



# 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

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### President's Message

Jim Horton

I'd like to thank Holly Carter for helping me last month with at the HHS booth during the Zionsville Z-Greenfest. We answered questions from visitors and displayed native Indiana Herps.

Our 10th Hoosier Herpout is this month. It will take place next month, May 22<sup>nd</sup>. We hope to celebrate this special occasion with a few extra surprises. I hope to see many of you on this Southern Indiana outing! Look for details inside this issue.

Welcome our new members! I hope you will enjoy your membership in the HHS!

The excellent Guest Speakers just keep coming. This month, we welcome Mr. Mike Pingleton. Mike is a seasoned field herper and an excellent photographer.

Next month is our Scales and Tails exhibit at the Indiana State Museum.

### May HHS Meeting

**Wednesday, May 19th 7:30 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Mike Pingleton, University of Illinois**

**Topic: *"Herping" Through Kansas***

**Butler University, Room#150 Pharmacy Building (new wing)**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society welcomes Mike Pingleton as this month's guest speaker. Any veteran HHS member knows that Mike is an experienced field "herper" and excellent wildlife photographer. He has bred many different reptiles and has published a book on red-footed tortoise husbandry. He has traveled extensively throughout the United States studying different reptiles and amphibians. His topic for this month's meeting will be his account of several field trips through Kansas. Be sure to plan to attend this meeting for an interesting and informative evening!

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

# HERPETOLOGY WEEKEND – A REVIEW

By Jim Horton

Herpetology enthusiasts from Indiana and neighboring states enjoyed a fun filled weekend of field herping and presentations at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Herpetology Weekend.

The event was held at the Hemlock Lodge in Natural Bridge State Park in Slade, Kentucky. Natural Bridge is nestled in the Red River Gorge ecological area of Daniel Boone National Forest.

At the visitor's center, attendees were treated to a display of live local snakes (including local venomous species) from Kentucky.



Friday evening featured guest speakers Bill Love and Les Meade. Bill Love, famous herp photographer, breeder, and owner of Blue Chameleon Ventures, treated the audience to a comprehensive and comical lecture on herp photography. His talk was labeled "*Herp Photography-Beyond snapshots*".

Mr. Les Meade, biologist from Washington, lead a lecture called "*Selected Herps of Washington State*". He introduced us to the state of Washington and the herp species found there.

Door prizes were drawn and the winners collected their prizes from tickets handed out during registration. The herp weekend shirts featured a beautiful green salamander (*Aneides aeneus*) on the front and herp weekend sponsors on the back.

Afterwards, many herpers decided to 'road cruise' the "Gorge" area for herps. Several

live and D.O.R. copperheads, garter snakes, and amphibians were reported that night.



Saturday morning attendees were able to choose from several field trips in search of amphibians and reptiles. There was even a trip for kids called the 'salamander splash'.



After lunch was an opportunity to see a venom extraction at the Kentucky Reptile Zoo (KRZ). Herp weekend attendees were offered free admission to the KRZ throughout the weekend.

Another list of field trips departed at 1:00pm from the Hemlock Lodge. Again, adults were able to 'hit the field' while younger kids enjoyed herp crafts at the activity center.

Saturday evening, herpers dined at the Hemlock Lodge for a buffet. The food was really tasty and we stuffed ourselves until it hurt.

Afterwards, more lectures and drawings were offered at the activities center. John Bird, a former middle school teacher, featured "Confessions of an Amateur Herpetologist".

Then Mr. Ed Zimmer, Morehead State University, reviewed results of his studies on the venomous Cottonmouth with a talk titled, "Cool Cottonmouth Work".

A silent auction was held afterwards to benefit the event for next year. Items were

donated by the Park, regional herp societies, and individuals. Over \$200 was raised.

Next year will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for this event and they promise not to disappoint.

This was a fantastic event and the organizers should be very proud. I can't wait to see what next year holds for Herpetology Weekend!

## INDIANA RACERS

By Jim Horton



Black Racer photo-Jim Horton

Of Indiana's black snakes, none have the allure of the notorious black racer. We've all heard stories of a "black snake" that tried to chase someone. Or, there was the black snake that they saw one moment and it was gone the next. Most of the time, folks are referring to one of the racers. The southern black racer (*Coluber constrictor priapus*) or the blue racer (*Coluber constrictor foxii*). This snake doesn't coil or constrict its prey as the name may suggest. Instead it overpowers prey with its body by pressing firmly against a hard object until prey succumbs.

