

THE MONITOR



NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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

Volume 30 Number 5

May 2019

H.H.S. Monthly Meeting **Wednesday, May 15, 7:00PM** **Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Ian Hahus, Purdue U. & Univ. of Florida
**Topic: *To Indigos and Beyond: Herp Conservation in Florida and
the Southeastern U.S.***

Our speaker for May is Dr. Ian Hahus. He is originally from Southern Indiana and now lives in Indianapolis. He earned his BS in Agricultural Engineering from Purdue University in 2014 and a PhD in Agricultural and Biological Engineering from the University of Florida in 2018. He has always been interested in nature, and during his four years in Gainesville, FL. he became involved in environmental outreach and education, with a particular interest in herps. He volunteered with a number of herp conservation organizations, took graduate courses in herpetology, and got the opportunity to herp all over the state. Ian's volunteer and outreach experiences include working with Ashton Biological Preserve, The Rattlesnake Conservancy, The Orianne Society, Florida Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, and the Florida Museum of Natural History. Since returning to Indiana, Ian has been attending HHS meetings and just finished his Indiana Master Naturalist classes with the Indiana DNR. He looks forward to getting to know the herps and herpers in his home state! His talk will focus on his experiences with herp conservation and outreach in Florida, and may give out a couple field herping trips for those interested in visiting the Sunshine State.

HERPOUT RESCHEDULED – May 18

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

President's message

Jim Horton

Its May and our natural world is alive with color, sound, and fragrance! Along with the blooms of plants and trees are frogs and toads calling. Reptilians are emerging from their winter retreats. Our 18th Hoosier Herpout is May 18th (wow, what a great date!). We decided to reschedule due to the cold, rainy weather. Hope to see some of you at Hardin Ridge for this event.

If field herping interests you, look no further. One of our younger members, Thomas Raymond, is an Eagle Scout. His project is to survey a property near his home for herps! If you'd like to help, he could use your expertise. Please contact me if you are interested.

I'd like to thank Miss Taylor West. She was our guest speaker at the April meeting. Her program kept us in the herping mood. Another thank you goes to Ed Ferrer. He somehow keeps us entertained with some great speakers each and every month. Ed has another good one lined up this month.

We have a great opportunity for you to show off your favorite animals. The HHS will again this year be displaying live herps at Holliday Park Nature Center for the *Pack the Parks* event. This show will be June 29.

Many of you are active on our Facebook page. We are now on Instagram (@hoosierherp) too! Hope to see some of you on our social media pages.

See you at the next meeting! Jim

West park bioblitz

Carmel Parks and University High School held a BioBlitz on the fourth of May. This is an ongoing event in the second year. HHS members, Dale Shoentrup and Katie Kolcun assisted in the herp surveys. Dale reported that the cold/rainy weather was a factor in the low herp count. No reptilians were reported and only a grey tree frog and salamander larvae were found. Dale suspected that the larvae were smallmouth salamanders.

Due to the inclement weather, the evening frog call surveys were cancelled.

Eastern garter snake

(*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*)

Article and photos by Jim Horton

Eastern garter snakes are one of the most common snakes in our state. Their genus, *Thamnophis*, is shared with the ribbon snakes.

The garter snake may have earned its name from folklore. It was said that their stripes resemble the garters men used to wear to hold up their socks. Other theories say that it might be a corruption of the German name for garden. It is often referred to as “garden snake”.



Eastern garter snake

This snake is an early riser in the Midwest. In fact, it is one of the first snakes to be spotted by hikers, mushroom hunters, and herpers alike. It also might be one of the first snakes that youngsters might encounter. They were among my first snakes to see in the natural world and the first to keep as a young budding nature lover.

This medium sized snake ranges from 18-26 inches as adults. The record length in the United States is 48 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Eastern garters are incredibly variable in pattern and color. Ground color may be dark to light green, olive, brown, tan or even bluish.

They typically have 3 yellowish stripes, one running dorsally and two along the sides. Typically, a double row of black spots run along the side between the stripes. They may also have broken checker patterns. Some exhibit orange or red color between the scales. The belly may be greenish to bluish, or pale yellow.

This diurnal snake is a live bearing species. As many as 50 young have been reported from a single female but a litter of 12 – 38 may be typical.

Young feed on earthworms and soon grow up to feed on a variety of prey. Slugs, worms, insects,

frogs, and salamanders are the chief prey items for adult garters. Young birds and rodents may also be dinner for them as well.

Here in Indiana, this species is found state-wide in a variety of habitats. It is most abundant in open grassy areas or along woodland borders. Areas near marshes, floodplains, lakes, swamps, borders of streams are other preferred habitats. They may also frequent vacant lots or city parks.

When encountered or harassed, this snake will flatten its body and coil. Striking is also an option that is put to the test. A foul smelling musk may be discharged from the cloaca area to deter predators.

