

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

4th Annual Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council Symposium, **April 3-5, 2002**. Renaissance Hotel, Nashville, TN. Contact: www.se-eppc.org.

Association of Southeastern Biologists 63rd Annual Meeting, **April 10 – 13, 2002**. Appalachian State University, Boone, NC. Contact: www.asb.appstate.edu.

First Latin-American Short-Course on Biological Control of Weeds, **June 24-28, 2002**. Montelimar, Nicaragua. Contact: Julio.Medal@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu.

Society for Ecological Restoration 14th Annual International Conference Held Jointly with the Ecological Society of America. **August 4-9, 2002**. Tucson AZ. Contact: www.ser.org.

European Weed Research Society's 11th International Meeting on Aquatic Weeds, **September 2-6, 2002**. Moliets, France Contact: ewrs.2002@bordeaux.cemagref.fr.

2002 Natural Areas Conference, **October 2-5, 2002**. Renaissance Asheville, NC. Contact: [Jeff DeBlieu@tnc.org](mailto:Jeff.DeBlieu@tnc.org), www.natareas.org, 252-441-2525

Notes From The Disturbed Edge

Chapter 4

The kids got it — last year was history to them and tomorrow is a brand new day full of possibilities. For them it all made perfect sense. Out with the new, in with the old. The parents and teachers who stood in the back were a different story. With each new species he'd rattle off, he could see them conducting mental inventories of their yards, their neighborhoods, counting the beans, trying to calculate a bottom line, comparing the relative value of ecological restoration to the costs it could exact upon their pocketbooks, their privacy. He knew they loved their shady spots, their barriers, their trees, their blooms. Myopic with age, and territorial by nature, they found it hard to dial in the big picture. He understood, better than most, how difficult and expensive it could be to remove invasive exotics and replace them with natives. Yep, he was losing the old folks fast, but the kids were hooked in, glances darting from his boots to the backpack sprayer with its sloshing blue contents (water and marker dye only, of course, around the kideleewinks), the potted plants and, ooh, his machete. That was cool. He was a warrior on the front lines in the battle for planet earth! But she was even cooler. They could not keep their eyes off her.

She stood by his side, posing today as Our Lady of Land Stewardship (someone had once made the mistake of jokingly referring to her a "land stewardess" — once), with the centerpiece of all attention dangling around her neck — their wildly popular mascot "Big Blue", a six-foot indigo

snake. She felt like a living display case, window dressing for his slithering magnificence, but she knew that if he captured their attention, they would listen and learn. It was an OK deal.

She too saw the cynical facial ticks creeping across the countenances of the over-10 contingency. She stood and smiled, but all the while her mind was running a mile a minute. How do we reach the grown ups? How could this all come together?

The take home message was emblazoned on a banner hanging overhead: "Only YOU Can Prevent Habitat Degradation." Sure, it was a shameless rip-off, but she didn't see anybody in a bear suit coming to arrest them. He droned on for a while as Blue explored her shirt buttons, luckily decided not to lift and separate, and then it was time to go. She was coiling Blue back into his box, when she saw a little guy break free from his mother's hand and make his way across the room. It never failed — there was always a future herpetologist who asked to pet Blue, and she always felt bad telling them no.

He walked right up to her, looked her in the eye and squeaked out "Thank you Ma'am, I learned a lot." He lowered his voice, and raised his eyebrows towards his waiting mother "Don't worry — I'll convince my Mom. Last year, I got her to quit smoking." He gave a big missing tooth smile, and then spun and left, with nary a snake-ward glance. She departed the room as if walking on a cloud.

— J.A.

An excerpt from "The Adventures of Hack Garlon and his buxom sidekick Squirt."