



# 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 18    Number 4**

**April    2007**

## **President's Message**

Jim Horton

Greetings fellow herpers!

Wow! What a strange spring it has been. I don't know if I should keep feeding my herps or put them back into hibernacula...(kidding). Some of us have been in the field and we've found a variety of herps but the freezing temps of last week have dealt a tough hand for animals and plants alike. But don't worry, the warm sunny days of spring will show up soon!

We have a date for the herpout – May 19. Please mark your calendars! Another Annual HHS activity is the Reptile Invasion in Evansville (June 9 & 10).

We will soon set a date for another herp field day at Chris Wherly's property for sometime in May. For more information, read inside.

We have another great Guest Speaker set for April. Byram Feltner will educate us on Gila and Beaded lizards of the Southwest!

This issue of the Monitor has more original article on herping underground by Elliot Stahl, a review of the amphibian trip, more facts and hints, and more...

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

**New**

**Dallas Evans**

**Bill Gaines**

**John Wright**

**Renewals**

**Paul Hofsommer**

**Sheryl Mitchell**

**Ralph McBee**

**Carl Schwartz DVM**

## **HELPFUL HERP HINTS**

By Barry Hammer

High metabolism lizards like whiptails, collareds and other fast moving, highly strung species may benefit from waxworms in their diet. These bee moth larvae are higher in fat than either mealworms or crickets and can help these lizards maintain good body weight.

# Indiana's State Reptile?

by Ed Ferrer

I recently read in the May, 2007 issue of **Reptiles** magazine that the state of Massachusetts had established the garter snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, as its "state reptile". The article mentioned that two six-grade boys first proposed the idea as third graders. The two ambitious students lobbied for three years with the help of a state representative and finally accomplished their goal this year. They picked the garter snake because it helped control pests and was common throughout the state. According to the article, the two boys appeared on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* on February 13th.

Most Hoosiers are aware that our state bird is the cardinal and our state tree is the tulip tree. But what is our state's reptile? The answer is Indiana doesn't have a state reptile. Perhaps we could get a few students to propose a species as Indiana's state reptile. I would suggest that the species be somewhat common or at least well known throughout the state. My particular favorites would be the beautiful Northern copperhead, *Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*, or the Eastern box turtle, *Terrapene carolina carolina*. Both species are relatively common and well known and have colorful markings. The timber rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, might also be considered. Although it is rare and endangered in Indiana, most Hoosiers know of it and there is some historical precedence in its favor. During the Revolutionary War the "timber" was actually our country's first national symbol that adorned our flags, currency, and military uniforms. Benjamin Franklin lobbied for the timber rattler to become our country's official national symbol but of course lost out to the bald eagle.

Hopefully some people will take up the cause for establishing a state reptile for Indiana. Whatever public debate regarding the reptilian "candidates" would certainly raise the public's awareness of the plight of our state's reptiles and hopefully bring a greater knowledge of Indiana's environmental issues and lead to saving some critical habitat areas for these often forgotten and misunderstood species.

**General HHS Meeting: April. 18th, 7:30 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Byram Feltner, Kentucky Reptile Zoo**

**Topic: Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards**

**Gallahue Center (science building) room#108**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to announce that April's guest speaker is Byram Feltner from the Kentucky Reptile Zoo in Slade, Kentucky.

Some of you may remember that Byram was originally scheduled to be our speaker last August but was unable to attend due to a serious field accident to his hand involving a machete. He had to go through extensive rehab with his hand and could not travel last year. Now he has recovered from his injuries and is looking forward to presenting a power point program describing the husbandry of Gila monsters and beaded lizards currently being kept at the Kentucky Reptile Zoo. He will also discuss some of the exciting research that is being done with the venom extracted from these lizards and the medical possibilities.

**Don't miss this program! See you there!**

## Cold blooded facts

Submitted by Jim Horton

Hylidae, the Treefrogs, inhabit most tropical and subtropical parts of the world. Over 635 species and 27 genera exist today. There are five genera in the Eastern United States: Treefrogs (Hyla, Osteopilus, and Smilisca), Cricket frogs (Acris), and Chorus frogs (Pseudacris)

## HHS Tin “Seeding”

On a recent sunny day in mid-March, a few HHS members headed to private land in Morgan County to lay tin. “Seeding”, as it is commonly referred in herpetology, is strategically placing sheets of corrugated tin to develop a temporary thermoregulation point for snakes and other reptilians.

HHS member Chris Wehrle submitted the idea of placing tin at his family property for HHS field trips.

