



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 28 Number 8

August 2017

Monthly H.H.S. Meeting Holliday Park Nature Center August 16, 7:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Todd Pierson, University of Georgia
Topic: "What is a species, anyway?"

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to welcome back Todd Pierson as this month's guest speaker. Todd originally from Indianapolis, received a B. S. in Ecology from the University of Georgia in 2009. He is currently a PhD Candidate in the department of Ecology and Biology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Todd's research uses genetic and sometimes genomic tools to uncover the ecology and evolutionary history of salamanders, and his dissertation work focuses on the two-lined salamander (*Eurycea boisleata*) species complex.

His topic "What is a species, anyway" will describe the science behind the frequent, often frustrating, and sometimes unjustified proposed changes to herpetological taxonomy, focusing on some of the most prominent examples from the past twenty years. For example, is the canebrake rattlesnake actually a unique species or is it a subspecies or geographic race of the timber rattlesnake? Todd has done many programs for H.H.S. and they are always very informative and entertaining!

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13 – HHS KAYAK/CANOE FLOAT



9:00 A.M. BLUES CANOES IN EDINBURG, IN

Join fellow HHS members for a canoe/kayak trip down the beautiful Driftwood River. There are many turtles and water snakes along the Driftwood. We will be counting turtle and snake species while on the river. We'll also stop along a sand bar for a short lunch (on your own).

What to bring – drinks, lunch, waterproof baggies, camera (not your best one), binoculars, sunscreen, bug spray, swimsuit, sunglasses, old shoes or water shoes.

For more information - www.bluescanoelivery.com 812.526.9851

Questions for HHS members – call Jim at (317) 443.4845

*******Look for any updates or postponements, or cancellations on the HHS website or Facebook page*******

President's message

Jim Horton

From what I hear, the July meeting went very well. There was plenty of entertainment, from Rex and Abbie's collection of live herps to Rick's videos. Thanks everyone for a successful meeting!

Our trip to Arizona was a blast! The International Herpetological Symposium was so much fun and educational! I hope to have a presentation coming up featuring our time in the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts.

Speaking of symposiums, the HHS is in the planning stages of the 2018 Midwest Herpetological Symposium. We're currently looking for guest speakers for this event. Like always, we'll need as much help as we can get to put on a conference like this. If you are interested or have any leads, please see any board member. The date is September 28, **2018** at LaQuinta Inn South.

We have several opportunities for you and your animals to get involved with the HHS! September 9 is the Handi-Capable Camp at Bradford Woods near Martinsville. This is a weekend for mentally challenged individuals. These folks get a chance to do a wide variety of activities during the weekend and our display is one of the most talked about! We've been asked back for several years now!

August 19 is a creek cleanup event in Zionsville called Creek Fest. We were invited to exhibit live local amphibians/reptiles during the event. If you have native riparian species that you'd like to share, contact me and I'll give you the details.

The Holliday Park Fall Festival is November 5th from 1:00 to 4:30 at the nature center. We're always a big hit here as well. You are welcome to show your stuff (animals) during this time.

I know I probably don't have to say this but, please be courteous and professional during our public events. We ask that you have clean, well lit enclosures with proper identification of each animal.

If you have anything you'd like to have published in the Monitor, please email it to me and it can be in the next issue.

Our website now has an Indiana native snake ID field guide that is phone-friendly. Check it out when you get a chance – www.hoosierherpsoc.org

HAND HELD HERPS

Article and photos by Roger Carter

The Eastern Milk Snake, *Lampropeltis triangulum triangulum*, is a snake that measures twenty-four inches to thirty-six inches long with the background color gray or tan with brown or reddish brown blotches that have a black border. The blotches on young snakes can be a very nice shade of red. They also have a "V" or "Y" shape mark just behind its head. It can be found from southern Maine to southeastern Minnesota, through northern Illinois, most of Indiana, to parts of North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia. They can be found in a wide variety of habitats from loose bark, under rocks and man-made debris like boards and old roofing tin and sometimes they can be found out in the open. Most of the ones that I have seen rarely

bite. They eat small rodents and other reptiles. We rescued a female from a location that was being bulldozed, that female laid several eggs which all hatched and we re-located the mother and all the hatchlings to a more isolated spot.



The Eastern Milk Snakes shown in the pictures here were found in different spots somewhere in southern Indiana, the large one on June 2014, and the little one on May 2017.



I don't remember the circumstances of finding the adult animal but it was probably either hiding under a fragment of plywood or a piece of roofing tin. The little one, which we think is a hatchling from 2016, was found under fragments of an old board this year. The Eastern Milk Snakes are very common and I always enjoy finding them. We often find them during the Hoosier Herp Out, the picnic and field trip of the Hoosier Herpetological Society every spring.

Sure baby turtles are cute, but...

What will you do when you're done caring for it?
When you're kid grows up and moves out?

Aquatic turtles are a long-lived species.
They eat, poo, and live in the same water/tank.
They require daily care.
They need a filter.
They need ultraviolet lighting and basking lamps.
They need constant water changes.
They need a variety of food items.
They need vitamin supplements.
They may out-live you.



Keeping turtles and tortoises may also be very rewarding for the right person(s).

Please! Do your research before considering taking in a turtle of any species.

Created by Jim Hooten for the Hoosier Herpetological Society 2017



HHS at Brown County's Snake Fest

Jim Horton

Last month, naturalists at Brown County State Park held an educational event called SnakeFest. This was in collaboration with the Indiana DNR, the HHS, and BCSP. This day featured hikes through the woodlands in search of snakes, live presentations, informational displays, and even a raptor show. The HHS was invited to take part in this much needed program. Dale Schoentrup, Robert Tyler, Barbara Filtri, Rex Morell, and Abbie Watson represented the HHS. Thanks to Robert Tyler for the photos!

