



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 19 Number 4

April 2008

President's Message

Jim Horton

April is the start of the herp season! Reptilians will begin emerging from hibernation during this month. It is also one of the most beautiful times to get outdoors and see nature at its best!

You may have noticed the white strip on the masthead of the newsletter last month. That was correcting a mistake. I accidentally left the date from the previous month on it and it went to print.

I have to announce some unfortunate news for Indiana herpetology. Our state herpetologist, Zach Walker, has taken a new position in Wyoming as their new state herpetologist. We hate to see him go but wish him the best with his new endeavor!

Just a thought – if you are looking for a great place to see herps and don't mind shopping for wildlife books, then the Muscatatuck Wildlife Refuge is the place for you. The bookstore there has the best selection of field guides I've seen anywhere in the state. They also have Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana (Sherman Minton Jr.). That book seems to be a tough one to find these days. It is also a great place to see some 40 different species of herps!

I would like to thank our members for renewing each and every year! It is great to see the great amount of renewals in this organization. I also want to extend my welcome to our newest members and hope that they enjoy their membership in the Hoosier Herpetological Society.

If you missed last month's meeting, you missed a good one! The presentation was a bit lengthy but really good. Dr. N. Thomas Hakansson (University of Kentucky), Presented – The Herps of Kenya (Africa). He encountered a plethora of herps from his East African visit. In fact, there were too many to mention here.

Don't forget this month's Guest Speaker – our own, Elliot Stahl. Elliot will lead us through caves in the United States and the herps he has encountered (and saved) within these vast, dark underground passages.

Happy Herping!

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

Renewals

Anita Carter (sustaining membership)

Carl Schwartz

Paul Hofsomner

Pat Hammond

Amy and Peter Baird (sustaining membership)

Brian Barker

Michael Beard

New Member

Chad Thompson

SPECIAL NOTICE

We are scheduled for Room 105 at Butler for April and may

Reptile Invasion '08

The Wesselman Woods Nature Center (WWNC) in Evansville will be hosting the Annual Reptile Invasion June 14 & 15

The Invasion is a collaboration of WWNC staff, local herpers, and H.H.S. members. It is a two-day event featuring live herp exhibits and programs/presentations. The event is a huge fundraiser for WWNC and one of our largest donations of the year. Members will exhibit their reptiles and amphibians from 10:00am to 4:00pm both days.

General Meeting: Wednesday April 16th, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Elliott Stahl

Topic: Herps in Caves

Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#105

April's guest speaker is H.H.S.'s long time board member Elliott Stahl. Elliott is an experienced field herper, excellent photographer and veteran cave explorer. He has traveled extensively throughout the United States searching for herps and repelling into caves. His power point program will feature the many reptiles and amphibians that he has encountered while exploring in caves. The first part of his talk will feature the herp species that normally are found in cave environments. The second part of his talk will feature "herptiles" that he found that had fallen into the caves or were otherwise trapped underground that he has rescued and returned to their normal above ground habitat. As an ex-geology major in college, I have visited many caves, but my attention was always on stalagmites, stalagmites and other limestone features. Now when I visit caves I will take a closer look at some of the animal inhabitants.

Come join us for a unique, subterranean herpetological adventure! - Ed

Herpetology Weekend

Natural Bridge State Resort Park, May 2 & 3

Registration upon arrival: \$5 per adult / \$2 per child age 12-17 / Free for children under 12

FRIDAY NIGHT SPEAKERS: 7:30 PM AT THE ACTIVITIES CENTER

Marty Rosenberg: Amazing Amphibians and Remarkable Reptiles

John MacGregor: Herpetologist's Galapagos Adventure

SATURDAY NIGHT SPEAKERS: 7:30 PM AT THE ACTIVITIES CENTER

James Kiser: Herpetology of the Big South Fork National Recreation Area

Tom Biebighauser: Building Habitat for Spadefoots in British Columbia

FIELD TRIPS: Field trips leave the Hemlock Lodge at 9:00am and 1:30 pm on Saturday

Visit herp hot spots with knowledgeable herpers for fun, photography, and slime!

