

"Yes, I like snakes. They make clean, interesting pets. Perhaps snakes will become more popular with people when they learn more about them."



# The Girl Whose Playmates are Snakes

The Daughter of a Famous Reptile Expert, Who Was "Brought Up" With Them, and Tells Why She Likes Them Better Than She Does Cats--A Plea for the Usefulness of Snakes That Is Backed by Uncle Sam.

"When you stop to consider that in the United States there are 94 species of snakes that are non-poisonous and only 17 that are poisonous, you can see they are not as dangerous as most people think."



For Gladys Snakes Will Be Good Even While They Are Being Photographed.



Gladys Can "Wear" a Snake as Comfortably as the Ordinary Girl Could a Feather Boa.

By Nina Marbourg

DON'T you think he is really beautiful? Look at the marking. It is perfect."

The speaker was Miss Gladys Ditmars and she was singing the praises of her newest pet, a large king snake, that she held in her hand. Slowly and gracefully the snake glided up her arm, and she ran caressing fingers over the cool, glistening, firm body.

Miss Ditmars is the 14-year-old daughter of Curator Raymond Ditmars of the Bronx Zoological Gardens in New York city. Mr. Ditmars is one of the world's leading specialists on reptiles and Gladys has long evinced an interest in the serpents that have become her father's life study and work.

## The Girl with Strange Pets

In all probability there is not another young woman in the country who has such strange pets as has Miss Ditmars. Several snakes, a baby alligator and a monkey comprise her miniature Zoo. These are her private property, but, being the daughter of the curator of the reptile house, she is in a position to be on familiar terms with the many reptiles kept there in glass cases.

Recently Curator Ditmars and his family went to South Carolina to obtain new specimens for the Zoo. The main object of the trip was to secure a good sample of the diamond-back rattler, the largest and most dangerous species of reptile in the United States. It was Gladys Ditmars who carried off the honors of the expedition, for surely enough this 14-year-old miss captured just such a rattler as her father coveted. From head to tail Miss Ditmars' catch measured 10 feet.

Of this accomplishment Miss Ditmars speaks in a most matter of fact way.

"A little colored boy in the party," said Miss Ditmars, "came into the house one day and said he had seen a big snake in the berry patch. I asked him to take me to it and show it to me. He did. I saw it was a large diamond-back, and knew that was what father was after. I then went back to the house and got a box we had there, attached to a long stick. This was for the purpose of catching such a snake. When I went back to the snake he was stretched out on the ground, and he had to coil before I could get him. So I tickled him with a long stick and he coiled. Then quickly I placed the box over him, jumped on it to press it down into the earth and there left him until father came home. That was all there was to it."

Shades of Eve! "That was all there was to it!"

## Why She Likes Snakes

"Yes," continued Miss Ditmars, "I like snakes. They make clean, interesting pets. My pet monkey is cute, but he gets into all sorts of mischief. He has a decided taste for literature. His main delight is in tearing up books and trying to digest their contents. I have had dogs and cats for pets. They are companionable and you can teach them

tricks, but snakes, although they will not learn tricks, are decidedly interesting to study, and to one who becomes interested in them are very beautiful.

"Perhaps snakes will become more popular with people when more is learned about them; and when you stop to consider that in the United States there are 94 species of snakes that are

to have such pets. But I have never heard them say that they think it dreadful to have such a pet as a monkey, cat or dog, any one of which is more dangerous than a garter snake."

Perhaps through his thorough knowledge of reptiles Mr. Ditmars



Growing up with Sympathy for All Living Creatures, Gladys Naturally Is Fond of Little Alligators, Too.



Gladys at the Age of Three with a Big Snake Among Her Dolls and Other Playthings.

non-poisonous and only 17 that are poisonous you can see that they are not as dangerous as most people think. I don't believe that a small king snake, a garter or an indigo is half as dangerous a pet for a child as is a cat or dog. One never knows when a cat or dog will scratch or bite. But one does know that these little snakes will never do either one.

