

Black Mt. News — 26 February 1981

How to round up a desert rattlesnake

Heagreen getting snake out of his cabin

from the CCIA Conservation Committee

I had a rude awakening this morning at 5:45 a.m.

Through mists of sleep I heard the dog spring up and run out of the cabin. He'd been startled by a loud buzzing noise which at first I'd taken to be the alarm clock. Not so! There was in fact a black-tailed rattlesnake coiled and rattling at the base of the armchair . . . very much inside the cabin!

Cautiously, I got out of bed and established its exact position. How to remove it? As there was no question of killing it (I like rattlesnakes and always have had friendly encounters with

them), I took a wooden crate with a wire-mesh bottom and after some difficulty (for it hid beneath the armchair), managed to trap it beneath.

With a walking stick, I dragged the box and disturbed snake over the flagstone floor to the front door threshold. Slipping an old screen door under the box and snake, I was finally able to lift them both up. Holding the buzzing prisoner in his temporary cage, I walked gingerly along the creek and then up a rock slope where I released him. He crawled away, still rattling, and stole beneath the safety of a boulder.

Black-tailed rattlesnakes

are noted for their docility and this one was true to form. Although he was agitated enough to rattle, he never once struck at the stick that was prodding him into the box.

Considering the rarity of rattlesnakes in the immediate area, it was a privilege not only to have him come into this neck of the woods, but further, to enter the cabin itself. With the doors wide open all night long (so as to sleep in a cooling breeze), it wasn't difficult for him to pay me a visit.

The experience was so much the richer for having allowed this beautifully marked reptile to live.