Venom Extraction: At the Kentucky Reptile Zoo at 1:00 pm Saturday and Sunday

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE: Quiz your knowledge of amphibians and reptiles - you might win a herpin' prize!

For more information contact the
Park Naturalist Office at 606 663-2214
or brian.gasdorf@ky.gov

Embarrassing Herp Moment

Dave Mitchell

I did the Reptile Days on March 14 at the State Museum. The Herp Society was well represented for this show on a Friday. Things were going smoothly all morning with lots of school kids touring the display. My 6 turtles were coping pretty well. Shortly after lunch my male spotted turtle decided it was time for some fun and mounted the female. I figured they wouldn't do this long because the female was very hyper. I was wrong. A young girl says to me, "What are they doing?" I replied, "What do you think their doing?" The young lady who looked to be 11 or 12 years old answered, "They look like their mating." In my stupidity I say, "You're right." I next thing I know a young man comes running over with a video camera and starts recording the goings on. Next thing I hear him say "Cool, turtle porn!" I promptly separated them. They were cool for the rest of the show. I sat there envisioning every young man at some middle school ogling at a video of 2 turtles doing the nasty. But what really surprised me was that these tweens knew what was going on.

Hoosier Herpout '08

It's soon time for the 8th Annual Hoosier Herpout!

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

Saturday, May 24th - 9:00 A.M.

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

There is a \$4.00 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.

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 including 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. You bring the covered dish (desert, casserole, etc.) and your own beverages.

Hardin Ridge offers class "A" camping (showers, electrical hookup) and class "B" (showers) camping. We will most likely be camping in the "Southern Point" campgrounds (class B).

Look for a note at the gatehouse. For more info. Call Jim Horton (317) 865-0464

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.

Central Indiana Frog Watchers

(the local chapter of the National Wildlife Federation's Frogwatch). Monthly meetings are held at the Camp Cullom Nature Center in Frankfort, IN. For more info. Contact Wendell Zetterberg at

wzetterberg@hotmail.com or (765) 249-2298

Keeping Kenyan sand boas

Eryx colubrinus loveridgei

Jim Horton

The sand boas are an Old World species of Boidae, (subfamily-Erycinae). These erycines include the New World rosy boas (*Lichanura*) and rubber boas (*Charina*) of North America. The Kenyan sand boa, which will be discussed in this article, is a well-established species in the herpetological hobby. Due to smaller size, hardiness, and affordability, sand boas are a good choice for any herpetological enthusiast.

Kenyan sand boas or East African sand boas as they should be referred, are short and stocky in build. Many attain lengths at adulthood of only 18-24 inches. Females are generally larger in size.

The scales are smooth dorsally and keeled at the posterior. Males may be determined visually, by a longer tail at the base of the vent. Larger anal spurs may also be present in males. Ultimately, they must be probed for definite sexual determination. Coloration is a bit drab in some of these Erycines but they are the most attractively marked of all the sand boas. Hues ranging from tan, buff, to bright oranges are present in these snakes. The ventral side is an off-white and smooth to the touch. Kenyan sand boas are viviparous (live bearing) and don the same patterns at birth as they do in adulthood.

Sand boas are small but strong constrictors and all are terrestrial. The arid dwelling sand boa is also a burrower and they are most comfortable under the surface for several reasons, 1. To elude predators. 2. Ambushing their prey while beneath the surface, 3. Escaping the heat of the sun. However, they don't always burrow in their natural habitat. Some will utilize other reptile and mammal burrows. It should also be noted that they aren't always found in sandy terrain. Soil, gravel and even grasslands are typical habitats where they may occur in East Africa.

Some Kenyans may be "snappy" or bite when alarmed while most others are quite well mannered in nature. These "biting" boas will snap from the side by surprise! Snakes with this behavior may not tame down easily by handling and are best left to observe in the enclosure.

Captive Care

These snakes thrive in arid conditions and high levels of humidity are unacceptable. Many problems may persist if the cage isn't kept dry. A small water bowl at the cool side of the enclosure

will keep humidity to a minimum. If humidity is a problem, water may be offered several times a week and removed afterward.

