



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 35 Number 8

August 2024

HHS Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, August 21st, 7:00PM

Holliday Park Nature Center

Guest Speaker – Yusnaviel Garcia-Padron

Topic – “*Herpetology of Eagle Marsh Nature Preserve*”

Eagle Marsh is an 831-acre wetland nature preserve located on the southwest border of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The marsh is host to a plethora of plants and wildlife. Many species of amphibians and reptiles are found in the preserve.

Join Yusnaviel as he describes the habitat and herps found here.

www.hoosierherpsociety.org

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Thank you and welcome to the Hoosier Herpetological Society! Thank you to our returning members!
Without all of you, we wouldn't be the organization that we've grown to be today!

Renewals

Nancy Kloskowski
Jim Horton

New Members

Savannah Senopole
Jay Smith
Sonny Rosetto
Rebecca Stevens

July Meeting Review

Holly Carter/HHS Secretary

At the July 2024 meeting of the Hoosier Herpetological Society, we were given the opportunity to have Savanna Senopole as a speaker. She is a 2-time winner of Junior Herpers award at the International Herpetological Conference.

Savannah is 14 years old but did a wonderful job of educating all of us on “Pseudocerastes Urarachnoides” a little known snake from the mountain areas of Iran. The popular name for this snake is Spider Tailed Horned Viper. This snake is considered endangered in Iran, and studies are being curtailed by its rarity as well as political environment. This viper is highly cryptic in its coloring, disguising well with its home in the stoney ledges on mountain sides. It sidles down amid the stoney debris with just its eyes and curious tail showing. This tail has a growth on it that uncannily looks like a spider complete with legs on its sides. This growth starts out as a small bulb on a baby snake and as it grows it develops this unusual appendage on the end of its tail.

The snake is only about 20 inches in length but it has approximately 2 inch front fangs that it uses to catch small birds. It uses this “spider” as a lure and wiggles it around until a bird arrives to catch a meal of a spider.

The snake then pounces and envenomates its prey.

Savannah even was able to include a short video of this snake in action luring and attacking the bird,(which she added menacing music to add to an entertainment value of the video) Savannah then included how she became interested in these animals as well as several others she keeps as pets. She tells how she learns about an animal before she commits to obtaining it to make sure she has the correct accommodations for them.

She hopes to be able to continue to study and travel to places to learn about more of these animals, as well as teach others to have respect instead of fear, concerning these different creatures.

We hope to hear more about her future explorations.

HHS River Float (Review)

Jim Horton (Photos by Anne Laker and Jim Horton)

The weather was perfect! Blue skies and low humidity made for an awesome day on the water. Our group of 17 met at Blues Canoes in Edinburgh at 9:30AM. After a long time waiting, we were finally on the bus ride to our drop off site.



Once in the water, Ethan Estabrook found a northern

water snake just across the bank. It had a beautiful ventral side with orange and pinkish coloration.

The river was swarming with groups of kayakers all day. The HHS group did our best to avoid the masses but it wasn't easy.

Turtle numbers were down compared to previous years. Species recorded were red-eared slider, northern map, spiny soft shelled, Ouachita map turtles. Although not an official count, I believe we roughly came up with about 40 to 50 turtles.





Northern waters snakes were plentiful. Many were on snags near fast flowing current. Unfortunately, they were too difficult to photograph. Others were captured, identified, photographed, and released. We had the usual, "Is that a snake in your hands?" from passing boaters. We would give a calm answer of "Yes". Of course, the "You're crazy" and other unmentionables were uttered from the curious and serpent fearing.

The group recorded two Queen snakes on the river float. One slipped right through my hands and everyone jokingly let me know afterwards. Another gravid queen snake was captured, admired, photographed, and released.



We are known to make many stops along the river. Snacks, liquids, rock skipping, disc throwing, and exploring are part of the stops. Some of our crew even swam while we were beached along a shoreline. At one of our afternoon beach stops, we found a five-lined skink along the shoreline that was injured. It was most likely hit by a sliding kayak. Various minnows, tiny catfish, and toadlets were also found while exploring the shoreline.

About halfway through the float, we enjoy stopping under a large old, iron bridge.



At the base of each end are large stones securing the bridge frame. In the cracks between the rocks, one can easily count on seeing a water snake or two taking refuge from the sun (and kayakers). We saw a few among rocks but our young member, Ravi Shanker was determined but unable to retrieve one for photos.

