

Our recent camping trip turned out to be more interesting than I had expected. My family and I drove up to a remote forest area near Lake Chelan. There were no houses nearby, and only a few signs of human life(1). We set up our campsite next to a dirt path, overlooking a spectacular view of some distant mountains. It is very dry this time of year, but there are enough trees to offer some welcome shade(2). We rode our dirt bikes, built a campfire, the boys did some target practice with their BB guns, and we generally relaxed and explored. Some friends also joined us, one of whom is a hunter, and a bit of an animal expert. When he arrived, before he even said, "Hello," he presented us with a snake that he had just found on the property. "It's a kind of Boa," he explained. We all leaned forward to have a better look. It was small and green, and seemed to be a very gentle creature. It doesn't eat, bite, or sting humans, so I was quite happy to hold it. My daughter, who is an animal lover, borrowed it for quite a few hours. It curled around her hands, wrists, shoulders, and even her neck. I think it appreciated her warmth(3). The snake is now in a very nice terrarium back at the house where it is being thoroughly spoiled, and is growing longer and fatter.

1. 'Only a few signs of human life,' shows how remote the place was where we were camping. 'A sign of/ a few signs of' is an effective way of expressing the lack of impact of humans. It can also be used with many other subjects. It is similar to using the expression 'traces of'.

a. As we walked through the forest, we could only see a few signs of the fire that had happened five years ago.

b. There were signs of animal activity in our garden: bear tracks and claw marks on the trees!

2. 'Welcome' is used as an adjective in the context of something

being appreciated, a help, or a relief.

a. At the end of my marathon, I was offered some cold water. It was truly a welcome drink.

b. The old men meet at the coffee shop where they have a welcome conversation.

3. The verb 'to appreciate' can be added into conversation easily and effectively to show fluency.

a. Thanks for helping me with the paperwork; I really appreciate it!

b. I appreciate how you listen so well.