



# 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

Jim Horton

I would like to thank all of our members who exhibited their animals at the Indiana State Museum's *Reptile Days*. It was a big hit for the Museum and it provided good exposure for the H.H.S. Our club participation was slim on Saturday but we brought enough animals to fill the tables. Sunday was crowded with H.H.S. members showing animals and their knowledge of herpetology.

A big thanks ZooMed for their kind contribution to the H.H.S. on Sunday at the ISM. They gave us a box of ZooMed "goodies" for our monthly raffle. The donation will help our fundraising raffle tremendously.

Our speaker for July, Mr. Mark Jordan (I.U.P.U.I. Fort Wayne) intrigued us with his findings at the Galapagos Islands. His focus on Lava Lizards informed us that the females have red heads during breeding season. These lizards occurrence on the three sections of the island of his study was particularly interesting.

We also learned about feral animals such as goats and their impact on the demise of the native life on the Islands. I learned that Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets are natives of the Galapagos Islands (who knew?).

The H.H.S. also is thankful for the members who donated their time exhibiting animals at the Johnson County Library. The library staff appreciated our large assortment of native Indiana and exotic herps.

We are starting a new column in the Monitor called *Embarrassing Moments in Herping*. If you would like to contribute, please do. We've all had them so please think of one of your more memorable mishaps, spills (excrement), escapees, bites, (etc). and send them in. Mike Wood is kicking off the first "Embarrassing Moment".

If you like impressive photography and field herping, then you'll want to be at the next H.H.S. meeting at Gallahue Hall. Mike Pingleton will present "*Field Herping Experiences*".

## **WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED H.H.S. MEMBERS!**

### **New**

Todd Russell  
Katherine Toon  
Andrew Hoffman  
Robert Hansen  
Faith and Don Trumpower  
Josh Ezell

### **Renewals**

Clint Bartley  
Angie and Scott Felty  
Ernie Lanier  
Shawn Miller  
D.J. Mosley  
Brandon and Amy Osborn  
Junius Sneed

## **HELPFUL HERP HINTS**

### ***L'eau de Frog, the secret to life***

Amy Baird

Ok, I may be stretching it a bit to say that frog water is the secret to life, but, it could be if you are a starving baby snake. Despite the best efforts of offering; live, brained, and even “gecko mummied” (pinkies shrouded in skin shed by geckos) pinkies, three juvenile tricolor hognose snakes resisted eating on their own. They were tube fed weekly with a high calorie cat/dog food called a/d made by Hill’s Science Diet (available by prescription from your veterinarian). Although these snakes were not failing in health they still had yet to thrive. It was the generosity of the Zetterberg’s which was to change their luck. After the show-and-tell herp meeting, I asked the Zetterberg’s for some water which had been occupied by their bullfrog. This water was used to scent pinkie mice. This was the technique used; step 1 – thaw pinkie, step 2 – wash pinkie with mild soap and rinse well, step 3 – soak pinkie in frog water, step 4 – offer to snake, step 5 – be happy as you watch snake eat on its own!

(If you have a remedy or an idea that works for you, please submit it and let your peers know.)

## **HHS website is looking for your help**

HHS Website Coordinator, Richard Searcey, will soon be updating our website to include information on the amphibians and reptiles of Indiana. A short bio and photo will accompany each Indiana herp. We would like our members to participate in this project. We need pictures of Indiana amphibians and reptiles. Please send them to my home email [Stardali84@hotmail.com](mailto:Stardali84@hotmail.com)

## **Herpetology Greats**

Thomas Barbour (1884-1946)

Most known for his work at Harvard University as Director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology. His career also embraced travel and collecting and writing (nearly four hundred publications), including: *Check List of North American Amphibians and Reptiles*, with Leonhard Stejneger (1917), *Naturalists at Large* (1943), and *A Naturalist in Cuba* (1945).

# EMBARRASSING MOMENTS IN HERPING

Mike Wood

About 10 years ago my friend Don Robinson and me were coming back from a Columbus Ohio reptile show.

I was driving along and looked back in my mirror and an Ohio state trooper had the lights on me. After pulling over I was gathering my license and registration and didn't pay much attention to the officer approaching my truck.

The officer ask me if I new why they had pulled me over and I said " no sir", that was my first mistake, the *sir* was a masculine lady. Then she asked what was in the styro, Don answered and told her the truth, it was a snake he had bought at a show. Needless to say she didn't believe him and ask to open the styro, Don proceeded to be honest and say it was a 6-foot Burm meaner that a junk yard dog. But...She ask to look inside, after several polite warnings buy us not to open it, she just had to do her job.

