



THE MONITOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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President's Message

Jim Horton

I would like to thank our members and Board members for their hard work last year. Especially the Board members who have attend every meeting and committed their time to special projects. I look forward to working (and playing) with everyone in the coming year!

Lets also ring in the New Year by becoming involved with our Hoosier Herpetological Society! There will be many chances to join other members with educational exhibits, field trips, and other activities. Also, please give your input and ideas concerning the HHS. If there is something you'd like the club to do or not do in the future, please let us know. All it takes is a phone call or an email.

I'd also like to request that our members get out in the field and observe, take photographs, and record notes of the amphibian/reptilian action that your encounter. Any Information is important and valuable. Be sure to include where, how many, and the climatic conditions of the herps that you encounter.

I've written a review of the 23rd Symposium in Des Moines, IA. our first edition of an HHS member spotlight starts in this issue.

We are scheduled for Room 105 at Butler for the Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., and May meetings.

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

Renewals

Alan Resetar, Valpariso

Stacey Simison, Fortville, (Sustaining Membership)

Petstuff, Inc. Larenceburg, (Sustaining membership)

General Meeting: Wednesday January 16th, 7:30 P.M.

Annual Photo Contest

Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#105

It is time for our annual photo contest! Bring your best photos (8x11 size) and compete for prizes! It is a great way to see what other members have been doing this past year. Come and share your experiences and you might be lucky enough to go home with one of the prizes! See you there!

Annual Photography Contest

The Annual Photography Contest will be this month.

Bring in your best, your favorite, and your most original shots in print format!



Entry fee is one dollar per print. Enter as many times as you like. Entries must pertain to herpetology. Judging will be from your peers, (the audience). Prizes to be announced at the General Meeting.

HHS to Hold Photography Exhibit

The Zion Nature Center in Zionsville, Indiana has invited Hoosier Herp Society members to exhibit their best photographic work.

The exhibit will start off with an open house on Friday evening February 8 and the exhibit will last for two months.

The Rules:

Native Indiana amphibians and reptiles only.

Limited to three entries.

Any size welcome but prints should be matted and framed.

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT: "A PORTRAIT OF INDIANA REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS"

The Hoosier Herpetological Society photography from the field is on display at the Zion Nature Center. Many HHS members are accomplished photographers who trek Indiana wilderness in search of native reptiles and amphibians. View photographs of the amazing animals of Indiana's forests, prairies, hillsides, swamps, caves, and waterways. The photography exhibit is on display from February 8 through April 6, 2008.

23rd Midwest Herpetological Symposium – In Review

Jim Horton

The 23rd Midwest Symposium in Des Moines, Iowa was a great success! Hosted by the Iowa Herp Society, and sponsored in cooperation with Reptiles magazine, the symposium sailed from a smooth start to a fine finish. The *herp friendly* Holiday Inn graciously welcomed symposium attendees for the weekend. The location was conveniently off the highway and near many dining establishments. We had, breakfast, lunch and dinner at Bennigans, which is also conveniently connected to the hotel.

It was good to see the friendly and familiar faces that accompany each symposium. At the registration, I was happy to meet Mr. Dave Barker of VPI Pythons. He is a really down-to-earth guy who was quite amicable towards me, a total stranger.

The Friday evening Icebreaker featured a cash bar, free beer, and a nice spread of hors'de ou vours, compliments of Reptiles Magazine.

The guest speaker for the evening was **Jeff LeClere** (Minnesota Herp Society). Jeff's presentation was "Is This Herp Heaven? No, It's Iowa".

His talk covered all corners of the corn-laden state. He explained that almost the entire original prairie has diminished from Iowa due to its agriculture industry. Many of the herps found in Iowa are located in fragmented ecosystems and are quite rare. He covered the Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Special Concern animals that are protected by the state of Iowa.

After the Icebreaker presentation, many attendees combed through the awesome collection of herpetological books for sale by Zoo Book's, Eric Thiss. I purchased a few myself. A nice display of some of the Iowa's native amphibians and reptilians was available for viewing and photography as well.

