



# THE MONITOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the  
Conservation of all reptiles and amphibians

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## President's Message

Ed Ferrer

This has been a busy month for me. I have met Jeff Corwin and participated in a herpetology symposium in Detroit, Michigan. It was great to meet other people who were interested in reptiles and amphibians and gain some insights from talking with them. I would encourage any members who would like to learn more about herpetology to seek out similar opportunities. In the near future there is the Herpetology Weekend in Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, Kentucky on April 21-22. I plan on attending as are several other club members. There is also a herpetology symposium in Southern Ohio in May. Wendell Zetterberg and I visited the zoos in Detroit and Toledo. Wendell took a lot of photos of the herp displays in both zoos and I imagine there will be more on those visits in the April issue of the Monitor. Thanks to Mr. Scott Shupe for his presentation last month on venomous snakes and their mimics.

We are still putting together details of our Midwest Herpetological Symposium. We have set very ambitious goals for this event. We could always use assistance in this endeavor. Be thinking about articles you can contribute to our auction and we could always use donations and sponsors.

I'm looking forward to hearing Dr. Michael Finkler's presentation on snapping turtles and their survival rates and conservation issues at our March general meeting on Wed. March 15th. I hope to see all of you on the "Ides of March!" See you there!

***Herpetology Weekend April 21st – 22nd***

***Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, Kentucky***

Learn about nature's most misunderstood critters! Experienced herpetologists will lead field trips in to the Red River Gorge to observe reptiles and amphibians in their native habitat. Collection is prohibited. Demonstrations will include live venomous snakes! Evening presentations will focus on reptile and amphibian conversation. Registration fee is \$5 per adult and \$2 per child.

***WELCOME NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS!!!***

***New***

Griffin Lunt - Camby, IN

Charles Dobbs – Muncie, IN

Toby Barker – Indpls, IN

***Renewals***

Carl Schwartz, DVM – Indpls, IN

## SYMPOSIUM FUNDS NEEDED

Hoosier Herp members may or may not know we are hosting the Midwest Herp Symposium Nov. 3-5. As all things in America, we need assets to fund this project. The club is seeking contributions from you, your friends and relatives, or your employers. We are a 501C organization, so all contributions are tax deductible. Employers will be listed on all literature as event sponsors for advertising purposes. If not cash, then we could use donations of items for the auction. All your help will be greatly appreciated for this informative event.

If any fellow out of state corresponding clubs read this, and have hosted the symposium in the past, your suggestions for acquiring funds will be greatly appreciated. My e-mail is [turtlelonin@comcast.net](mailto:turtlelonin@comcast.net),

The majority of the funds will be used for advertising, speaker expenses[ i.e. travel, fees, food, and lodging], rentals, parking and food for receptions, etc..

Respectfully Dave Mitchell

**March Meeting: Wednesday, March 15th, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Finlker, I.U. @ Kokomo**  
**Butler University, Gallahue Center, room#108**  
**Topic: Snapping Turtles Survival Issues**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to have Dr. Michael Finkler as this month's guest speaker. He is an Associate Professor of Biology at I.U.-Kokomo. His B.S. degree is from Kalamazoo College in Michigan and both his M.S. and Ph. D. degrees are from Miami University (Ohio). He has conducted field-based research in Ohio, Michigan, Ohio and Nebraska on such topics as frogs (spring peepers and chorus), salamanders (spotted, tiger, smallmouth, and jefferson-blue spotted hybrids), snakes (Northern water snakes, eastern garter snakes, and queensnakes) and turtles(snapping and ornate box turtles).

His presentation will focus on his research on snapping turtles egg laying, hatchlings and their survival rates. He will also discuss conservation issues that effect snapping turtles as well as other turtles. Be sure not to miss this power point presentation so we can better understand one of Indiana's better known reptiles. See you there!



wood frog *Rana sylvatica*



redback salamanders *Plethodon cinereus*

# Frogwatch USA Workshop

By Wendell Zetterberg

In February, twenty new volunteers joined together to learn more about the Frogwatch USA program and to help the declining populations of frogs and toads in Central Indiana. HHS members attending the workshop included Rick Marrs, Barry Hammer, and Peggy and Taylor Zetterberg. In Frogwatch USA, you pick a wetland that you would like to monitor and enter what you hear into a national database. Data from Frogwatch USA as well as from INAMP (Indiana Amphibian Monitoring Program) has already found that the status of the Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*) is better than previously thought. Wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*), spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) and chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata*) will begin calling anytime now. Many salamanders have already begun their breeding season. It is a great time to watch and listen to these amazing herps. Why not record your data while you are out and help scientists keep track of the status in Indiana. For more information about Frogwatch USA go to: <http://www.nwf.org/frogwatchUSA/> or contact me at [wzetterberg@hotmail.com](mailto:wzetterberg@hotmail.com)

## Michigan Herpetological Symposium

by Ed Ferrer and Wendell Zetterberg

Wendell Zetterberg and I attended the first annual Michigan Herpetological Symposium on Saturday, March 4th.