Thanks to our HHS crew for taking their day to give snakes their day!



July HHS Meeting Review

by Ed Ferrer

After our successful June "Show and Tell" meeting our board decided to have a similar meeting for July centered around the exotic "pets" of Rex Morell and Abbie Watson. Heather as vice-president started the meeting with the customary announcements of upcoming events and answered questions. I showed what turned out to be two herps of the month. I first showed a zig-zag ball python that originally belonged to Will Brown, but he was ill and couldn't make the meeting. I also presented my female bull snake and mentioned that I was very excited when she laid fifteen eggs! Then I was disappointed when they all turned out infertile.

Next Robert Tyler showed two beautifully prepared displays of some of his shed skins of his venomous snakes. They were encased in glass and wood just like they would be in a museum display. One had the skins of a timber rattlesnake, a southern copperhead, and an Eastern diamond back rattle snake. The other was of his Gabon viper.



He also described how his passion for venomous snakes was inspired by the work of Bill Hasst (of the famous Miami Serpentarium) and showed a display he made of Haast

obituary and two photos, young and old. He was also inspired by an earlier book The Venomous Snakes of Africa by Sherman Minton. He had to trade a cobra to get this collector's item book and he had it signed by both Sherman and his wife. He has had a working relationship with Jim Harrison of the Kentucky Reptile Zoo. It was obvious he has done a lot of research and has obtained the necessary permits to handle the "hot" snakes.

Then Rex and Abbie took center stage with their awesome collection of exotics. Abbie first presented a red tail boa constrictor that was a rescue that she nursed back to health. Rex then presented a normal Burmese python and an albino 'Burm.



But it was obvious Rex's real passion was his awesome collection of reticulated pythons. He first started with a normal 'retic, then a tiger, platinum golden child, and lavender tiger 'retic morphs. All were beautiful and unique. (My

personal favorite was the lavender tiger.) Next he held "Squishy", a huge black throat monitor lizard and explained that even though it was about 50 pounds it was only two years old. When they first got him it came in a plastic container about the size that is commonly used for young tarantulas at reptile shows! He ended their presentation with two beautiful tarantulas, a large Brazilian black and a Mexican fire knee. Rex and Abbie worked well together and gave everyone a chance for an up close encounter with their fantastic collection.



Next Rick Marrs showed several videos that he had taken in various field trips. We saw many forms of wildlife such as northern water snakes, other snakes, turtles, frogs and many other wild fauna and flora. The videos included excellent commentary that was both informative and often humorous.

A big "Thank You" for all the HHS members who provided a wonderful experience for all who attended!

2017 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

August 13, 2017 – HHS Canoe/Kayak float trip. 9:00AM, Blues Canoes in Edinburgh, IN

August 16, 2017 – HHS meeting, Special Guest - Todd Pierson (University of Georgia), Topic: “What Is a Species Anyway?”

August 18-20, 2017 – Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), Annual meeting, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN. For more information – www.mwparc.org

August 19, 2017 – HHS at Creekfest in Zionsville. This event is a creek cleanup and the HHS will be displaying local, native riparian species.

August 27, 2017 - 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 show dates: November 5

September 9, 2017 – HHS educational display/exhibit of amphibians and reptiles for the Handi-Capable Camp at Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN 9-4pm

October 20-22, 2017 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium. Bloomington, MN, Hosted by Minnesota Herpetological Society

November 5, 2017 – Holliday Park Fall Festival, HHS will be exhibiting/educating visitors. All HHS members are encouraged to attend. Time is 1:00-4:30

December 2, 2017 – HHS Christmas party. Location – MCL south. More info. to come.

The new yellow sea snake assumes an unusual ambush posture

July 31, 2017 Source: sciencedaily.com and Pensoft Publishers



This is the ambush posture of the new yellow sea snake subspecies *Hydrophis platurus xanthos*. It floats at the sea

surface at night in a sinusoidal shape with its head pointing downwards and mouth agape.

Credit: Brooke L. Bessesen; CC-BY 4.0

Carrying its petite frame and all-yellow skin, the recently scrutinized sea snake populations from Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica, already seem different enough to be characterized as a new subspecies. However, their most extraordinary trait is only exposed at night when the serpents opportunistically feed on small fish by hanging upside down from the water surface, assuming a peculiar sinusoidal ambush posture.

The new yellow sea snake subspecies (*Hydrophis platurus xanthos*) is described by Brooke Bessesen, Phoenix Zoo, USA, and Dr. Gary Galbreath,

Northwestern University and The Field Museum of Natural History, USA, in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Unlike its related species, the yellow-bellied sea snake (*Hydrophis platurus*), the yellow sea snake subspecies lives in a significantly more hostile environment -- the waters in the gulf are warmer, often turbulent, and the dissolved oxygen in them occasionally drops to extremely low levels. The two snakes' territories are separated by some 22 kilometers.

Likely as a result, the new reptile has evolved to hunt at night, while its lighter coloration plays role in thermoregulation.

Given the list of well-defined distinct traits, the new subspecies could eventually turn out to be a new species instead. As for the moment, however, the

authors remain cautious until additional data are available.

More importantly, the scientists call for conservation measures to be applied to the new serpent's habitat. With its very restricted geographic range of about 320 km² located in a currently unprotected area, the yellow sea snake is at a serious risk of extinction. Collectors have already been reported to remove specimens from the sea. Additionally, the reptiles are already living at the upper edge of the species' temperature tolerance, which makes them particularly susceptible to climate change.

"Hopefully this globally unique population can continue to offer both scientists and conservation-conscious tourists a worthy subject of observation and study," say the authors.

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

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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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____ Renewal

____ Name

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____ Individual/Family Membership \$20.00

____ Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

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