A hospitality room was open in a suite on floor five. It is sort of an after the icebreaker, *ice breaker*, if you will. Dozens of pizzas, munchies, and homemade deserts were available to symposium patrons. Pop, water and beer was ready for consuming in the backroom for adults.

We left for our room around 12:45 and the Hospitality room was still crowded and loud (herpers like to party).

The next morning was the main portion of the symposium – the talks.

The first speaker of the day was **Alyse DeVries** (lead keeper of amphibians/reptiles at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo). Her talk covered artificial insemination of snakes and crocodiles. They fed the male crocs meatballs while semen was being collected. It took place on land which was easier on the handlers. They successfully hatch corn snakes through artificial insemination. A removal of semen was successful in all species of snakes that they worked with. The Zoo's "ultimate" goal is to work with Jamaican boas.

Don Soderberg (South Mountain Reptiles) spoke was up next. Don has been working with corns since the 70's and has bred thousands. His photography was outstanding! We were taken through a PowerPoint of hundreds of corn snake morphs. An array of colors and patterns have been bred over the years and more are coming to a breeder near you. The names for the new morphs are comical to me... sunglow motley, bloodred hypo motley, zagteck, pied-sided, etc. I liked his quote, "Corn snakes are the guppies of the snake world".

Jeff Parmelee (Simson College) and **Dan Fogell** (Southeast Community College, Lincoln, Nebraska) shared a talk on Iowa's pit vipers. Jeff worked with timber rattlers and copperheads. He found that Iowa copperheads fed mostly on meadow voles. They breed every other year, the young stay associated after birth, and the females can store sperm for the next year. He informed us that copperheads are rare in Iowa.

The timbers occur rather spotty in Iowa but nevertheless, they did capture several in grassland areas where there was a high number of rodents. They used radio tracking on about 25 specimens. Other tracking methods utilized were drop buckets and drift fences. He also noted that the females are able to store sperm into the next breeding season. He found that the young followed the mother 50% of the time during a controlled test.

Dan Fogal worked with prairie rattlesnakes and found that there are an estimated 90-100 adults in the most populated area of the study. Prairies have a biennial reproductive cycle which aids in some decline of this species. They found the average litter size to be eight young. Mating takes place from August to September. Females are gravid upon emergence from hibernacula in spring.

Massasaugas emerge from hibernation dens in mid-March in the state of Iowa (ant mounds were found to be utilized as hibernacula). There are two breeding seasons utilized for these snakes – early spring and again in

autumn. Massasaugas are found east near the Mississippi river and west along the Missouri river basin. Blood results to reveal if two subspecies occur in the state.

Garrick DeMeyer, a leading breeder of leopard and crested geckos, presented a colorful display of slides that brought us into the world of *designer* geckos. He produces anywhere from 3 – 4,000 leopard geckos annually. He uses rack systems and Post-it Notes for records. They feed on a diet of mealworms and nothing else (due to the many problems with maintaining crickets).

Again, with designer herps you get fancy names such as, Raptor, Blazing Blizz, Midnight Bliz-Banana Blizzards, and Diablo Blanco... to name a few. He stated that the first leopard gecko albino morphs hit the market in the year 2000.

His work with Fat-tail geckos isn't as widespread in his collection as he would like. But he is making strides on them but they aren't as hardy and don't readily breed as the leopards. The albino fat-tails that he showed were very beautiful (I think they are similar in color to the albino Ball pythons).

He stated that crested geckos were thought to be extinct in the wild until 1994. He started breeding crested geckos in '98. The drawbacks to keeping these geckos was the cleanliness (they are very dirty lizards). The good points were that they only need room temp heat and not special lighting requirements. There are many morphs in this species too – Fires, Tigers, Dalmations, Pinstripes, and Creamsickles are being bred.