A medium size Rubbermaid container or ten-gallon aquarium will be suitable for a single snake throughout its lifetime.



Sand boa enclosures on heat tape.

Keepers may want to give more roaming space, but for those who keep a sizeable collection, Rubbermaid-type containers are the way to go. But humidity must be monitored closely in the latter enclosures.

Sand seems to be the preferred substrate for these terrestrial Kenyans. Different snakes will have their own preference as to what feels secure and comfortable for them. Sand may create a problem when feeding. Therefore, feeding should be monitored when using sand as a substrate. Problems with intestinal impaction has been documented due to sand sticking to prey and swallowed. These secretive boas prefer to hide and burrow by habit, so a secure hiding spot is needed. A flat rock is a good choice for a hide spot. Some keepers use newspaper, paper towels, or other commercial bedding for substrate. Newspaper is the most economical and easy to clean. I have a never-ending cage substrate, thanks to my newspaper subscription.

Heating is an important function when keeping sand boas. An under-cage heat pad should be used with levels at the mid-80's to the mid 90's as a hotspot. A thermometer should be utilized for monitoring the heat. A thermal gradient should be present in the cage by placing the heat at one end of the cage. This allows the snake to heat up and cool off when needed.

These snakes do bask and a spot light will work fine in an aquaria based enclosure with a screen lid. I don't use a heat-light and have had good luck with it. Although using a light above the cage may be helpful in keeping the ambient temperatures at correct levels. Another method is to keep a single 'herp' room at an even temperature. This isn't recommended with Kenyans.

In the event of a power outage, always have a source of emergency heat available. Generators,

heat packs, and propane heaters are good alternatives.

Feeding usually isn't problem. Some newly born Kenyans may take weeks until their first meal but they will almost always eat. In their natural habitat, sand boas feed upon lizards and rodents. Captive bred individuals almost always feed on frozen-thawed rodents. Some may not, but again, it's a matter of preference for the individual snake. Males will go off-feed during the cooler months and may not eat until they are ready, which could take months. I have two males that present feeding behavior this way. I have a male that is no longer than 14 inches and has been a great breeder for over eight years!



Female (large) and male

Breeding

Kenyan sand boas will breed readily when conditions are suitable. Adults will show breeding activity generally after three years of age. A gradual cooling period (and light cycle if used) should start in late fall for about eight weeks. Then the opposite, with a warming period-followed by feedings. Females should be well fed before any breeding begins. After several weeks of warming/feeding, the adults may be placed together (preferably soon after female sheds) until copulation occurs. Remove them and place them together again the next day and repeat again. After several weeks, the female (if fertile) will show signs of swelling in the posterior region. She will utilize heat more often. Gestation is about 120-180 days and litter sizes range from 3 to 18 young.

If one is interested in breeding sand boas, more reading is recommended to determine specifics.

These are vague notes that have worked for me in the past. I recommend more research if you have and interest in acquiring one of these most interesting little boas.



HERP HAPPENINGS

April 19, 2008 – HHS live amphibian/reptile exhibit at Garfield Park, Indpls. 10am-2pm

May 2 & 3, 2008 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, Kentucky,

May 24, 2008 - Hoosier Herpout – Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Monroe Reservoir, Camping, field herping, identification, photography.

June 6-8, 2008 – North American Amphibian Conference, Erving, MA, www.tnaac.org

June 14 & 15, 2008 – Reptile Invasion, Large public exhibit of amphibians/reptiles and programs. Wesselman Woods Nature Center, Evansville, IN 10-4

June 29, 2008 – 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 (Other dates, August 24.)

July 12, 2008 – Evansville Reptile Show, National Guard Armory, doors open at 10 a.m., contacts - snakefreak@insightbb.com or call (812) 629-0827

July 26 & 27, 2008 – Reptile Days at the Indiana State Museum, 11-4 (Sat.) & 12-4 (Sun.)

