

# 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 29 Number 9

September 2018

### H.H.S. Monthly Meeting Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium

**Wednesday September 19th 7:00 p.m.**

**Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium**

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Omar Attum, Indiana University Southeast**

**Topic: "Journey Through The Sinai Wilderness"**

This month our guest speaker is Dr. Omar Attum. Dr. Attum is a wildlife biologist and professor at Indiana University Southeast who fell in love with Sinai at the age of sixteen. Before joining IUS Dr. Attum was a wildlife biologist with the Zoological Society of London. He was also a postdoctoral fellow at the Center of Reptiles and Amphibians at Indiana Purdue University at Ft. Wayne.

He has been conducting wildlife research and surveys in the Sinai peninsula since 1998. A self-taught photographer, his credits include National Geographic magazine, The Courier Journal, Outdoor Photographer, Shutterbug, Egypt Today, and The Jordan Times. Also, he is the recipient of a Blue Earth Alliance Photography fellowship.

His book *Sinai: Landscape and Nature in Egypt's Wilderness* transports readers through the wilderness with 150 breathtaking full-color photographs. His talk will show the wide variety of animals, plants, mountains, and other natural features conveying the abundance of life that inhabit this awesome wilderness. He will bring some copies of this book that costs \$37.00 for any members who would like to add it to their collection. (I know I want one!) He will also bring some tortoise crafts also for sale. **Be sure to attend this fantastic program!**

**Midwest Herpetological Symposium – September 28-30**

## HHS KAYAK/CANOE FLOAT (REVIEW)

By Jim Horton

Floating down a serene waterway with fellow HHS members was both exciting and relaxing. The sights and sounds of songbirds, kingfishers, herons, and other birds kept us entertained. Unfortunately we never have the river to ourselves. Other folks were floating, fishing, and conversing during this beautiful sunny day. We tried our best to maintain a good distance from the others to view as many chelonians as possible.

Northern water snakes were abundant throughout the Driftwood/Flatrock river system. Several were captured for photos and examination.



Ventral view of northern water snake.

We found only one queen snake on the trip. This was a gravid female. It was also carefully captured for photos and soon released.



Queen snake

Both species of softshell turtles inhabit this river. We spied numerous spiny softshells (*Apalone s. spinifera*) but the smooth softshells (*Apalone m. mutica*) were sparse in numbers. By far, the most abundant turtle was the common map turtle (*Graptemys geographica*). The species known as the 'sawbacks' are the false map turtle (*Graptemys p. pseudogeographica*) and the Ouachita map turtles (*Graptemys o. ouachitensis*). Several of each type were seen throughout the day

straddling logs and quickly flopping into the water.

Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta marginata*) and red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) were also found in good numbers.

Tiny yearling turtles weren't budging as we floated closer to them. Unfortunately they have a lot to learn about being captured. We did catch a few for pics and quickly released them.



Spiny softshell turtle

In all, 64 turtles were observed and 7 species represented. Kayakers and canoeists ahead of us may have startled larger numbers of turtles to skew our counts for the day.

Another annual HHS float in the books. Can't wait until next year!

# President's message

Jim Horton

The Midwest Herp Symposium is this month, September 28-30! I'm incredibly excited to be hosting this event again and I'm looking forward to seeing all of those familiar faces and friends.

We can always use a few extra hands for this event. If you're interested in being a part of this awesome event, please contact me or any board member.

**Auction items are still needed.** If you have any unique herp-related items you'd like to donate, please contact any board member. This event will require much needed assistance throughout the weekend. If you would like to help in any way, please contact me or any board member.

I hope to see our active members as well as those we don't see too often at the MHS. You won't be disappointed. It's an active weekend of herps, food, talks, a zoo trip, reptile show, book sales, and even a carnivorous plant guy! This event is our largest fundraiser and all proceeds from the symposium benefit the HHS.

A big thanks to Mike Pingleton for a fantastic presentation last month on herping the Yucatan Peninsula!

I'm looking forward to this month's guest speaker as well. Mr. Omar Attum, will take us on a trip though the Sinai Peninsula. See you there!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

### RENEWALS

**Silly Safari's**  
(Sustaining membership)

### NEW

**Ben Kugler**  
**Bob Herndon**

## 2018 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**September 19, 2018** – HHS meeting, 7:00PM, Holliday Park Nature Center. Guest speaker: Dr. Omar Attum, Indiana University Southeast. Topic: "journey Through the Sinai Wilderness".

**September 30, 2018** - 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](http://www.midwestreptile.com) Other dates: Nov. 4

**September 28-30, 2018** – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Indianapolis, IN, LaQuinta Inn, 5120 Victory Drive, Indpls. IN. Please check the HHS facebook page and website for information and updates.

**October 13-14, 2018** – North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC), Tinley Park, Ill. Saturday 10AM -5PM, Sunday 11AM - 4PM, tickets: adults-\$15.00, kids under 6-12, \$8.00 [www.narbc.com](http://www.narbc.com)

**October 17, 2018** – HHS meeting, guest speaker: TBA

# HAND HELD HERPS (TEXAS)

Article and photos by Roger Carter



The Texas Toad, *Bufo speciosus*, measures two to three and one-half inches long. It is a greenish gray to brown with dark blotches around greenish brown warts. There are two black tubercles on each hind foot. The inner tubercles on each foot are sickle-shaped. This toad is nocturnal and is found in most of the state in sandy soils, prairies, woodlands and cultivated areas with cattle tanks, irrigation ditches and reservoirs.