A bite from an eastern garter snake isn't life threatening. Personally, I've been bitten by many feisty garters over the years with no effects other than some mild bleeding. Most field herpers can attest to the same. However, recent findings indicate that garter snakes may in fact be venomous. A mild venom may be utilized to immobilize prey. The effects of this venom on humans may be minuscule depending on the individual. There are reports of bites from garter snakes causing swelling, redness, and discomfort. It is always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after a bite from any snake.



Eastern garter snake

Garter snakes are losing their habitat, mainly due to development by man. Open fields and grassy areas these snakes thrive in are rapidly disappearing. I don't encounter as many as in the past. Hopefully this once common species will regain its ground and be the 'first snake' for future nature lovers!

Indianapolis Zoo New Improved Snake Exhibit

By Ed Ferrer

If you have visited the Indianapolis Zoo lately, as you went through the Desert Dome you probably noticed that the area that previously housed the Drop Dead Gorgeous Snake Exhibit was all boarded off. I was told by some of the zoo keepers that the snake exhibit was going through a major renovation. The plans were to have larger enclosures with more naturalistic settings. Not only were there going to be larger displays but some were going to have multiple species displayed together. Also, there will be new additions to the collection. Some of the new snakes are black mambas, green mambas, reticulated pythons and Burmese pythons to name a few. The grand opening date was scheduled to be May first. I have not yet been able to visit our zoo this past week but I am making sure that I visit the zoo this next week! As a "herper" whose major interest is snakes I am very excited to see this new exhibit.

Our zoo had already been recognized by some zoo authorities as one of the top ten zoos in the country. This new addition just adds to its reputation.

HERP ART

Pictures and story by ROGER CARTER



This is a small figure about three and one-quarter inches across at its base and the same amount tall. I don't remember where I acquired it or how long I have had this.

The eyes are red glass and the body may be either bronze or brass. The word 'INDIA' is engraved in the bottom.

This kind of figure is used in India in certain religious ceremonies. One of the engineers that I used to work with is from India and moved back there several years ago. I sent him some pictures of this and asked him to tell me about it. The following is his reply:

Hi Roger,

You got some interesting figures, these have religious value in many parts of the country.

There are temples of Lord Shiva where you can find people selling these figures.

Many people worship them, use them for black magic may be!!! Just kidding!!

There are few days in the months of July/August (per Indian calendar) when people offer milk/stuff to the real ones.

Many thanks to my friend in India, Naveen Sachan.

PACK THE PARKS

HHS Live Herp Exhibit!

The HHS will be part of the *Pack the Parks* event at Holliday Park, Saturday, June 29. We need a good showing of HHS members and their animals for this show. This one day event is usually well attended by curious visitors. A few of our members who usually exhibit here will be out of town. We hope that you, our members, will support the HHS on June 29!

Please contact Ed Ferrer for information regarding set up, etc.

pythonpals1@msn.com or call 317-787-7448

18th Annual Hoosier Herpout

Saturday, May 18 – 9:00 A.M.

Hardin Ridge Recreation Area (Hoosier National Forest),
Monroe Reservoir, Bloomington, IN



Hiking, Herping, Camping, Cookout!

Meet at the shelter house #2 near the boat launch ramp parking lot (follow the signs).
Rain or shine (herping is always good, even in rain)

Schedule:

We will leave to herp the area shortly after 9:00 a.m. and return before 12:00 p.m. for the cookout. Pitch-in style cookout. HHS will provide the burgers and dogs. Please bring a dish or treat of your choice.

We will herp again after lunch. Those who chose to camp may be herping the area on Sunday. Saturday evening the HHS usually presents a PowerPoint presentation of The Herps of the Hardin Ridge Area (still pending as of this printing).

In the event of inclement weather or other possible cancellations,
check the HHS Facebook page or contact Jim Horton.

For more information, call or email Jim Horton (317) 443.4845 email - president@hoosierherpsoc.org



2019 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

May 10-12, 2019 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Resort Park, Slade, KY. This event has been going for over 20 years. Field trips, presentations, Kentucky Reptile Zoo, and more.

May 15, 2019 – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker: Ian Hahus, Topic: *To Indigos and Beyond: Herp Conservation in Florida and the Southeastern U.S.*

May 18, 2019 – 18th annual HHS Herpout. A day of field herping, photography, cook out, and camping. All HHS members are welcome.

June 2nd, 2019 - 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 (HHS members only)
www.midwestreptile.com Other dates, 8/25, 11/10

June 19, 2019 – HHS meeting. Guest Speaker – TBA

September 27-29, 2019 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO. Friday and Saturday presentations, ice-breaker, live and silent auctions, field trip to Snake Road. See St. Louis herp society facebook page for details.



HHS Board of Directors - 2019

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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 7:00 p.m. at Holliday Park Nature Center. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**



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