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Texas Rattlesnake Hunters Become Most Active In Very Early Spring

Joe Scott and a fellow highway patrolman named Bill Flynt spend their work days examining citizens' qualifications for driver's licenses. For recreation they hunt rattlesnakes. Their vocation and avocation compliment each other. Riding on the non-steering side of an automobile with a driver who has admitted that he needs a road test seems to prepare them to crawl up under ledges after rattlers.

Scott says the best time to hunt snakes is on sunny days when the temperature ranges near 30 degrees. He says the snakes are easier to find in that kind of weather, as they tend to be right at the opening of their dens instead of holed up deep or out wandering around. The value of Scott's opinion on snake hunting weather of course, depends on whether you really want to find a snake or just want to look for a snake.

The kind they are catching in the picture is the western diamondback. Neither Scott nor Flynt is sure how big the western variety grows, so I looked it up in the World Book.

All the World Book said was that western diamondbacks don't like cold weather any better than humans do, and their fever runs as high as ours does. Now I wonder why the World Book didn't go on and admit that they don't know how big the snakes get instead of dodging the issue by getting off on their temperature?

Show me one man that wants to take a western diamondback's temperature and I can show you 10,000 that don't.

Every March, snake catchers have a contest in the Shortgrass Country. March does something to nearly everybody. I guess it's the high winds that make us act different.

SNAKE HUNTERS catch substantial numbers of rattlers on West Texas ranches every spring, and onlookers say more power to 'em. In this picture by Monte Noelke a pair of San Angelo highway patrolmen, Joe Scott and Bill Flynt, jerk a diamondback from its winter hibernation place on the Noelke ranch.