)

General: It tends to hold its ground even when escape might be easy, rapidly vibrating its tail and gaping at the intruder to expose the white "cotton" lining of its mouth from which it gets the name "cottonmouth." It can bite under water. Its venom is more toxic than that of its close relative, the copperhead.

Habitat: Almost any aquatic area from swamps, bayous, lakes, rivers, sloughs, irrigation ditches, and stagnant backwaters. They are frequently found lying underneath objects on the ground.

Description: This is a pit viper, variable in color and markings and difficult to recognize. It has a dark, chunky, heavy body, brown or black above, patternless or with dark, indistinct crossbands. The head is shaped somewhat like a diamond. White face stripes are present on many, although obscure or absent on others. They are usually 2 to 3 feet long; the record is 4.5 feet. The young have a light brown body with dark brown bands and bright yellow or chartreuse tail tips which are used as a lure for potential prey. The distinct bands fade to a dark brownish-black as it ages. They closely resemble a variety of beneficial harmless watersnakes.

Southern Copperhead

General: It is the most abundant of the U.S. venomous snakes and is often confused with the harmless hognose snake.

It usually remains coiled and quiet unless approached or touched, and will vibrate its tail when angry. It often seems reluctant to strike. Its soft colors blend well with leaves on the forest floor, making it easy to step on and increasing the chance of contact with children and pets; however, its bites are usually not serious and fatalities from its bite are almost unknown.

Habitat: Wooded, watery areas; wooded, hilly areas broken by expanses of rocky ledges; abandoned buildings, vacant lots, old plank roads, woodpiles, and grassy areas with scattered logs and debris for cover.

Description: This pit viper has a thick, stout body, usually brown, pinkish tan or chestnut colored with darker hourglass-shaped crossbands. Some may be solid color with no dark bands. Adults average 2 to 3 feet; the record 4.5 feet.

Texas Rat Snake

General: It can frequently be found in open places during the day in cool spring and fall weather. Because it has a tough, slightly laterally flattened body and sharp-edged belly scales that can dig like spikes into tree bark, it is an especially agile climber. It is a very muscular snake and can stiffen its body to span branch-to-branch distances more than a third of its length. When it is surprised, its dramatic

Texas Coral Snake

General: Its venom is primarily neurotoxic, depressing the central nervous system. Death occurs by respiratory or heart failure. The venom is very potent (lethal dose 5 to 10 mg). Because of their secretive and nonaggressive nature (except in feeding), few human fatalities are recorded. Most bites occur when victims handle the snakes or step on them. The Texas coral snake resembles several other harmless snakes and it is important to recognize the differences. Remember the saying, "red on yellow, kill a fellow; red on black, venom lack." If these two warning colors touch on the snake's body, it is venomous.

Habitat: Broad range of habitats including pine and hardwood forests, coastal and inland prairies, cedar brakes, rock canyons and hillsides. It is usually secretive, nocturnal or crepuscular.

Description: This is a slender, shiny, medium-sized snake with broad, alternating bands of red and black separated by narrow yellow or white rings. The head is black with a yellow ring behind the eyes. Adults average 2 feet long, but specimens of 4 feet have been reported. ■

TICKET WINDOW

Exchange Store hours

Monday-Friday

Bldg. 3 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bldg. 11 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

All tickets are non-refundable. Metro tokens and value cards are available.

For more information, please call x35350.

The following discount tickets are available at the Exchange Stores

General Cinema Theaters	.....	\$5.50
Sony Loew's Theaters	.....	\$5.00
AMC Theaters	.....	\$4.75
Fiesta Texas	.....adult .. \$18.25 .. (child under 48")	... \$15.50
Astroworld One-day Admission	.....	\$21.00
Astroworld Season Pass	.....	\$54.75
(valid at all Texas Six Flags Theme Parks and Water World)		
Water World	.....	\$10.75
Moody Gardens (2 of 6 events)	.....	\$10.75
Sea World	.....adult .. \$27.25 .. child (age 3-11)	... \$18.25
Schlitterbahn Water Park	.....adult .. \$20.75 .. child (age 3-11)	... \$17.50
Space Center Houston	.....adult .. \$10.25 .. child (age 4-11)	... \$6.50
(JSC civil service employees free.)		
Space Center Houston Annual Pass	.....	\$18.75
Splash Town Water Park	.....adult .. \$14.50 (child 48" and under)	... \$11.50
Houston Comets tickets are now available for July 1, Aug. 6 and 18.		
Quantities are limited.		