Ken Lane, a friend the HHS, had an abundance of tin stacked in piles at his farm. He graciously agreed to come along and to donate some of it to our project. We stacked a truck bed with about 20 sheets and headed to our destination. Once there, we planned out our spots and moved up the hill. The temperature was a chilly 42 degrees but it was sunny which made the day more pleasant. We found several good spots at the wood lined fields. The tin was scattered about and some were stacked in layers. Tin was laid in a variety of localities including, fields, wood borders, near watersheds, and other habitable spots. Each piece was marked, numbered, and flagged for identification purposes. We dropped several sites and marked around 22 separate pieces for future location identification. We will keep records of what herps are found and where they were the tin was placed. We hope to learn some valuable data from this project that may possibly be of some help in the future. If nothing more, at least we can survey the diversity of herps in the area.

Chris Wehrle, Roger and Holly Carter, Ken Lane, Barry Hammer and myself had created this project along with some of Chris’s relatives. We would like to thank the Wehrle family for the use of their land and their hospitality involving this project.

After laying tin, Ken dove to the ground in a field to pop up with a garter snake. This juvie was fully alert and active despite the cooler temps. We are currently in the process of scheduling an HHS field trip to this area.



Chris Wehrle marks tin.



Tin is placed, numbered and flagged.

## HERPETOLOGY GREATS

### John Edward Holbrook 1794-1871

An American practitioner and herpetologist whose North American Herpetology became the basis of American herpetology when it was published as a five-volume, second edition in 1842. The first edition was produced in three volumes between 1836 and 1838.

# Early Spring Herping, Underground

By, Elliot Stahl

(All photos by Elliot Stahl)

On Saturday March 10<sup>th</sup>, Dave Stahl and I headed towards the Harrison-Crawford Counties area, to do some caving. We met up with a friend of ours near Wyandotte Cave, and we visited a wild cave in that area first known as Paradise Lost. The only herps seen in that cave were a few Cave salamanders (*Eurycea lucifuga*). After exiting that cave in the late evening, we decided to visit another nearby cave known as jug hole. The entrance to this 40 foot pit is very small. While rappelling the entrance pit, I spotted a few cave salamanders on the wall. After reaching the bottom, I was surprised to find an adult Pickerel frog (*Rana palustris*) sitting on a rock. No more herps were seen that night. We camped that evening, and the next morning we awoke early, and met some other cavers to visit some more vertical caves of the area. The first cave we visited was called Hung-Over Well; this was a 28 foot small pit. At the bottom I noticed a few cave salamanders, and as I was searching the lead litter at the bottom, I also found a large Jefferson's salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*). I took a few photos of the salamander, and then placed him back in his leafy home. Before I climbed out, I spotted one other Jefferson's salamander hiding behind a small collection of formations. From that cave we walked to another pit called Bear Plunge, named for exactly that, in fact there are still some Bear Bones at the bottom. I rappelled into the 88 foot pit first, and I immediately spotted two Slimy salamanders (*Plethodon glutinosus*). There were also a few cave salamanders at the bottom. As I searched the bottom a little more, I was delighted to find a large Ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsi*) near the base of the drop. I took a few pictures of him, and then Dave placed him in his pack for rescue. We ascended to the surface, and I released the ringneck snake far from the pit, amongst some logs. We decided to next visit a pit known as Devils Dungeon, where I had seen herps before. Upon arriving at the pit we rigged the rope, and I went down last. When I reached the bottom, I found yet again a few cave salamanders. Then I discovered three small Eastern newts (*Notophthalmus viridescens*) in the Red Eft stage. Some of the other people began to ascend the rope, and while I was waiting I spotted a pickerel frog sitting in a small stream at the bottom of the pit. When every body else was done climbing, I prepared to get on rope, and in doing so I noticed three Spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) tucked into some crevices in the wall. While I was observing these individuals, I noticed the tail of a snake protruding from the crevice. I was able to carefully extract an adult Worm snake (*Carphophis amoenus helenae*) from the crack. The snake was in perfect condition, and it appeared he had had many bugs to feed on down there. I yelled for Dave to drop his pack down the pit, and he did so, so that I could rescue the worm snake. I placed him in the pack and climbed out. After exiting the pit, I took the worm snake away from the pit, and placed him on a rock where I took some photos of him. Then I placed him in log pile safely away from the pit. Afterwards we visited a few more caves and then headed home, very delighted with our early herp findings.



worm snake



Jefferson's salamander

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# HHS 2007 Amphibian Field Trip

By Jim Horton

Spring had already sprung before we had a chance to get to our favorite amphibian “hot spot”. But we had such excellent spring-like weather that we had at least a chance to see some breeding activities.