The styro was outside by the truck and when she opened it the Burm started moving around in the snake bag, yep you got it, she wouldn't listen and opened the bag.

Out comes this Burm, nailed her on the wrist and started wrapping around her arm, so along side the road people driving by can see all this, what a sight!

Finally we got it off her but she was fuming mad !

I drove away with a speeding ticket for going 4 mph over the posted limit, and Don received a stern letter from the Ohio state police.....not because of the snake, but because he was laughing so hard at her with the snake on her arm.

Dons parting words were" Miss if ya don't listen, your going to feel." And feel she did!

## The Perfect Night of Road Cruising

By, Elliot Stahl

(All photos by Elliot Stahl)

On Friday August 3, Dave Stahl and I left home a little before 8 o'clock, and headed south towards Morgan Monroe State Forestry. We arrived just before dark and quickly began road cruising about a 5-mile stretch of blacktop road that follows a forest ridge top. The night air was very hot, and the road was warm. We did a couple laps before we found are first snake. I jumped out of the car and found it to be a beautiful adult eastern milk snake. It posed for some photos on the road, and then we placed it in the woods. A short distance down the road we spotted an adult copperhead lying on the road. We took a few photos of him as well before making sure he got safely off the road. We then turned around and on the next lap we found two eastern garter snakes not far from each other, both young only about 6 inches long. The next snake we found was an adult Midwest worm snake. I took some photos of him on the road, and then returned it to the forest. On our next lap we caught a Northern Brown snake, and quickly moved him off the road. Then we unfortunately found a DOR black racer, and I quickly moved it off the road. A short ways down the road we came around a corner to a strait away and were amazed to see the large body of a beautiful timber rattlesnake stretched out across the road in front of us. I got out of the car quickly and made sure that the cars that were right behind us did not hit the large snake that was about 3 feet long. Once the cars had passed I retrieved my camera from the car. The snake cooperated, and posed for some photographs. The docile animal never grew aggressive either as we took numerous photos of it. Then we made sure it got safely off of the road. We then headed home after a great night of road cruising.



Timber Rattlesnake *Crotalus horridus*



Midwest Worm Snake  
*Carphophis amoenus helenae*



Northern Copperhead  
*Agkistrodon contortrix*

**General Meeting: Wednesday August 15th, 7:30 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Mike Pingleton**

**Topic: Field Herping Experiences**

**Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#102**

Our guest speaker for August is Mike Pingleton from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Central Illinois Herp Society.

Mike has been involved in field herpetology and herpetoculture for over 30 years. His field experiences have taken him to many interesting locations across the United States, and these trips are documented in his on-line journals. Over the years Mike has raised and bred many species of snakes, lizards, tortoises and frogs. Mike is the author of a book on Redfoot Tortoises and serves as a trustee for the World Chelonian Trust.

He is currently working on a new book about his field herping experiences and his power point program promises to be a "best of" account of his many field activities. Anyone who has been involved in the 'herp hobby is familiar with Mike's experience in the field and if you attended the Friday evening social at last November's Midwest Herp Symposium you will remember his fascinating slide show he presented to the attendees. **This will be a "can't miss" presentation so make every effort to attend. See you there!**

### **A LETTER FROM THE INDIANA STATE MUSEUM**

Dear Members of the Hoosier Herp Society:

The Indiana State Museum staff would like to extend our gratitude for your participation in Reptile Days on Saturday, July 14 & 15, 2007

The collaboration of a variety of organizations helped create a dynamic learning environment for over 1,100 museum visitors over the weekend. With your help we were able to educate and entertain visitors on conservation of both exotic and native reptile, proper care and handling techniques, legislation protecting herps as well as easing the public's fears of these animals.

Thank you again for helping to make the Indiana State Museum's Reptile Days a success. We hope you enjoyed the event and we look forward to your participation on future endeavors, and hope to see you at the 1<sup>st</sup> Reptile Day School Festival on March 14, 2008

Sincerely,

Dave W. Fox

### **HERP HAPPENINGS**

**August 15, 2007** – General Meeting, Guest Speaker, Mr. Mike Pingleton, Topic – *Field Herping Experiences*.

**August 26, 2007** - 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. information booth. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)

**September 6-8** – Midwest Partners in Amphibian & Reptile Conservation (PARC) at the Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning Center. <http://www.duneslearningcenter.org/contact.html>

**November 3-5** – Indiana Pet Expo, Indiana state fairgrounds, Indianapolis.

**November 10-11, 2007** – 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Des Moines, Iowa.  
[www.iaherp.org](http://www.iaherp.org)

# Scientists Are Aiding Timber Rattlesnakes

Adapted from a news release issued by Purdue University 7/26/07

(Submitted by Dave Mitchell)

The much-maligned and endangered timber rattlesnake may have a future in Indiana, thanks to Purdue veterinary medicine, forestry and natural resources researchers working with the state's Department of Natural Resources on a project to track the snakes.