Do these snakes really chase humans? Most likely not. The startled snake probably just happens to be frantically traveling in the same direction of the frightened human being. They are certainly an aggressive snake and they will definitely stand their ground when threatened. All racers will strike repeatedly and vibrate the tail on dry leaves creating a sound similar to that of a rattlesnake.

The racers are one of our large colubrids. Lengths of 48 55 inches are common. Blue racers may attain larger lengths from 54 to 73 inches as adults.

Typically, blue racers are found in the northern section of the state and black racers to the south.

They occur state-wide and they do intergrade between ranges.

These snakes get a head start among some other snakes by emerging from hibernation fairly early in the season. They are very opportunistic feeders. Prey items consist of insects, rodents, birds, amphibians, lizards, and other snakes.

These large serpents are very successful at survival. These active snakes are diurnal and equipped with large eyes that aid in their search for prey. It isn't uncommon to see them with their heads above the vegetation while in motion. They won't hesitate to take to trees and shrubs for safety.

Racers are one of the more common snakes in the state. They frequent fields or woodland edges where prey is plentiful.

They are great swimmers too! Once in Southern Indiana, Pat Hammond, Rick Marrs, and I captured a racer for photos. It bit my hand repeatedly and blood was everywhere. After releasing it, the snake quickly slid down a hillside into a large pond. It traveled good distance across to the other side and moved up

the embankment. We were amazed by its dexterity and responsiveness.

The eggs of racers have their own characteristics. The texture is a rough, grainy feel and look. They also have an odd appearance to them. Not the usual 'pill' form of other viviparous snakes but more of an oval shape.

Young are marked with a light-grey background and light-brown or reddish saddles or spots along the back. The pattern darkens and completely disappears as they mature.

Adult black racers are dark gray to jet-black above. The ventral side is slate or bluish-gray. They have a distinct white chin and throat (a key field marking). Blue racers are shades of blue to greenish or gray as well. Belly is pale blue or gray. The head is usually darker in color than the body.

The month of May in Indiana is a great time for an outdoor experience with more than one kind of *racer*.

## Welcome New Members!

### Renewals

Jim Horton

Ed Ferrer

Stahl Family

John Wright

### New Members

Payton Whoberry

*The Monitor* is printed courtesy  
**The Harding Poorman Group**

## *April meeting review*

Jim Horton

Danna Baxley entertained the audience with a presentation on her recent studies. Black pine snakes, *Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi* were the bulk of the program but she also worked other herps were also mentioned. Danna has been studying pine snakes in Mississippi for four years. The black pine snake is currently listed as a candidate for the Endangered Species Act. It is losing its foothold in the pine forests of the southern U.S.

Three subspecies make up the pine snakes east of the Mississippi river. The Black, Florida, and the Northern pines. All three subspecies are of conservation concern.

Black pine snakes are large and powerful. Lengthwise, they may reach 100 inches or more. Brown bars are evident on juveniles. As growth occurs, these colors blend into a black or mostly black sheen.

Danna's four year research was concentrated on the black pine. These beautiful large snakes inhabit the longleaf pine forests where pine plantations are plentiful. Other pine forest specialists include the gopher tortoise and the Eastern Diamondback rattlesnake. Seventy-two species of herps may be found in the pine forests of the southeast.

Range for the black pine snake is southwestern Alabama, southeastern Mississippi, and Washington Parish, Louisiana. These are upland snakes found near ridge-tops. This habitat provides open sunny areas for basking and egg-laying.

Tools for her research include radio transmitters, drift fences, funnel traps, pitfalls, road cruising, coverboards, and random walking through the forest. She logged in 3,464 trap days and 400 hours of manual searching. Road cruising mileage was at 34,400 – that's a lot of wear and tear on a vehicle.

Twenty-seven new records for the black pine snake were discovered by Danna during this study! Eight adults for studied in an area of six counties. The longest distance of travel for a single specimen was

2,000 meters in a 3-day period. Peak movement was during the warmer months of summer and fall. Winter movement was active but slow. Home ranges were up to 1000 acres!

Favorite hideouts found for black pines include, stump holes, abandon tortoise burrows, open areas, brush piles, armadillo burrows, and other holes constructed by mammals.

