



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 21 Number 4

April 2010

President's Message

Jim Horton

It has been a beautiful spring so far with above average temperatures. Members have already reported reptilian findings on the website message board.

Our zoo trip was a great success. Ed's count was 29 members attending for the day! We hope to make this an annual event. Look for an article from Ed reviewing the trip.

The Garfield Park educational exhibit was a huge success! Thanks to our hhs members who took their day off to support the HHS! Also, thanks to Holly and Roger Carter for spending their day tending the HHS booth at the Midwest Reptile Show!

Come visit fellow members at the Zionsville Z-greenfest on Sunday the 18th. We'll be displaying local herps.

The Annual Hoosier Herpout is coming up quick. It will take place next month, May 22nd. I hope to see many of you on this Southern Indiana outing! Look for details inside this issue.

I'd like to welcome our new members! I've had a chance to meet several of you and I hope you have enjoyed the HHS! A big *thank you* to our current members for your renewals!

I encourage all of you to get involved by attending meetings, writing for the *Monitor*, or exhibiting at our live educational displays. We are still seeking volunteers for a few positions internally. If you are interested, please contact me.

The Guest Speaker for this month promises to be another great one. You can see the bio on the 'meetings' page of the HHS website. www.hoosierherpsociety.org

See you at the meeting, Jim

2nd Annual Save the Frogs Day, April 30th

For more information www.savethefrogs.com

Welcome New Members!

Renewals

Garrett Kazmierski
Paul Hofsommer
The Stokes Family
Rick Marrs
Wanda and Juan Horner

Mike Wood
Carl Schwartz, DVM
Dale Schoentrup
Angela Thomas

New Members

Kendall Waltz
Ed Brown Family
Noah Franks

March meeting review

Jim Horton

Guest Speaker: Christen Wiley

Kentucky Reptile Zoo's Christen Wiley was our guest speaker for our March meeting. Christen has recently attended conferences on venom and its properties. She learned quite a bit and decided to share her new found knowledge with us.

She noted that Australia, has a Snake Bite University is said to be one of the best in the world. Christen hopes to attend the university sometime in the near future.

We learned that antivenin is difficult to obtain throughout the world, especially India where it is needed frequently. In countries such as India, the bite victim must get to a hospital quickly. In that country, payment is made ahead of time for any treatment. From there, they must locate antivenin themselves, often sold on the street. One may end up purchasing a false concoction of antivenin from unknown sellers. This can be deadly when time is of the essence.

Most of her talk focused on the CroFab antivenin. In the U.S., the brand Cro Fab (derived from sheep), is the most used antivenin. Using Crofab, the victim is unlikely to have allergic reactions after administering. This antivenin is used for pit viper bites but not the elapids such as the coral snake.

The only downfall from CroFab is that after usage, there is a recurrence of symptoms 2-3 days after the medical injections. Another negative point is that this antivenin is about \$1000 a vial, it must be given every 2 hours and there is a shelf life for this product.

Referring to a recent conference on 'venom', Christen mentioned a discussion of 'venomous' colubrid species here in the U.S. The difference is that the snakes known to be truly venomous have a means of storing and delivering venom. The *non-venomous* snakes have the Duvernoy's gland, a gland found in many rear-fanged snakes such as the hognose. Two of the most infamous colubrid snakes are the twig snake and the boomslang. Snakes in the colubrid family aren't considered venomous because they aren't equipped with hollow fangs or venom glands. But some *non-venomous* snakes can deliver bites with after effects such as swelling, blisters, and ecchymosis (bruising). This has been found to be evident in cases with the hognose.

But there have been documented cases of some colubrid snake bites with symptoms to those of a venomous bite. This is definitely a very difficult and complex subject.

One audience member asked why a snake's own venom won't digest their own head while being stored in its venom gland. Christen said that the venom itself produces a low pH and enzymes are less active at these lower levels. Therefore, a snake is safe from its own venom.

Christen said that there has been an ongoing study by Dr. Francis Markland since 1982 of fibrosis (the process of breaking up blood clots). This drug could be of great help in the medical community if approved. To get the 'green light' for drugs to be approved in the U.S., they must go through several lengthy phases. This process may last up to 20 years before it is ready for medicinal use. To this day, it is currently still not ready for use.