After lunch, we were treated to what I thought was one of the most informative and entertaining talks on Amphibian Declines that I've seen. **Jessi Krebs**, Supervisor of Amphibians and Reptiles at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, presented – *A Response to the Global Amphibian Extinction Crisis*. Jessie noted that of the 6,000 species of amphibians on Earth, 2-3,000 are threatened with extinction and over ½ of all amphibians are threatened with extinction! Since 1980, 122 species are believed to have gone extinct. For every one mammal, 2 species of amphibians are threatened. Amphibians play an important role in insect control, cultural importance, human medicine, the food chain, and as an indicator species. He told us that an Australian species of frog has properties on its skin that kills the AIDS virus in rats. (Tell me that's not important). We also learned that disease is the #1 killer of amphibians. The Henry Doorly Zoo and Staff at the Johannesburg Zoo have been monitoring amphibians in Africa. He said they were not well equipped for this project. HDZ staff trained the Johannesburg staff how to catch, keep, and quarantine frogs.

Jessi gave the audience several facts about the Chytrid fungus that is wiping out so many frogs from existence. It was discovered about 5 years ago in Central America and it is moving north about 28 kilometers per-year! It is only active at certain temperatures and it is very weak. Heat kills it and in cool temps it stays dormant. Reed frogs are not affected by it; nor are cane toads and American bullfrogs. He provided several websites for more information: Globalamphibian.org, saveafrog.org, amphibians.org, crestedtoadssp.org, omahazoo.com

Dave Barker, Co-Owner of VPI, Inc. presented – *The Mechanics of Ball Python Reproduction*. Mr. Barker's presentation was of great surprise to me. I suspected just another talk on ball pythons and received much more!

His talk featured the anatomy of ball pythons and how everything works inside. His illustrations included dissections of tail organs, and views of how egg follicles (at full size) move through the body of a snake to the oviduct. Who knew that there was a Sulcus "groove" on the hemipenes that allows for sperm to travel into the female's oviductal openings? He stated that one male may breed several females – they produce sperm continually. At the V.P.I. facility, they don't cycle their breeding snakes with light or heat. They utilize feeding methods instead.

A few other words of wisdom from Dave B. – "Males should be introduced during the females swelling of oviducts". "Overfed female snakes won't fully develop eggs – sperm cannot reach all follicles (due to stretching). "Balls have very long lives and breed till the end of their lives". And my personal favorite quote of the evening, – "Fat females do not make more babies".

Eric Holt, Owner of Empire of the Turtle, talked about turtles and tortoises. He showed pics of the huge facility that held room for the ten species of turtles/tortoises that they monitor and breed. Eric is currently working with ornate diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemmys terrapin*) in Crystal Bay, Florida. His transportation – kayak. He stated interesting facts: Of the 7 species of Diamondback terrapins, 5 occur in Florida and they are the only species of turtle that have adapted to brackish water. These turtles drink fresh water from runoffs and retain water through reduced urination. Their favorite food is blue crab, followed by mangrove, fiddler crabs and Periwinkle snails. Terrapins spend time in Mangrove Islands, shared by cormorants and pelicans. He found that females in

the study had numerous barnacles and males had none. Sex ratio was two females for every one male. They are killed most by crab traps, human consumption, raccoons, road kills, loss of habitat, and boat strikes. Rico Walder of Signal Herpetoculture reviewed the facility the techniques used to successfully breed Green tree pythons and boas. Clean, sterile enclosures hand made with glass house the snakes. They mist the snake enclosures heavily with cool water to induce breeding behavior. After recent sheds, females are placed with several males. After the natural “combat” of the males, the triumphant male is left with the female. After egg laying, females coil in a tight “behive” around the clutch and use muscle contractions for heat and egg development. Artificial egg development is used as well using a fluctuation of temperatures. Rico had a quote to conclude his talk as well - “Never stop having fun...when you do , life becomes too much like work.”

