

CHRISTOPHER LLOYD, Dept of Natural Sciences & Mathematics, West Liberty University, West Liberty, WV, 26074, and ZACHARY LOUGHMAN, Dept of Natural Sciences & Mathematics, West Liberty University, West Liberty, WV, 26074, Evaluating Preference Between Sterile and Enriched Enclosures in False Water Cobras (*Hydrodynastes gigas*): A Case Study

Zoo funding is commonly directed towards charismatic megafauna within zoological institutions. Because of this, research and psychological studies on reptiles are lacking. As zoos started becoming a part of social culture, reptile houses became a part of that as well; however, the welfare of these early reptile houses significantly lacked compared to other zoo exhibitry (mammals and birds). Throughout the years more focus has been directed to the psychology and welfare of reptile/amphibian enclosure design. A common debate within this topic is if the reptile truly needs an environmentally stimulating enclosure or not.

The results from this case study suggest that environmentally enriched enclosures are preferred over sterile ones. Three of four snakes spent the majority of their time in enriched enclosures. In conclusion, the aim of this case study is to decipher if zoo funding should be directed to False water cobra (*Hydrodynastes gigas*) enclosure design based on behavioral data if required.