To end her presentation, Christen delighted the audience with pictures of some of their (KRZ) latest clutches of king cobras. They were cute little boogers!

10th Annual Hoosier Herpout

Saturday, May 22nd - 9:00 A.M.

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

Meet at the shelter house near the boat ramp. Rain or shine

There is an entry fee at the gatehouse. Campers will waive the fee.

Schedule: we will leave to herp the area shortly after 9:00 a.m. and will return
sometime before 12:00 p.m. for the cookout.

Several members will be camping at Southern Point. We will also herp on Sunday.

The herpout is a chance for our members to get out and field herp the hills of beautiful Southern Indiana. We should see a variety of herps with the possibility of venomous species. We will also be taking counts on our finds in the wild. Wear the proper gear and herp at your own risk. The H.H.S. assumes no responsibility for accidents or injuries. Please be careful and have fun!!

Barbeque

The H.H.S. will provide the burgers and dogs. Please bring a covered dish and your own beverages. Hardin Ridge offers class "A" camping (showers, electrical hookup) and class "B" (showers) camping. For more information, call or email Jim Horton (317) 865-0464. stardali84@hotmail.com

Monthly Meeting: Wednesday April 21st, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Danna Baxley, Kentucky D.N.R.

Topic: Black Pine Snakes of Mississippi & Alligator Snappers of Kentucky
Butler University: Room#150, new wing of the Pharmacy Building

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is pleased to welcome Danna Baxley as this month's guest speaker. Danna is the State Wildlife Grant research coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources. Her presentation will discuss her research project on the secretive **black pine snake** of Southern Mississippi and efforts to identify rare **alligator snapping turtle** populations in Western Kentucky.

Danna has spent the past decade working in the field of natural resource management with the Mississippi D.N.R., the South Carolina D.N.R. and the Appalachian Trail Conference along with her current position in Kentucky. Her extensive research experience will provide a interesting and informative view of reptile field work. In her free time, Danna is an avid backpacker and outdoor enthusiast.

Friday Night Frogwatch - Eagle Creek Park

Friday Night Frogwatch Programs continue through August. Cost is \$5/person, we meet at the Earth Discovery Center for an intro to the local frogs and then drive to the pond to look for and try to catch frogs. Pre-registration required at 327-PARK or 327-7148:

April 16th 8:30pm-10pm

April 30th 9pm-10:30pm (almost full)

Registration for May-August starts after May 7th

May 28th 9pm-10:30pm

June 4th 9pm-10:30pm

June 18th 9pm-10:30pm

July 2nd 9pm-10:30pm

July 16th 9pm-10:30pm

Louisville Zoo Field Trip March 28th

By Ed Ferrer
Photos by Jim Horton

On Sunday March 28th our herp society arranged for a field trip to the Louisville Zoo, complete with a "behind the scenes" tour of the HerpAquarium. This zoo is one of my favorites in the Midwest area and my favorite part of the zoo is the HerpAquarium. I enjoy the many naturalistic displays arranged in biomes from around the world. We had signed up 29 adults and two children for the trip!

On that Sunday the weather was threatening with a forecast for thunderstorms. As I started out down I-65 the rain was ever present varying from drizzle to thunderstorms. I crossed my finger and as I approached the Kentucky border there seemed to be a break in the weather. Throughout the day even though it was somewhat cool with the temperatures around a windy mid 50 degrees whatever rain did occur was very light, not enough to bother our plans. I am glad that the thunderstorms waited until our trip home!



Jim Horton and a chameleon sculpture

We met at the HerpAquarium at 11:00 a.m. and were divided into two groups by zoo staff members Chris Lawrence and Linda Sloan for our tour. The Rainforest exhibit had "King Louie", the white alligator, a large alligator snapper turtle, and huge Burmese python and several brilliantly colored birds. My favorite exhibits in the Forest section were the Gaboon viper, a timber rattlesnake and Northern copperhead sharing the same display, (my two favorite native Hoosier 'herps) and two eyelash vipers (one bright

yellow the other a green and brown "lichen phase" that was in the process of shedding).

