

## MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH SNAKES

By Sam Denny

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Since the beginning of recorded history there has been an inappropriate amount of fascination and fear associated with snakes.

Some say this started with Eve's encounter with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Others say the mystery of the creatures is the cause.

Whatever the reason, the height of the snake season seems a good time to discuss such things. As you know any injury to a person caused by a snake makes big news.

On the other hand, injuries by other means, say in an automobile, often times don't get beyond the police report.

I will not get into the statistics on the likelihood of being injured by a snake versus an automobile. What I wish to discuss is the myths that were proclaimed and believed by many of the early residents of this region.

By the terms myths, I am referring to stories, told as the truth, by people that hadn't actually seen the event but felt their information could be relied upon.

Back when every family had one or more milk cows on the farm, the story of the "milk snakes" was often told. It was believed when a cow was out grazing in the field a certain kind of snake would crawl through the grass to the cow, attach itself to an udder and suck the milk. I believe this story came from England, was probably a means of explaining the mystery of why, at times a cow didn't have any milk.

The "hoop snake" – it is said this snake would take the tip of its tail into its mouth, thus forming a hoop, then raise itself into an upright position and roll down a hill to escape an enemy.

The "spike snake" – this snake was reported to have a poisonous spike at the end of the tail. This spike was used for defense. It has been said that a good size tree could be killed when the snake missed a strike at an enemy and spiked the tree.

Being "charmed" by a snake. This was especially feared when poisonous snakes were involved. It was believed that if a person looked into the eyes of a snake it could cast a "spell" on the person, causing the person to become immobile and unable to escape the snake's attack.

Snake "feeders", snake "doctors" (dragonflies), the presents of dragonflies about the yard or garden was a sure sign that snakes were about, as it was believed the insects were seeking out the snakes in order to feed them.

The term snake doctor has somewhat reasonable origin as dragonflies will in fact gather about the body of a dead snake.

A pregnant woman should never look at a snake, it will cause the baby to be "marked". Perhaps that is what has happened to people we refer to as being "crooked as a snake."

\*Read more Sam Denny stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>