This event was hosted by the Detroit Zoo and held in the new Ford Education Center in a room called the "Wet Place" (a place decorated with leaves and paintings that make it look like a wetlands area).

After the opening remarks by Bill Flanagan, Andy Snider and Kim Sneden, we listened to many presentations featuring studies about the herptofauna of Michigan. Among the morning topics discussed were "The relationship between water chemistry and mink frog abundance, research of the rare herps of Michigan, the herps of Beaver Island, herp inventory of Fort Custer and wood turtles. J. Alan Holman gave a humorous and sometimes hilarious account of famous herpetologists of Michigan's past. During the lunch break we were led on a behind the scenes tour of the Reptile House by Andy Snider and then a similar tour of the new Amphibian House by Bill Flanagan. It is important to realize that the Detroit Zoo, like many zoos throughout the country, are active in conservation studies and breeding endangered species besides maintaining exhibits and education programs. Hopefully these efforts will effect the public so that they may obtain a true appreciation for wonders of nature.

During the afternoon sessions we learned about cricket frogs of Michigan, the diversity of the herptofauna in Southeastern Michigan's urban ecosystems, the Eastern massasaugas' status in Michigan, painted turtles of Beaver Island, amphibian communities studies, and blue-spotted salamanders and hybrids. We went away with a renewed appreciation of all the dedication and effort that goes into field work and we hope that these endeavors will have a positive influence on nature. It was great to meet and talk with other people who were interested and informed about the reptiles and amphibians of the Midwest. I got to meet Jim Harding from Michigan State and J. Alan Holman shared experiences he remembered with Sherman Minton who was one of my mentors. As the symposium ended there was hope that this would be the first of what would become an annual event in Detroit. It also made us more excited about the Midwest Herpetology Symposium in November 3-5, 2006. We passed out some flyers and seemed to get positive responses from those who attended this meeting.

# Jeff Corwin Visits Indy

by Ed Ferrer and Elliott Stahl

Herp member Elliott Stahl e:mailed me to inform me that Jeff Corwin was going to appear at the Half Price Book Store in Greenwood from 1:00-3:00 to sign autographs and meet people. We immediately made plans to attend. I then went to the book store earlier in the week and asked about the possibility of interviewing Jeff for our herp society. I then called the Half Price Book Store's public relations manager who put me in touch with Becky Gomez, promotions manager. Over the telephone she agreed that we could have a short interview with Jeff after his two hour visit.

So Saturday, February 18th, Elliott, his father Dave and brother Tristen and I arrived at Half Price Book Store at 12:30. We were surprised to find out that the store was already overflowing with people. They had made up 400 numbered wrist bands as a way of organizing the procedure to usher the public to see Jeff. Those were all passed out by about 10:30! There was easily 800 people who had come from all over for the chance to meet Jeff. I talked to some people who came from Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan as well as all over Indiana. It just illustrates how popular Jeff Corwin is and his tremendous influence on today's youth. Jeff Corwin currently is serving as the spokesperson for this year's Half Pint Library book drive. This program encourages families to donate new or gently used books to this drive which distributes them to libraries in hospitals, special needs schools and community centers across the nation. Riley Hospital for Children benefits from books collected in this area. Jeff made a brief announcement that over 10,000 books had already been collected and then the star of Animal Planet's "Corwin's Quest" settled down at a table and began meeting people and autographing books, posters or other items. We filtered through the line and gave him a copy of our Monitor newsletter and a hat. Surprisingly everyone got through to meet Jeff by 3:00 and he was ushered into a back room. Becky Gomez kept her promise and we were allowed to ask Jeff a few questions. The following is a paraphrased account of our conversation.

H.H.: "Everyone asks you how you got started that led to you being a famous T.V. personality and author?"

Jeff: "I always was exploring as a kid and my favorite animals were always snakes. One thing led to another here I am."

H.H.S: "What advice would you give kids who are interested in herpetology?"

Jeff: "Besides staying in school, I would encourage them to explore and work on making observations in nature.

That way they will gain an appreciation and respect for nature. I would also encourage them to find out what conservation projects are being conducted and if possible get involved in those projects."

H.H.S: "What was your most dangerous encounter in your adventures"?

Jeff: "Although working on the Animal Planet's projects is somewhat dangerous, the most danger I have experienced has been the threat from people. Many of the countries we visit have political unrest and there always is the possibility of violence of some kind".

H.H.S: "Have you ever been envenomated by any of the snakes during your work?"

Jeff: "I have only been bitten once by a venomous snake. That was a coral snake and it luckily wasn't too serious of a strike."

H.H.S: " Do you personally keep any herp species?"

Jeff: "No, I don't. I'm not a big fan of collecting exotic species. I think it is better to just explore and see them in nature."