The Dessert area included both the venomous Mexican beaded lizards and Gila monsters. One large display included 33 vampire bats. (They produced 8 babies). Linda explained how they had to go to a slaughter house once a week to get a supply of blood that was then mixed with chemicals to prevent clotting so they would have a continuous supply of blood. (The bats also drank water.) There were also several rattlesnakes (including a sidewinder) and a Egyptian cobra (the specie that was probably reported as the asp in the Cleopatra saga).



Chris Florence answers questions

During the tour we were told about the system they used to identify the various venomous species and what type of anti-venom was on hand for each species. The zoo staff goes through periodic unannounced drills simulating an escaped venomous snake so everyone is prepared for any emergency. Off display was a one hundred pound green anaconda that had developed a skin cancer. Although the cancer has been successfully removed they have kept it off display as a precaution. Her former exhibit area now houses 13 red-foot tortoises and 10 Argentine tegu lizards. We also saw a 100 pound alligator snapping turtle and a very rambunctious Cuban crocodile that kept jumping and thrashing around in its pen providing some excitement as we passed it.



Chinese alligator

There were several rattlesnakes and one particular rattler rattled continuously as we passed its cage. We were also shown the kitchen where the various anti-venom kits are stored, the quarantine room where all new arrivals must spend at least 30 days before they are put on display and the food room where all the prey species such as rodents and fruit flies are kept. The Aruba Island rattlesnake is one of the species that is being bred by this zoo as part of the government species survival plan.

The aquatic area included Cuban crocodiles (zoo employee Bill MacMahon is presently working to save the Cuban crocodile in the wild) and American crocodiles and a Chinese alligator. The Island Pavilion contained an impressive Komodo dragon, several giant fruit bats, some Orangutans, penguins, and an aviary. I have been told that the Louisville Zoo was the first zoo to switch a Sumatran tiger and a tapir periodically to provide each with extra stimulus as they investigated the new smells each time they entered the new exhibit.

We would like to thank Chris and Linda for an interesting and informative behind the scenes tour that gave us a great perspective of what goes on in this impressive zoo.

After our tour of the HerpAquarium and Island exhibits we were free to explore the rest of the zoo on our own. Many of us headed for Island Café for lunch where we also watched many ducks and black swans and a few turtles in the lake next to the café. The Americans exhibit housed an ocelot, jaguar and a pair of bald eagles.

Both eagles had damaged wings and couldn't fly so we were able to see them at a very close range. (In most zoos that I have attended the eagles are presented high up in the trees where it is often difficult to get a good look at them.) We then saw a maned wolf, a beautiful snow leopard and two cougars.

For the kids there is a Lorikee landing where they can feed the birds, a Wallaroo Walkabout where they can walk among wallabies, kookaburras and emus and a new animal-tronic dinosaur area.



Silverback Gorilla

I then went to the Gorilla Forest (that also included a pigmy hippo) and several families of gorillas. We saw a 7 week old baby gorilla hanging onto its mother, Mia as dad Mashinda, a huge silver back, looked on. The baby is the second gorilla birth at the Louisville Zoo. The first was born in 2007 and is presently at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. There is currently an ongoing public contest to name the baby gorilla. We asked a lot of questions from one of the zoo employees about the gorillas and were impressed with the apes grace and apparent intelligence.

I next went to the new Tiger Tundra exhibit that features two Amur (Siberian) tigers, one female named Ella and a huge male tiger named Sasha. They only have one tiger on display at any one time since tigers are generally solitary in the wild. I attended the tiger demo with the awesome 385 pound male Sasha. The trainers opened a garage door and the tiger came up next to the chain link fence. The trainer put Sasha through a variety of behaviors as it responded to whistles and word commands. Each time he did the correct response he

was rewarded with a whistle and a small piece of meat. These behaviors were a way of being able to observe his overall health and conditioning him to take a shot on occasion. For example, one behavior was for him to open his mouth and roar allowing his teeth to be examined while another was to have him stand on its hind legs (reaching an impressive height of 7 1/2 feet!) to check for any wounds on his paws or underside.

As we headed to the exit, we passed the lions, giraffes, zebras, elephants, antelopes, rhinos and stopped by an exhibit of tarantulas and scorpions and other

arachnids and a pair of Stellar sea eagles. These impressive eagles, related to the American eagles, are the largest birds of prey in the world!