The researchers are supporting the biological diversity of wildlife in Indiana by helping to stop the disappearance of the snake from the state, said Purdue veterinarian Steve Thompson. Once found in abundance in woods and hills of Indiana, researchers now have a hard time finding them.

"More timber rattlesnakes have been killed by people than people have been killed by timber rattlesnakes," Thompson said. "We both have our place in the ecosystem. In addition, if an animal becomes extinct, we will never know the uses we might have found for it. There's medical research being done now using other reptile venom for treatment of diseases such as diabetes. If the timber rattlesnake disappears, we can't anticipate what predator will fill its niche, overpopulate in their absence or if better understanding could provide an opportunity to help other species, pets or humans."

The snake measures 3-5 feet long and can be identified by its characteristic rattle and the presence of dark bands running across its back. There are about 34 snake species in Indiana, four of which are venomous, including the timber rattlesnake, northern copperhead, cottonmouth and massasauga rattlesnake. Both of the rattlesnakes that are found in Indiana are endangered species and if found should be left alone, according to a state advisory.

Timber rattlesnakes can be slow to defend themselves and ordinarily avoid confrontation, Thompson said. The snake can live to be 20 years old but is endangered largely because of habitat loss and human persecution.

Thompson is implanting radio transistors in the snakes so the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Purdue biologists can monitor movement and hibernation.

The project calls for eight snakes from the wild to be implanted with the transistors every year for three to five years. Teams search the snake's southern Indiana habitat three times a week and bring them into a lab to implant the device, which is about the size of an AA battery.

From a large brown sack, the snake is placed in a clear, 3-foot-long tube that circulates the general anesthesia while protecting the head during the surgery. Thompson inserts the transmitter at the end of the snake near the rattle, then closes the incision with sutures and tissue glue. The snake is then released in the same location where it was found.

"Pain management is included during and after the surgery so activity levels have been observed to be absolutely normal after the surgery," Thompson said. "The snakes eat, shed their skin and move about regularly."

Radio telemetry allows researchers to determine the location of the hard-to-find animals while they also learn more about the amount of territory each snake utilizes. Researchers are measuring baseline data over a two-year period to determine where and how the rattlesnakes live, said Brian MacGowan, Extension wildlife specialist in forestry at Purdue who is based in Brookville, Ind.

"We can determine if snakes avoid areas where trees are being harvested or logged, or if they use them more frequently than expected," MacGowan said. "By finding the exact location of each snake, we can also measure vegetation and climate variables to see what specific habitat needs they require. All of this information down the road will help us prescribe forest management plans that will benefit this species."

The rattlesnake project is a small part of a large project among the Department of Natural Resources, Purdue and other universities called the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment. The purpose of this project is to determine the ecological and social impacts of long-term forest management on public and private lands in Indiana and the central hardwoods region.

The Indiana Division of Forestry and Purdue University Department of Forestry and Natural Resources provided funding for the project. MacGowan said a Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment Web site would be available later this year.

MacGowan also is overseeing a portion of the project on box turtles with Zack Walker from the Department of Natural Resources. Other researchers from Purdue, Indiana State University, Ball State University and Drake University are involved to study small mammals, bats, songbirds, cerulean warblers and salamanders. Similar projects in the past helped repopulate Indiana's river otters, peregrine falcons and bald eagles.

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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.**

### **2007 OFFICERS**

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Suggestions and articles for *The Monitor* are welcome. Submit your typed or legibly hand written articles by the first Wednesday of each month to: PO. Box 40544, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0544 or 7712 Miracle road, Indianapolis, IN, 46237. Articles on PC or compatible, formatted, 3½ disks are accepted. To have your disk returned, you must provide a self addressed, stamped envelope within your mailing to us. Back issues of *The Monitor* are available. Send requests to our PO. Box, or contact Holly Carter. Quarterly Advertisement Rates for publishing your ad in *The Monitor* are: ¼ Page - \$10.00; ½ Page - \$15.00; and Full Page - \$25.00. Classified Ads are free to all paid H.H.S. members and will be printed for two months. All ads must be submitted in writing to the Editor by the first Wednesday of each month. All artwork is copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without written permission from the artist.