This event almost didn't happen. Apparently, the livery had rented out their entire fleet of kayaks/canoes days before our trip.



Big THANK YOU to Ethan Estabrook obtained enough kayaks for our group the day before. He even rented a trailer to transport them! Without him, we would have been in big trouble.

It was another great day on the water with wonderful people!

Magical, Mythical Frogs & Toads

By Mary A. Hylton



So, switching gears for something new! The past several articles I've submitted pertain to Snakes, their mythology and symbolism down through the ages. While I'm sure there may be more to uncover, I thought I'd take a break and shift our focus to a few different critters—frogs and toads—and the mythology, symbolism that surround them.

While researching this topic I learned, to my surprise, that apparently much of the folklore related to amphibians tend to portray them as "devious, ill-hearted monsters." Let it be said, though, that some cultures feature amphibians in a more positive light—connecting them to good luck protection, fertility and more. So let's explore!

Ancient Egypt

The people of ancient Mesopotamia frequently collected clay along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers where they also tended to frequently encounter frogs. Egyptians adopted the word, "krr" or "Krrw", which resembles the sound a frog makes when spoken. Babylonians used the word "khûru", which also resembles the sound of a frog. As you may notice, these are much different from our English "Ribbit" that is often used to simulate frog calls.

Ancient Egyptians believed that frogs were born from mud and water hence the description of amphibians as having a semi-aquatic lifestyle. This belief stemmed from the times when the Nile River would flood during rainy seasons and frogs would seemingly appear out of nowhere and then proceed with their mating rituals. Frogs were commonly depicted on jewelry and other ornaments in ancient Egypt as well as other civilizations. One common practice involved the placing of frog-laden knives atop the bellies of pregnant women and upon newborn babies with the belief that the children would be protected from all harm.

Frogs, in fact, were so important to early Egyptians that they were often embalmed upon death.

Ancient Greece

Ancient Greeks adopted many of the Egyptians' traditions surrounding amphibians such as believing that frogs originated from mud and water. It was around this period that the phenomenon, of "Frog Rain," came into existence. Frog Rain?!?!

In those times, before the global decline of many amphibians, frogs often were observed to reproduce in hordes during their mating season. It wasn't uncommon for thousands of tiny frogs and toads to cover walkways while simultaneously entering homes, invading public areas and, thereby, were generally considered pests. This occurrence became commonly known as

"Frog Rain" as they tended to take place after the first heavy rains of the season. For many modern day herpers we can identify with breeding cycles of Spring Peepers, Chorus Frogs, etc. to begin during a period preceding and/or during early Spring rains. Visiting a vernal pool during a warmish period in late February can give testament to this as one is met with the deafening chorus of a myriad of frog mating calls. Frogs were also associated with weather predictions because they begin croaking just before it rains.

Frogs in Witchcraft, Dark magic, Totem, Spirit & Omen

According to folklore legend, witches often believed that in order to control the weather they would concoct brews of snakes, toads, and frogs (and parts thereof) which was often referred to as "Toad Soup." They were often depicted as mangling toad bodies in order to devise spells and concoct potions from various toad body parts.

Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages societies began to show greater interest in science, namely the study of animals. Although much of the content of these studies often originated in myth and folklore they served as the early beginnings of modern biological sciences.

The book, *Physiologus* (c. Middle Ages) was purportedly the most important literary work pertaining to the science of animals during this time. In this book, frogs were categorized in two ways: Land Frogs and Water Frogs. "Land Frogs" symbolized stamina and steadfastness as they are required to endure the heat of the sun if they are to survive. Water Frogs, in contrast, symbolized cowardice as they fled to the cool water to escape the dangers of living on the land.

Ancient Folk Medicine

In ancient and medieval times, amphibians were thought to possess medicinal properties. Frog potions were used as aphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and more. Frog Livers were believed to consist of two halves one of which (unclear as to which one) was considered to possess the antidote to any and all poison in the world. Toad Lungs were believed to be the means of the "perfect murder of a husband." Frogs were believed that they could help remove any thoughts of adultery from one's mind. When all is said and done, however, it would not be surprising to learn that much-experienced illness or death resulted after ingesting or applying frog-made brews containing toxic frog secretions.

While this article touches lightly upon some of the folklore surrounding frogs and toads, I'm certain there is much more out there to explore so we will save that for next time!

