

8-20-2017

My giant sotol, which is built a lot like an agave only 50 times as wicked (I swear that if you even look at it, it will make your arms bleed), has become a rat harbor. Maybe even mice have lived in there, and we all know there was a gopher snake under there. Maybe that is where the ill-fated trio of mice who invaded the Toyota AC originally hid out. All the cats will sit next to it and just listen in poised pounce mode. The long strap leaves, armed with razor sharp hooks, grow outward and then lean down, creating a well-armed canopy for skulking vermin to hide under.

All that isn't bad enough, it is growing in tight formation under a pine tree, a giant jojoba and a sprawling chuparosa, with a dense clump of aloe plants fortifying one whole side of the mass of vegetation. So to get under all that to even get at the lower leaves of the sotol to cut them off, I have to squat/crouch/duck in as small of a ball as I can make myself while keeping a safe distance from the sotol leaves.

Whilst in this awkward, balled-up posture, extending my arms as far as I could reach, clipping sotol leaves with the loppers, I felt gradual pressure up against my rear end and back. I lowered the loppers and craned my neck around dragging along the limbs caught in my hair and saw a sight to behold! There was big ol' Cautious the cat, very comfortably snuggled lovingly up against my back, all set to take a nap where he lay. I had to laugh and strained to reach around to pet him. I suggested to him that if we moved out of the cramped quarters, I could pet him better and be more comfortable.

But he was fine with where he was and didn't budge at all, and he effectively trapped me where I was. I couldn't believe how determined he was to not move. I became a reasonably good contortionist just to step over him so that I could get untrapped and be able to straighten up. I was pretty glad that there were no snakes in there today, because I would have had a hard time explaining to them why I couldn't get out of their space.

I am nearly done with the sotol saga, and my arms provide testimony to the savageness of that plant. I almost took a photo of my arms running blood but figured someone would just ask me why I didn't wear long sleeves, and I would have to admit to being a scatterbrain that forgets such

important things especially when bent on ruining the rodent resort.

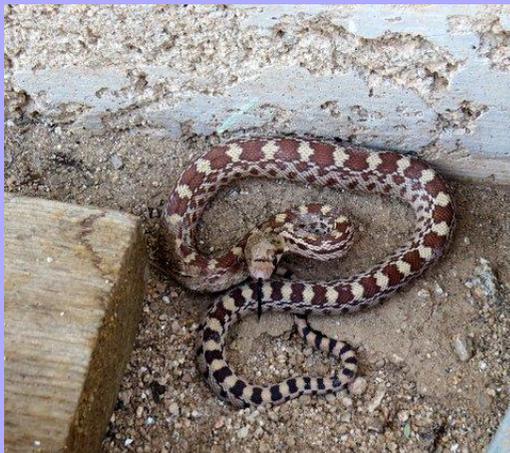
9-5-2017

Cautious the cat was in his usual place outside the north door and up against the cool concrete of the foundation of the house. I saw him suddenly get up and then heard a heck of a ruckus and a lot of what sounded like hissing. I ran to the door to see that there was a snake in his bed! I timidly opened the door to intercept Cautious, because he was bent on attacking the snake! I wasn't sure what kind it was and was pretty concerned until I saw the pointed tail with no rattles.

I still couldn't tell what it was, because it was fleeing along the wall of the house. I know that snakes around here will follow along the edge of the house or even along a fenceline, and I think it is for their own safety. The fencelines here have a lot of vegetation growing along them so the snakes are not out in the open.

I am not sure why they follow the wall of a house but I have seen it a few times.

So I suspect that, as this little fellow was following the wall, it came up against the furry heap of a cat lying against the wall and a ruckus ensued. It turns out to be a baby gopher snake and not



very big. The tile in the one photo is a foot square, so you can see that the snake is quite small but it has one heck of a hiss! Plus I got a stick and nudged it to try to get it to leave and it kept striking the stick.

Gopher snakes are irrationally aggressive! I just left it alone because Cautious has forgotten about it and is back in his cool spot. I had a baby gopher snake on the porch just a few feet from this incident earlier this summer and wonder if it might be the same snake.



9-9-2017

Big thirsty bunch all getting a drink at once.