If you are ever in the Louisville area, I would suggest you check out this fine zoo. With the large turnout for this trip and the relatively close proximity to other zoos in the Midwest, we probably will offer some more of these trips in addition to field herping excursions. If you have any suggestions for future adventures be sure to contact one of our board members.

Editor's note: The zoo is also working with a variety of amphibians including the Panamanian golden frogs and Puerto Rican crested toads (near extinct in the wild). Both are part of a conservation effort called the Species Survival Plan. Many zoos throughout the U.S. are working to save these magnificent animals.



Panamanian golden frogs (*Atelopus zeteki*)

Hoosier Herp Society shirts!

Same design featuring a Kirtland's snake with "Conservation through Education" added. Get yours for only \$10.00 at the General Meetings, online, or at the Midwest Reptile Shows.

New Giant Lizard Discovered in the Philippines

By Susan Milius, Science News, April 7, 2010



Scientists couldn't see the lizard for the trees.

But now they've tracked down and named *Varanus bitatawa*, a skittish reptile that's hard to spot even though it grows up to 2 meters long and sports bright yellow speckles.

In forests on the Philippine island of Luzon, the newly discovered monitor lizard hauls itself up into trees in search of fruit and melts into the vegetation if humans approach, says herpetologist Rafe Brown of the Biodiversity Institute at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He and his colleagues describe and name the species in paper published online the week of April 5 in *Biology Letters*.

The species is "new to us," Brown clarifies, because the Agta and Ilongot peoples living in forests of the Sierra Madre range know the lizard well — as a delicacy. It mostly eats fruit and reportedly tastes better than a much more common scavenging monitor that's "attracted to stinky stuff," Brown says.

A cousin to the giant Komodo dragon, *Varanus bitatawa* is hard to find but once detected, is pretty hard to ignore. During adulthood, yellow markings differentiate it from a much drabber neighbor — though both species sport colorful patterns as juveniles.

Reptile systematist Michael B. Harvey, who was not part of Brown's group, has helped name another *Varanus* lizard from New Guinea and

examined specimens from Southeast Asia. "I quickly realized that diversity of these lizards had been greatly underestimated," says Harvey, of Broward College in Davie, Florida. "I only hope that we don't lose much of this biodiversity before scientists can study it."

Deforestation poses a major threat to the biodiversity of the Philippines, which Brown and his colleagues describe in their paper as a "global conservation hot spot."

Western scientists first glimpsed the big monitor in 2001, Brown says, when biologists exploring the forest happened on hunters carrying a large lizard home for dinner. The biologists were permitted to photograph it, but theirs was the first of several encounters in which hunters showed no interest in giving up the centerpiece of a big family meal.

Herpetologist Arvin Diesmos of the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila and other researchers persisted in collecting photographs, local intelligence and the occasional juvenile, but they could not secure a full-grown adult specimen.

Then, in the summer of 2009, a team led by Brown and his graduate student Luke Welton got its hands on an adult lizard. They documented identifying anatomical characteristics such as the distinctive little horns on the ends of the lizards' double-barreled male reproductive organs. Which, by the way, are far from unusual in and of themselves: "All snakes

and lizards have a paired copulatory organ,” Brown says.

DNA tests were even more important, confirming that the species differs from a previously identified fruit-eating monitor living in a different part of the island.

Brown actually learned of the adult specimen’s existence via text message. After he and his students spent weeks in the mountains surveying

other vertebrates and hoping for an adult *Varanus bitatawa*, Brown had to return home early to start the fall semester. But he received a message from his students in the expedition’s final hours announcing their success — and letting him know that they were having a hard time finding a way to get from their camp to the airport.

Editor’s note:

This World is incredible! Just when we humans thought we’ve covered the last corners of the planet, we find more. New species of animals are still being discovered by modern man and more are out there.

As an adult, this monitor has the potential to reach lengths of 2 meters! That is incredible and very exciting for herpetology.

Similar to the situation with the green tree frog here in Indiana, this lizard was just a normal part of life for the people of the Phillipines. It is exciting to think of what (undiscovered) life forms are still out there living among us.