"I can't remember a time when I did not have a snake for a pet. You see, father has a studio at home and there he makes various experiments with reptiles. I guess I got used to seeing them about when I was a baby. Father taught me which were dangerous and which were safe, and many a time I have been in the studio with him, even when I was a very little girl, when he was working with a very poisonous snake. I was taught not to step on such a specimen nor to touch it, and also taught that these would rarely attack a person unless provoked. That is a thing many people don't know, and I think that is one reason why many are afraid. People think that a snake will make the first move for an attack, but this is not so. It is only rarely that a snake does this. In fact, they are timid.

"No, I do not think I shall ever make a serious study of reptiles or become expert in them. Snakes do not appeal to me in the way that they do to father. But I have naturally learned a great deal about them, and I like them. Many people have said they think it dreadful for a young girl

is prejudiced in their favor. He explains the liking of the average child for a snake in a very logical manner.

"Children," said Mr. Ditmars, "are not, as a rule, afraid of snakes. It is not until they have been warned of dangers that they become timid. It seems to me that in schools, especially country schools, more could well be taught about reptiles. Economically snakes are of great value to the country, for they destroy many creatures and insects that damage crops. Harmless snakes of this variety ought not to be killed, but when a boy, or an adult, is ignorant of this they kill snakes indiscriminately. Teach boys and girls the economic value of snakes, and also teach them which ones are poisonous and which are not."

## Why Children Like Snakes

"I think the reason that children like snakes is because they are active. All little ones delight in mechanical toys. A snake, to a young child, is just like a mechanical toy, only it does not have to be wound up. As Gladys has said, even when she was a little bit of a girl, she has been in the studio with me when I was experimenting with very deadly reptiles. From her earliest days she has been taught great respect for these dangerous fellows, and we have never had an accident with one."

Mr. Ditmars' suggestion that people be taught

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disagreeable when once you become accustomed to it.

Perhaps when the educational campaign regarding snakes is carried out the old horror of them will disappear. After thousands of years the virtues of the snake will be discovered and he will find his rightful place in the sun.

## Fish Dishes

FLOUNDERS, blue, weak, ling, cod or any other kind of fish must receive instant attention at the hands of the cook. Scale, cut off the heads, open and clean the inside, then dust with pepper, salt and wrap in a wet linen cloth. Place beside the ice until ready to cook.

For boiling, rinse the fish thoroughly, tie in a cloth and put on to boil in cold water, boil from 10 to 30 minutes, according to size. Serve with any fish sauce liked. For baking, wash, stuff with savory stuffing, oil all over and place in a baking pan with a cupful water and seasoning. Bake 30 to 40 minutes, according to size and weight. For broiling, rinse, oil over, put on grid-iron and cook skinned side. For frying, rinse and fry in hot fat. Dip in egg and crumbs or in batter if desired.

Normandy Fish Pie: Boil any white fish in the usual way, drain and flake it. Have ready a good cream sauce, season well and add the juice of an onion. Line a deep pieplate with good crust, turn fish and sauce into it, put on top crust and bake until the crust is done. Serve hot.

Lobster Pie: Take the meat of two cold boiled lobsters and cut it in small pieces. Make a rich Newburg sauce and put the lobster in it with a half a cupful of fried bread crumbs and a cupful of steamed soft clams. Line a deep pie dish with good paste, fill with the lobster mixture and put on the top crust. Bake until crust is done. Serve hot and save enough of the sauce to serve with the pie.

Haddock and Mussels: Lay a large slice of haddock on a buttered baking dish, cover it with a layer of boiled and bearded mussels, pour over a little rich, smooth and well seasoned tomato sauce. Lay on another slice of fish, then a layer of mussels, dot with butter, dust with pepper and a few crumbs. Turn over a little of the sauce and bake.

Roe Tartar: Put the fish roe, milt also if they are to be had, on in cold water and boil ten minutes. Drain, break up and mix in a rich cream sauce adding a little minced onion and pepper which have been sautéed in butter to cook slightly. Add a few dry crumbs and fill tartlet pans lined with good crust. Dot with butter, sprinkle with a few crumbs and a little grated cheese. Bake 15 minutes in a medium oven.