Federal Proposal Banning Pythons and Boas

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has made a significant move towards banning the importation and interstate transport of Boa Constrictors and Pythons in the United States. Quietly published in the Federal Register, the agency is accepting public comments until **April 30**. If enacted this will devastate an already hard hit industry, dealing a fatal death blow to a large number of businesses dependent on this segment of the industry and drying up the supply of these pets to pet owners across the United States.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service or We), are reviewing available biological and economic information on constrictor snakes in the Python, Boa and Eunectes genera for possible addition to the list of injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act. The importation and introduction of constrictor snakes into the natural ecosystems of the United States may pose a threat to the interests of agriculture, horticulture, forestry; to the health and welfare of human beings; and to the welfare and survival of wildlife and wildlife resources in the United States. An injurious wildlife listing would prohibit the importation into, or transportation between, States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or any territory or possession of the United States by any means, without a permit. Permits may be issued for scientific, medical, educational, or zoological purposes. This document seeks comments from the public to aid in determining if a proposed rule is warranted.

<http://www.pethobbyist.com/sitenews/...hons-Boas.html>

Online comments can be made here:

<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=SubmitComment&o=09000064803a565f>

Or mailed here:

U.S. Mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing,
Attn: RIN 1018-AV68, Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S.
Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 222,
Arlington, VA 22203.

Instructions: We will not accept e-mail or faxes. We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us (see the Public Comments section below for more information).

EMBARRASSING MOMENTS IN HERPING

By Garry Bryan

The fear of snakes is Ophidiophobia or how my mother felt **normal** people should feel about snakes; even a picture of a snake would “give her the willies” and “make her skin crawl” she used to say. Unfortunately, for her, I was not **normal**; I developed a weird fondness for these scaly legless reptiles at a very young age, bringing home, in my butterfly net, a baby water snake when I was six. In my mothers eyes things went down hill from there.

By eleven, I had a few “pet” snakes that my mother grudgingly allowed me to keep caged on the back porch. There was but one condition included in this arrangement: all snakes had to be released before cold weather arrived, no snakes allowed in the house yet.

I had one favorite snake then, a rather large, docile water snake that tolerated handling well which might explain, but not adequately, why I decided to tote this robust three and a half foot water snake onto the roof one pleasant Sunday morning.

As fate would have it, my mother was doing laundry that morning as well. “Natrix”, the water snake, crawled about on the warming tarpaper while my pre-adolescent mind wandered afar. My unsuspecting mother labored below, from the laundry room to the clothesline, a route that took her directly beneath both son and serpent.

Unbeknownst to me there was a hole in the porch roof that by coincidence lay just above the back door. Natrix, more sharp-eyed than his captor, spotted this escape route and made a beeline towards it, evidently not appreciating our morning convenes. Startled back to life when I realized that only part of the snake was now visible on the roof, I made an awkward yet successful grab at the tail just as it was about to disappear and drop to the porch below. I thought I had headed off a real disaster. I was sorely mistaken.

My mother, with a basket load of wet laundry, had just stepped through the back door at the precise moment that Natrix exited the roof, he now dangled just inches from my ophidiophobic mother’s face. Evidently, some unpleasantness occurred betwixt my mother and the dangling serpent, as there was a raucous commotion from below, the result of the laundry basket, the back door and my shrieking mother colliding with large garden implements falling to the floor. Her shrill scream, colorful expletives and use of my full name, including middle, was not a good sign. Cold weather had not yet arrived but I knew it was time to “release the serpents”.

My poor mother was involved in various snake dilemmas through the years, one of which involved her bonnet style hair dryer and a chilled boa constrictor, but that story will have to wait for another time.

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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, 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.

Hoosier Herpetological Society
MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ **New Member**

☐ **Renewal**

Name _____ **Date** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Phone _____ **Email Address** _____

☐ **Corresponding Member \$12.00**

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☐ **Sustaining Member \$25.00 or more**

Herpetological Interest(s)

Hoosier Herpetological Society
P.O. Box 40544
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Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

☐ If this area is checked, your membership will expire this month!