

THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

May 3-7, 2010



Every backyard and schoolyard in town has blind snakes. These snakes are usually less than eight inches long. Their eyes are black dots, and are unable to form an image — they only can tell the difference between light and dark. Blind snakes do not like light, and if one is found it will immediately try to burrow out of sight.

Blind snakes eat termites and ant eggs and pupae. Some blind snakes live with a species of ant (a small species of army ant that only is active at night.) The ants do not bother them, for they help keep disease out of the ant nest by eating the diseased eggs and pupae. When they travel with the ants at night, sometimes a screech owl will catch one and take it to its nest, where the snake is let go, so it can eat the nits of lice from the skin of the baby birds. More screech owl babies survive in a nest with blind snakes than a nest without the snakes.

Blind snakes are not poisonous, and their mouths are too small to bite a human. Most people see them after a rain, or the yard is well-watered, and the snakes seek higher ground so they do not drown.

TEACHER AND STUDENT CHALLENGE; If anyone finds a blind snake, please call us at 684-6827, or email us at bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org. Try to take a photograph of it, and send it to us, too!