Several HHS members had taken the interest (and their Saturday night) for some evening herping. Rain had fallen in the Indianapolis area for several days with temperatures well into the 60's and even 70's earlier in the week. Perfect for spring amphibians and our Annual trip to Brown County! As we entered Bartholomew and Brown Counties, we could clearly see that the terrain and roads were dry. As we parked our vehicles, we could hear the faint calls of spring peepers deep into the forest. The closer we walked, the more vibrant their calls became. As sticks and leaves crackled beneath our feet near the pond, the calls slowed to a stop. The water appeared a bit low and there wasn't much aquatic activity. No spotted salamanders were found in the water at all. A few were uncovered along the perimeter of the pond beneath logs and leaf litter. It was evident that they were finished breeding for the year. A mass of hatched eggs were found on the far-shallow end of the pond with neonates lying within. These were *Ambystoma* larvae, probably from spotted and Jefferson's salamanders.

No wood frogs were seen or heard anywhere in the vicinity. Wood frog egg masses were left in the ponds numbering in the thousands.

The spring peepers started to call sporadically and with our best peeper voices, we called back. They were in and around the pond in good numbers but not at full strength as our visits in the past had been. Most of them in vegetation around the edge of the water appeared to be at or below eye level.

A much deeper pond near by held a plethora of amphibian life. Newts and green and bullfrog tadpoles made up the bulk of the life in this pond. Amphibian egg masses were clung to fallen limbs and vegetation just below the surface of the water. Every scoop from our net revealed newts and (or) tadpoles. Other nettings yielded adult spotted and Jefferson's salamanders. Redback salamanders could easily be found by lifting rocks along the pond border. After my failing attempt at night photography, we called it a night and drove home. Our drive home included serenading chorus frogs serenading along the roadsides. Spring herpetology at it's best!

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## Frogs Went Silent

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Back in the Puerto Rican rain forest for the first time in five years, biologist Rafael Joglar sensed something was wrong. He didn't hear the frogs whose nocturnal calls he had long recorded.

After that discovery in 1981, Joglar and wife Patricia Burrowes, a fellow University of Puerto Rico amphibian specialist, found that other populations of frogs in the genus *Eleutherodactylus* – known as coquis for the distinctive co-kee sound made by two species – were also mysteriously absent.

Working their way through such suspected culprits as pollution and habitat loss, researchers zeroed in on climate change. The average minimum temperature had risen from 1970 to 2000 by 2 degrees, a significant rise for climate-sensitive amphibians.

(Source – Indianapolis Star, 4-1-07)

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## HERP HAPPENINGS

**March 18, 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)

**April 18, 2007** – General Meeting, Special Guest Speaker: Byram Feltner, Kentucky Reptile Zoo, Topic – *Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards*.

**April 21, 2007** – HHS Live herp exhibit, Garfield Park Conservatory. Time – 11am – 3pm. Focusing on rainforest herps.

**April 28, 2007** – Earth Day Indiana. Downtown Indianapolis at the War Memorial Park.

**May 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> 2007** – Herpetology Weekend. A funfilled weekend of herp presentations, live animal demonstrations, and field trips! Natural Bridge State Resort Park, Slade, KY

**May 16, 2007** – General Meeting, Special Guest Speaker, Dean Allesandrini, Greater Cincinnati Herp Society; Topic: Surviving a cottonmouth bite and conservation projects of Greater Cincy Herp Society

**May 19, 2007** – Hoosier Herpout. Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Hoosier National Forest, Monroe Reservoir, Bloomington.

**June 9&10, 2007** – Reptile Invasion, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, Evansville, IN. One of the largest fundraisers of the year. Features programs and live animal exhibits.

**July 14 and 15** – Indiana Pet Expo, White River State Park, Indianapolis.

**July 28, 2007** – HHS live amphibian/reptilian exhibit at the Johnson County Library, Franklin, IN

## Classifieds

**For Sale:** For sale: female Dummeril's boa almost three feet long, \$125; female carpet python, partially stripped, four feet long, \$125; female womas, \$650 each. Call Roger (317)873-6561 or e-mail at [drymarchonzz@hotmail.com](mailto:drymarchonzz@hotmail.com).

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**Ride Needed:** Bloomington HHS member in need of a ride to the meetings, and possibly the Midwest Reptile Show. Will chip in \$ for gas. Please tell me I'm not the only HHS member in the Bloomington/Bedford area! Contact Sheryl at [Roseroar1@aol.com](mailto:Roseroar1@aol.com)

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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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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, 5¼ or 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.

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