A banquet dinner was followed by the Keynote Speaker – Dave Barker. His hilarious talk was themed – “Hunting Ridgenose Rattlesnake in Mexico and Other Tall Tales.” This in-depth talk made you wish of herping with them in the early days of 1977 with their new van. His friend, Ardell was an accident waiting to happen. He was always sick or injured and the story of Ardell pinned under the huge rock was crazy. The 18# wheel of cheese purchased from the Menonites, which made several zoo employees sick in Dallas had the audience nearly falling out of their chairs.

The evening ended with the auction of herp-related items. Most of us usually spend more money than we should here but it is a justified fundraiser (which makes it ok in my book).

Anyone with a remote interest in herpetology will find the Midwest Herpetological Symposium a weekend filled with fun, education, and excitement. This year it will be held a bit closer to us in Detroit, hosted by the Michigan Society of Herpetologists.

For more information contact the www.michiganherp.org



EMBARRASSING MOMENTS IN HERPING

Every year the HHS participates in the *Reptile Invasion* in Evansville. Several years ago, Pat Hammond and myself were on the way home from the event with our herps in the back of the vehicle. Just after lunch, I glared towards the back seat to check on the animals when I noticed my black kingsnake was missing. We stopped the car and looked around to find that it had escaped its confines and had entered another enclosure containing male and female five-lined skinks. Needless to say, the king had a rather full belly and I was missing two skinks. It wasn't a disaster but I felt bad for those lizards since I had plans to release them at their site of capture shortly afterwards. It wasn't too embarrassing being that it was only Pat and I but now that I've shared it with you, it is!

Jim Horton

Herpetology Greats

Raymond Ditmars 1876-1942

He was one of the most well known adventurers and herpetologists of his time in North America. His writings have intrigued amateur and professional herpetologists alike for decades.

He was the Curator of Mammals and Reptiles at the New York Bronx Zoo. He has written dozens of books on the animal world. Some of his publications include: *Snakes of the World* (1931), *Strange Animals I Have Known* (1931), *Thrills of a Naturalist's Quest* (1932), *Snake Hunters Holiday* (1935), *The Reptiles of North America* (1936), *Reptiles of the World* (1938), *Field book of North American Snakes* (1939)

Congratulations to the 2008 Officers

President – Jim Horton
Vice-President – Pat Hammond
Secretary – Holly Carter
Treasurer – Dave Mitchell
Sergeant At Arms – Roger Carter

Don't forget to buy your 2008 hunting or fishing license for the year.
It is Indiana law that anyone field collecting have a state license.

HHS member spotlight profile

Name - Wendell Zetterberg, Jr.

Town or city - Frankfort

Age you found interest in herpetology? 5 years

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you like? I like them all but I'm mostly interested in amphibians.

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you keep? Bullfrog, greenfrog, spring peeper, gray treefrog, cane toad, White's tree frog, tiger salamander, painted turtle, spiny softshell, snapping turtle and red-eared slider.

Do you exhibit your animals at hhs shows? I have at a few, but hope to more in the future.

What do you like most about the hhs? That's hard to say, I love learning from the speakers.

When did you join the HHS? 2001

Other hobbies? Does children count? They keep me pretty busy. Myspace, the HHS Myspace has over 350 friends now.

Do you field herp? If so where have you been? When I can. Mostly in Clinton County at Camp Callom and Bryan Woods. I have herped in Southern IL. – Snake Road, but it wasn't very productive – one five-lined skink.

Where do you get your herps? Most are ones others didn't want. A few, like Gimpy, were found with deformities or injuries.

Have you ever bred any herp species? (if so, what kind?) No, someday I hope to help breed frogs for release.

Anything else you would like to ad? I'm the chapter Coordinator for a local chapter of FrogWatch USA, the Central Indiana Frog Watchers (CIFW). I was also voted volunteer of the year for Indiana NAAMP in 2005. I was featured in USA Weekend magazine for Frogwatch USA. We do many amphibian programs at schools and nature centers. Educating about amphibians is a big part of what I do.



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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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.