
Crotalus in the Cabin

by: Geoffrey Platts¹

A REMARKABLE ENCOUNTER

I had a remarkable encounter last evening at about 8:00 PM. The cabin front door had been left open, and as I was scribbling away, there was an un-mouselike rustle in some papers on the floor a yard to my left. In the soft light of the kerosene lamp, I at last made out half of its bright-colored length. A four-foot black-tailed rattlesnake had come in to welcome me back from a visit to Patagonia in the south of the state.

As I shifted instinctively away from Old Crotalus² (Western diamondback rattlesnake,) it twitched and gave the tiniest of rattles. When the adrenaline had lowered, I began writing again, knowing I'd no other choice but to relax, speak a welcome to the night visitor and leave it to its own devices.

(Poor D. H. Lawrence succumbed to his primordial fears and threw a log at his Sicilian snake at the waterhole and later wrote in "Snake" his affecting and famous

poem, "And so I missed my chance with one of the lords of life and I have



Wikipedia

¹ Article first published June 1999

² *Crotalus atrox*; see related [Wikipedia](#) article



something to expiate – pettiness.” Though startled, like Lawrence, I felt honored by the serpent’s electrifying visit.)

Well, it vanished (under the nearby bed?) and soon afterwards I got up from the chair to light a hurricane lamp so as to better illumine my walkway around the cabin. I certainly stepped gingerly!

Ten minutes later, about to go outside into the dark, I spotted my welcoming amigo just below the front step, with that mesmerizing triangular head swaying towards the lamplight. Minutes later, fully aware of my looming upright presence, it calmly crawled off, in a deliberate and dignified fashion, over the fallen leaves and up the cliff bank. Thus marked my eleventh encounter this summer with the rattling snakes that, when respected and understood, invariably prove to be the most mellow of creatures.

Author Geoffrey Platts is a friend of and a resource for the Desert Awareness Committee of the Desert Foothills Land Trust.³ He has made the Foothills desert his heart-home for the past 35 years.

Editor’s Note: The above article’s author, Geoffrey Platts, an inveterate poet, hiker, author, preservationist and gadfly, met an untimely death at age 62 in December, 2000. The cause was accidental drowning while attempting to save a companion. Thousands of people whose lives were touched by him mourned the loss. In the words of one of his many friends, Margaret Stewart, “Geoffrey Platts was the conscience of the Foothills—the person who called us to task when he saw the desert in danger. He never minced words about the environment. He always thought of Nature with a capital **N**.” To see more about Geoffrey Platts, refer to:

“There’s something about Cave Creek - It’s the People”, by Gene K. Garrison, Chapter 18 entitled Geoffrey Platts.

“TREK, man alone in the Arizona wild” by G. Platts.

³ Note: DAC now (2010) partnered with Foothills Community Foundation