(Source:<https://www.amphibianlife.com/frogs-and-toads-in-religion-mythology-and-witchcraft/>)

Snake Fest 2024

Jim Horton

Brown County State Park's annual Snake Fest takes place every second weekend of July. This year, was no different. Eli Major, BCSP Naturalist, always does a fine job orchestrating this event.

The HHS has been a part of the event for several years now. This year, we participated with live animal exhibits and presentations. Many of our members showed up for the day. Roger and Holly Carter, Baily Russell, and myself showed native and non-native snakes and other reptiles.



Jerrett Manek (DNR)

Jarrett Manek, Interpretive naturalist, O'Bannon Woods State Park, showcased the collection from the park nature center. It is indeed an impressive display! All the colubrid species native to Indiana were represented. Even our venomous species were included in the display. We're glad that Jerrett makes the trip every year!

Presentations were offered in the air-conditioned meeting rooms in the nature center. I gave a presentation in the nature center, along with two more by Roger Carter and park staff.

Eli Major gave a presentation outdoors on the lawn with a timber rattlesnake. He reviewed and dispelled the common myths regarding timber rattlesnakes in Indiana. Eli

carefully retrieved the snake from an enclosure and noted that it wasn't rattling or chasing him. In fact, when he approached it, the snake would always retreat. It showed no aggression whatsoever.



Eli Major (BCSP)

Another great day of education with reptilians at our most popular state park!
Until next yea

The Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium

Hosted by the

St. Louis Herpetological Society

September 20-22, 2024

Hilton St. Louis Airport
10330 Natural Bridge Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63134
314.824.1618
St. Louis airport.hilton.com

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Club Affiliation _____

Registration (please check one)

Adults: \$75 ☐

Students with school ID : \$50 ☐

Banquet: \$35 ☐

T-Shirt: \$20 ☐ **Size**

Field Trip to St. Louis Zoo Yes ☐ No ☐

Send to:
St. Louis Herp Society
P.O. Box 6532
St. Louis, Mo 63125

More photos from Snake Fest 2024



HHS Board of Directors - 2024

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	president@hoosierherpsoc.org
VICE-PRESIDENT	Katie Kolcun		k.a.kolcun@gmail.com
SECRETARY	Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP	Brenten Reust		treasurer@hoosierherpsoc.org
SERGEANT AT ARMS	Louis Studer		louis.studer86gmail.com

Appointed Board Members for 2024

EDITOR	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	stardali84@hotmail.com
WEBSITE COORDINATOR	Ethan Estabrook		
MEMBERS AT LARGE	Pat Hammond	(317) 656-9496	gnaubone92@yahoo.com
	Rick Marrs		rickmarrs@gmail.com
	Mary Hylton	(317) 966-4591	liblady81@hotmail.com
	Ethan Estabrook	(317) 650-7650	ekestabrook@gmail.com
	Kimberly Scott	(317) 306-1597	silverskydragon@att.net
	Dale Schoentrup		eyelashviper@hotmail.com

2024 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

August 21, 2024 – HHS monthly meeting. Guest speaker – Yusnaviel Garcia-Padron, Topic: Herpetology of Eagle Marsh Nature Preserve.

September 8, 2024 - Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. 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

September 20-22, 2024 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO. Hilton/St. Louis Airport. Mention the herpetological symposium for discount rates.

October 10, 2024 – Live Amphibian and Reptile Exhibit at Greenwood Nature Center. 7PM-9PM

President's message

Jim Horton

Its officially the *dog days* of summer! More and more nature fans are joining our HHS facebook page. People are reporting plenty of amphibian and reptile sightings on the page.

Big thanks to Samannah Senopole for outstanding presentation last month! She has a great science and herpetology future ahead of her!

Snake Fest was last month at Brown County State Park. As usual, our members gave it their all by answering questions, displaying herps, and giving presentations. Thanks to park staff for facilitating this event.

I'm sending out a huge thank you to Ethan Estabrook! Only days before the HHS Kayak/Canoe trip, we learned that the livery had sold out all of their rentals for that day. He gathered enough kayaks from friends to accommodate everyone on our trip. Ethan rented a large trailer to transport them to the livery. Thanks again for saving the day Ethan!

This month, Yusnaviel Garcia-Padron is going to give us a great presentation featuring the Herpetology of Eagle Marsh! See you there!

Membership Form

☐ new member

☐ renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Email Address _____

Individual/Family Membership \$25.00

Herpetological Interests

Hoosier Herpetological Society
P.O. Box 40544
Indianapolis, IN 46240-0544

Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

☐ If this box is checked, it's time to renew your membership