



Denise McKay developed an affinity for reptiles and amphibians as a young child, spending countless hours in her backyard catching toads, salamanders and garter snakes. Her true passion for reptiles bloomed during her preteen years when she was first introduced to Louie, her uncle's Asian Water Dragon. She vowed that when she moved out on her own, she would have her own pet lizard to love and care for. At age 22, Denise adopted her first reptile, Ozzy, a young female Iguana that had been relinquished to the SPCA Metro Shelter. At that time, there were no local resources for assistance or education so after Ozzy's untimely passing due to egg dystocia (an inability to lay her eggs), Denise was determined to learn as much as she could to help prevent this and other husbandry problems from causing illness and early demise of other reptiles and amphibians.



Now many years later, she still cares for a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians with a special interest in boa constrictors, monitor lizards and tegus. Denise is a consultant to and has fostered reptiles and amphibians for the SPCA Provincial office, Animal Services, the SPCA Metro Shelter and Canadian Wildlife Services. She is a Certified Reptile Specialist (CRS) through the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) in Ottawa, ON. She is trained as a first responder to assist with setting up shelters for family pets in disaster situations and is

secretary to the Disaster Animal Response Team of Nova Scotia (DARTNS). Denise has taken continuing education through the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), including Disaster Animal Response Training workshop in 2009 and Emergency Animal Sheltering (EAS) in 2010. She has also studied Introduction to the Incident Command System ICS 100.

As Adoption Coordinator of the Ssafe Haven Society for Reptiles and Amphibians, Denise strives to teach the public about reptile husbandry and alleviate fears through education and hands-on reptile shows. Denise has hosted reptile presentations throughout the years in schools, children's groups, churches, the Nova Scotia Hospital, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Exhibition Park, Chapters, St. Margaret Sailing Club, the Veterinary Assistant Program at Maritime Business College and Saint Mary's University. She and her team work together to organize the Halifax Reptile Expo which has become a very successful annual event. Denise has been providing rescue and rehabilitation, fostering and adoption services for reptiles and amphibians for over 20 years. The Ssafe Haven Society for Reptiles and Amphibians enables exotic species across Nova Scotia to find the good homes they deserve, as well as to provide necessary education to the public.

**Ssafe Haven Society for Reptiles and Amphibians**  
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