The HHS at Garfield Park

Jim Horton (photos-Laurie Mitchell)

The HHS live exhibit at the Garfield Park Conservatory was a big hit! GP Naturalist and HHS member, Brittany Davis reported that they had almost 300 people through the door. It was a great way to welcome spring.

Live reptile and amphibians were available for photos and careful handling. Rick Marrs, Angela Thomas, Dave and Laurie Mitchell, and Jim Horton were exhibiting herps from Indiana and others from around the world. Thanks to Brittany and the rest of the folks at the GP Conservancy for their donation, hospitality, and smiles!!



Notes on a trip to Southern Indiana

Observing Early Breeding Amphibians

Jim Horton

Thursday evening, March 11, was a perfect night for witnessing early spring breeding amphibians. Temps were in the 60's and it rained all day. After work, I drove to Columbus and met HHS member Brett Clark. We headed to Yellowwood Forest where we saw Pat Hammond and his brother and son. After parking the car, we could hear the welcoming sound of spring peepers in the distance. At last, winter is over!

Walking toward the vernal ponds, we started to hear the *chuck-chucks* of the male wood frogs. They suddenly stopped when we arrived but one-by-one, they started back up to a full chorus. Our first sight of the night was in the beam of our lights on the forest floor. Spotted salamanders were making their way to the ponds in good numbers. You really had to watch where you were walking. A small depression in the form of a drainage ditch held many more. They were traversing toward the ponds going against the flow of the water (similar to salmon). When our lights were pointed into the mossy water at the main pond, we could easily see dozens upon dozens of spotted salamanders. In one spot, approximately 15-20 males were 'in courtship' swirling around each other trying to win over the lone female. We were there at the perfect time. With no rain, it was safe to take out the video and still cameras for shots. Every beam of light into the pond would catch a spotted hastily swimming by. Others would surface for a quick gulp of air and descend back into the water.

Wood frogs were in pretty good numbers but with the evidence of huge masses of eggs, they were nearly done breeding. Several were still calling and about seven pairs were in amplexus.



Spotted salamanders



Woodfrogs (amplexus)

Got Rodents?

Hoosier Mouse Supply can take your orders for rodents and they will deliver to the monthly meeting on Wednesday, the 16th. (317) 831-1219

Go paperless

You now have the option to go paperless with your membership. The monitor will be sent via pdf/email to your inbox. This will help save money, paper, and time with folding, stapling, labeling, stamping, and sending the "hardcopy" newsletter. It's as easy as visiting the HHS website clicking the "paperless" button.

Classifieds/adoptions

For sale: 1.1 pair of red blood pythons c.b. 2008 450.00 pair. 0.1 het albino red blood python c.b. 2007 450.00, 0.1 red blood python c.b. 2009 125.00, Each python is high contrast with a good pattern. They are all eating frozen thawed, guaranteed healthy and properly sexed. Complete records with each snake. Mike Wood - 574-269-3441 2bears@embarqmail.com

INDIANATURTLECARE.COM

Indiana Turtle Care, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to the conservation, rehabilitation, education and rescue of turtles and tortoises.

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www.hoosierherpsociety.org

EVENTS

April 21, 2010 – HHS Meeting, Guest Speaker: **Danna Baxley**, Kentucky D.N.R. Topic - Black Pine Snakes of Mississippi & Alligator Snappers of Kentucky

April 23, 24, 25 – Wildflower Foray, Brown County, IN. Not just wildflowers! Nature hikes too.

May 7 & 8, 2010 – Herpetology Weekend: Features field herping hikes and guest speakers. Free admission to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo, Natural Bridge State Park, KY

May 15, 2010 – 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. Other dates: 5 /15, 6/5. For info: (317) 861-5550, www.midwestreptile.com

May 22, 2010 – Hoosier Herpout. Features a cookout, camping, and field trips. Hardin Ridge Recreational Area, Hoosier National Forest, Bloomington

June 12, 2010 – *Scales and Tails Fest*, Indiana State Museum. HHS will exhibit live herps.

July 24, 25 – Evansville Reptile Show

August 13-15, 2010 – Midwest PARC Annual Meeting, Lorado Taft Field Campus of Northern Illinois University.

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.**

Your HHS Board of Directors for 2010

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| | | | |
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Komodo Dragon (Louisville Zoo)

Hoosier Herpetological Society

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