H.H.S. "Are there any future projects we should anticipate from you?"

Jeff: "Besides new adventures of Corwin's Quest, we are going to have a series that is tentatively entitled Reptiles Ripple Effect and it will focus on how important reptiles are in the ecosystem".

H.H.S. "Do you have a favorite location to explore for herps?"

Jeff: "That is easy. Arizona is my favorite place to go herping".

H.H.S. "I know you must be exhausted from the day's activities. Thank you very much

for taking time out to talk with us."

Jeff: "No problem. Glad to be able to do it"

He then posed for a couple of photos with us. We certainly wish him continued success in all his future projects. He is truly a nice young man and a great ambassador for wildlife and conservation. We want to thank Half Price Books and the Animal Planet for their cooperation in making this interview possible.

## Editor's Corner

Jim Horton

It's that time again! Time for Indiana amphibians to emerge from their seasonal confines and begin to seek a mate. As of press time, we are receiving a good steady downpour and the temps are warming. Those two ingredients are what wake up the bulk of our winter breeding frogs and salamanders. It only happens once a year and when they are done—they're done. This is always an exiting time for local herpers because it gives them (us) a chance to get in some of the first field herping of the year.



spotted salamander  
*Ambystoma maculatum*

The first amphibians to reach the woodland ponds are usually the Jefferson's salamanders *Ambystoma jeffersonianum*, and wood frogs *Rana sylvatica*, followed by spring peepers *Pseudacris crucifer* and spotted salamanders *Ambystoma maculatum*. Other ponds will host small mouth salamanders *Ambystoma texanum*. Soon the Chorus frogs *Pseudacris t.triseriata*, Crawfish frogs *Rana areolata*, and tiger salamanders *Ambystoma tigriniim* will make their way to water sources. It is also one the first true signs of spring! So don't hesitate to get out the rubber boots, camera, net, and flashlights for a great chance to see one of Mother Nature's finest annual events in action!

## HERP HAPPENINGS

**March 15, 2006 General Meeting – Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Finlker, I.U. @ Kokomo. Topic: *Snapping Turtles Survival Issues.***

**March 19, 2006 – Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Southwest Pavilion, Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis. \$5.00 admission, reptiles, amphibians, books, cages, feeder animals, and other supplies. Sell your herps and dry goods free of charge at our H.H.S. info. table. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)**

**April 21-22, 2006 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge Park, Slade, KY. Programs, talks, field trips, Kentucky Reptile Zoo.**

**June 10-11, 2006 – Reptile Invasion, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, Evansville, IN A very popular event that includes programs and live animals. HHS members display their herps. One of our largest fundraisers!**

**July 14-16, 2006 – Reptile Weekend, Indiana State Museum, Indpls, IN**

**November 3-5, 2006 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Indianapolis, Indiana**

## **Pesticide use threatens frogs, study says**

Amphibians fell ill because chemicals suppressed immune systems, researchers say

Source – Indianapolis Star 2/19/06

February 19, 2006

**By Marla Cone**

Los Angeles Times

Frogs exposed to a mix of pesticides at extremely low concentrations, such as those widely found around farms, suffer deadly infections, suggesting that the chemicals could be a major culprit in the global disappearance of amphibians, University of California-Berkeley scientists have reported.

When tadpoles were exposed in laboratory experiments to each pesticide individually, only 4 percent died before they became frogs. But when atrazine and eight other pesticides were mixed to replicate a Nebraska cornfield, 35 percent died.

The frogs developed an array of health problems, including meningitis, because the chemicals suppressed their immune systems. They also took longer to complete the transformation from tadpole to frog.

At least one-third of amphibians worldwide, or 1,856 of the known species of frogs, toads, salamanders and caecilians, are in danger of extinction, according to an international group of conservation biologists.

"We demonstrated that a realistic pesticides mixture (based on a mixture applied to an actual field) at low, ecologically relevant concentrations can have dramatic effects on amphibian development and growth and ultimately, we predict, survivorship," said Tyrone Hayes, a professor at the university's Department of Integrative Biology.

Hayes and his colleagues reported in the online version of the scientific journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

"Given these adverse effects and the continued increase and use of pesticides in agriculture over the past 50 years, it is likely that pesticides have played and will continue to play a role in amphibian declines," they wrote.

Three years ago, Hayes triggered a controversy after reporting that the herbicide atrazine, used in large volumes in the United States, primarily on corn, feminizes frogs by mimicking estrogen.

Syngenta, the manufacturer of atrazine, has criticized Hayes' previous work, saying its research has been unable to replicate his findings.

Hayes, who formerly worked for a consulting company hired by Syngenta, has said the company pressures researchers to hide results that link atrazine to ecological effects, which the company denies.

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The Hoosier Herpetological Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the conservation of all reptiles and amphibians. General monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room 105 or 108. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**

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