There are ways that human activity may help these animals. Continued burning will help open up canopy and keep understory to a minimum. The discontinuing of stump removal will provide adequate cover. And finally, communications' between researchers will help keep the ongoing information up-to-date.

Danna mentioned our friends, Will Bird and Phil Peak of Louisville, KY. She added that the two of them are making a huge difference with their research and education regarding herps.

Other projects by the Kentucky DNR include a spotty population of Northern pine snakes. These snakes are rare in the state but are still known to occur. A Hellbender project is forthcoming. Researcher, Gregg Lipps is heading this study. So far only a few have been found in the state and most were older adults. A study on cotton mouths revealed 1,200 of them found by drift fence traps. They were also found to emerge from stump holes in the spring. A study on the Northern crawfish frogs is also ongoing in Western Kentucky. Ephemeral ponds are being constructed to aid in the survival of the uncommon frogs.

Finally, Danna is involved in an ongoing study on Alligator snapping turtles. The work began in 2009 and so far none have been found. Concentration has been at the Oxbow lakes near the Mississippi river. Traps utilized were hoop nets baited by the invasive Asian Carp. The carp were collected by 'boat cruising'. The sound of the boat motor irritates these large fish into jumping high into the air (or into the boats). 500 red-eared sliders, some common snapping turtles, and a few gar (fish) have been captured. Alligator snappers have yet to be found. This year they will try slow moving rivers.

I'm sure that when substantial data is collected and analyzed, Danna will let us know her results at a future HHS meeting.

## 10<sup>th</sup> 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 campground. 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](mailto:stardali84@hotmail.com)

## 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:



May 28<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30pm  
June 4<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30pm  
June 18<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30pm

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 9pm-10:30pm  
July 16<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30pm  
July 30<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30pm  
August 13<sup>th</sup> 9pm-10:30

## **Scales and Tails Fest Indiana State Museum June 12th 11:00-4:00**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society will be exhibiting our "herps" at this years Scales and Tails Fest on June 12th. at the Indiana State Museum. This will be our largest exhibit of the year! There has been a major change this year. Instead of being in a separate room on the second floor, we will be located in the main lobby. This will mean we will have much more exposure to the public. (Last year many people said that they did not know we were in the second floor room. If it were not for Roger Carter standing outside the door serving as a "barker" directing people into the room many more people would have missed us.)

But with this change we will have less number of tables than last year. We will have between 10-12 tables about 2/3 of what we had last year. We will need to plan to exhibit as many different types of reptiles and amphibians but with fewer animals than last year. If you would like to exhibit this year, please send a list of what animals you would like to display.

If you plan to be an exhibitor please remember a few things:

- (1.) Have your animals displayed in clean, neatly labeled containers.
- (2.) Have some hand sanitizer readily available at your location.
- (3.) Have only one animal out or open at any time.
- (4.) For safety concerns, be sure to secure (protect) the animal's head. Many of the children are used to petting dogs and cats on the head, exactly the opposite behavior is needed with a reptile. Children are very excited regarding exotic animals so warn against fast movements around your animals. Don't assume the public knows how to act around "herps". We need to continually remind people about being cautious and respectful around your animal. (It only takes one careless act by a person to ruin the show for everyone!)

Please contact Ed Ferrer at [pythonpals1@msn.com](mailto:pythonpals1@msn.com) regarding what animals you would like to exhibit. We encourage as many members as possible to participate but we don't need massive duplications of animals that could waste table space.

## **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.

*United States Association of Reptile Keepers - [www.usark.org](http://www.usark.org)*

### **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](mailto:2bears@embarqmail.com)

**For Sale:** c.b. Western hognose snakes, feeding well on frozen/thawed pinks. \$60.00 each.  
Jim Horton (317)865-0464 [strardali84@hotmail.com](mailto:strardali84@hotmail.com)

## EVENTS

**May 19, 2010** – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker: Mike Pingleton, topic – Herping in Kansas.

**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.

**June 5, 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: 7/10, 8/28. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)

**June 16, 2010** – HHS meeting: Topic – Annual Show and Tell meeting. Members share their herpetological interests (live herps, books, photos, etc.) with the audience.

**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

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	<a href="mailto:stardali84@hotmail.com">stardali84@hotmail.com</a>
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Amy Baird		

# Hoosier Herpetological Society

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Corresponding Membership \$12.00

☐ Individual/Family Membership \$15.00

☐ Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

Herpetological Interest(s)

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Hoosier Herpetological Society

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Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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