The Western Coachwhip, *Masticophis flagellum testaceus*, measures forty-two to sixty inches long. The coloration is variable being yellow to dark brown sometimes without any markings, sometimes with narrow bands or broad bands with darker cross bands. The narrow band specimens are the most common while the broad band specimens are the least common. The western coachwhip is found in western Texas brushlands, grasslands and savannahs. This species eats a wide variety of prey including other snakes.

In June 2018, I flew to Texas to spend some time with my buddy Tim Cole and to attend the International Herpetological Symposium that was held in Houston, Texas. Tim makes part of his living rescuing herps from properties and re-locating them. I went with him on a call about a snake in the wire of a screened in porch. When we arrived the owner of the property showed us the snake and it was a young western coachwhip approximately two feet long. There were two different screens at this porch. The outside screen was a tight mesh and the inner screen was a more open mesh with approximately three-inch openings and the snake was climbing through the open mesh. It was a nice docile snake that never attempted to bite. The property owner was a German immigrant who settled in Texas and has no problem having snakes on his property especially when Tim mentioned that this species eats other snakes including venomous snakes.

We went night driving in south Texas to see what herps might be crossing the roads at night. At one point, Tim told me that we were within twenty miles of the Mexican border. We found several specimens of the Texas toad, three specimens of the western diamondback rattlesnake, *Crotalus atrox* and one D.O.R. Texas Indigo snake, *Drymarchon corais erebennus*. The first rattlesnake was an adult D.O.R. and the second rattlesnake, we probably saw the same animal twice, was a smaller one. The indigo snake we stopped and measured it at seventy-four inches long and found that it was a gravid female because one of the eggs had popped out of its body. The good news was that I got to see my first indigo snake in the wild, the bad news was that it was a road kill. We doubled back a few times for what we thought were snakes on the shoulder of the road but those turned out to be shipping straps. There was a border patrol station that we were required to stop to let them know what we were doing. They were very nice people and one of the guys told us he has a buddy who does the same thing that we were doing.





**September 28-30, 2018**

**Friday night**

Ice Breaker and presentations

**Saturday**

Guest Speakers  
(throughout the day)

**Saturday Night**

Banquet  
Keynote speaker  
Auctions

**Sunday**

Zoo tour  
Midwest Reptile Show

**Other Features**

Book Sales / book signing

Live Amphibian/Reptile exhibit

*New this year!*

Young Herpetologist Award

## **Confirmed Guest Speakers:**

**Robert Applegate**  
(Keynote)

Applegate Reptiles

**Michael Price**

Executive Director at Eaton Hill Nature Center and Owner at Wild About Texas

**Todd Pierson**

University of Tennessee

**Dan Dourson**

Biologist, Naturalist, Author, Illustrator

**Dave Fogel**

Owner of The Herp House

**Nate Engbrecht**

Indiana State Herpetologist

**Yatin Kalki**

Illinois Natural History survey

**David Mifsud**

Herpetological Resource and Management LLC

**Ethan Kessler**

Illinois Natural History Survey

## **LA QUINTA INN & SUITES**

5120 Victory Dr. *Indianapolis*  
IN 46203

Online registration and detailed information can be found on the HHS website:

[www.hoosierherpsoc.org](http://www.hoosierherpsoc.org)

# **The 34<sup>th</sup> Midwest Herpetological Symposium**

## **Guest Speakers/Titles**

**Michael Price**

“Reptile Diversity of Brewster County Texas”

“Squamate Diversity of the Sierra Madre Oriental in Northern Mexico”

**Robert Applegate**

“Captive breeding of Colubrid snakes with an emphasis on kingsnakes”

**Nathan Engbrecht (Indiana State Herpetologist)**

“The State of the Herps: An Update on Indiana Herpetology”

**David Mifsud**

“Amphibian/reptile Best Management Practices and conservation.”

**Todd Pierson**

"Ecology and evolution of Appalachian salamanders"

**Ethan Kessler (University of Illinois)**

"The History and Current Status of Alligator Snapping Turtles in the Midwest."

**Dan Dourson (Biologist/Naturalist/Illustrator)**

“Reptiles and Amphibians of Belize”

**Yatin Kalki (University of Illinois)**

“Herping Southern India”

**Dave Fogel**

“Captive Husbandry and Behavioral Observatoins in the Mata Mata (*Chelus fimbriatus*)”

# INDIANA AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES



Photos - Jim Horton

## **Marbled Salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*)**

This mole salamander is one of our only fall breeders. They can be found in or near vernal pools in September and early October.

Females will lay eggs under logs and stones at the pond edge and carefully guard them until the fall rains. Heavy rains wash the eggs into the ponds where they develop into larvae.



Photos - Jim Horton

## **Prairie King Snake (*Lampropeltis c. calligaster*)**

This species inhabits old fields and open woodlands in western Indiana. They typically reach sizes of 3-3 ½ feet in length as adults. Its prey includes rodents, small birds and their eggs, frogs, lizards, and other snakes. Prairie kings are most encountered in early spring.

## ***HHS Board of Directors - 2018***

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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.**

MEMBERSHIP FORM

\_\_\_\_ New Member

\_\_\_\_ Renewal

\_\_\_\_ Name

\_\_\_\_ Address

\_\_\_\_ City

\_\_\_\_ Email Address

\_\_\_\_ Individual/Family Membership \$20.00

\_\_\_\_ Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

\_\_\_\_ Herpetological Interest(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240-0544



Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

\_\_\_\_ If this area is checked, it's time to renew your membership!