



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 24 Number 11

November 2013

Welcome Hoosier Herpetological Society members!

NEW MEMBERS

Jonathon Renshaw

Neil Jones

RENEWALS

Roger and Holly Carter – Sustaining membership

Mike McNeely – Sustaining membership

Leonard Gray – Sustaining membership

Martha Horton

November HHS meeting

November 20th 7:00 P.M.

Holliday Park, Auditorium

Speaker, Nikki Shonk, Ivy Tech

Topic: "*Field Herping in Costa Rica*"

Now that we had had a few hard frosts in Indiana field herping season is pretty much done. What a great time to check out warmer climates! Last year Nikki Shonk and her mother took an eco-tour field trip to Costa Rica and came back with some wonderful photos of what they found. HHS member Nikki is a current student at IVY tech where she plans to major in zoology. She also is an intern for Animalia, has worked at the Indy Reptile Expo in Noblesville, and successfully bred some of her own reptiles. I am sure after you see what they found you may want to plan a trip to Costa Rica in the near future. Be sure to make plans to attend this meeting!

President's message

Jim Horton

I'd like to thank Dale Schoentroupe for his efforts in rescuing axolotls from a local university. These amphibians were used in 'studies' at the university. They were slated for euthanasia if Dale had not taken them in. The HHS is charging a mere ten bucks for these aquatic salamanders and he sold them all at the last reptile show. We're glad they have all found homes! All sales went directly to the HHS – Thanks again Dale.

Another thank you goes to ErinWagner, Ed Ferrer, Lia and Andy Hicks, and Roger and Holly Carter for their help at the Garfield Park HHS live herp exhibit.

And again, more thank you's. Roger and Holly Carter, Pat Hammond, Ed Ferrer, Rick Marrs, and I displayed herps October 27th at Holliday Park Nature Center. Special thanks to Amy Baird for bringing her herps along.

These programs help pay for our meeting room, provide much needed funds for the HHS, and most important – educating our visitors about the amazing world of amphibians and reptiles!

Welcome to our newest members, Neil Jones and Jonathon Renshaw. Welcome back to our renewal memberships! Your sustaining membership is greatly appreciated!

Just a reminder, we won't have a newsletter for December. Instead, a flier will be sent out with information about our holiday party. Details are to come.

Hope to see you at the meeting next week for voting and Nikki's presentation.

Nominees for 2014 officers

President – Jim Horton and Rick Marrs

Vice-President – Ed Ferrer, Pat Hammond, and Angela Thomas

Treasurer – David Mitchell

Secretary – Holly Carter

Sergeant At Arms – Will Brown

Voting will take place at the November meeting.

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

Did You Know?

Indiana now has two herp societies. The Tri-State Herpetological Society is located in Evansville. Check out their website at <http://tristateherpsocietyindiana.weebly.com>

Homeless herps

The HHS taken in several herps that are in need of permanent homes.

2.0 Red-eared sliders, approx 6 inches and 1-year-old. All accessories go with these animals.

16 year-old green iguana, needs home, good disposition.

If you have an interest in re-homing any of these animals, contact Jim Horton

HHS at Bradford Woods



HHS members showing animals.



Partial HHS display.



Our helpers for the day

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN By Jim Horton

The HHS was invited to an event called HandyCapableCamp (HCC) at Bradford Woods in Martinsville on Saturday, September 14.

HHS members happily showed up with their animals to help educate the campers and raise funds for the HHS. The event lasted all day from 9am to 4pm. Thanks to Roger Carter, Angela Thomas, Barbara Filtri and Jim Horton for utilizing their Saturday to help the HHS and HCC. A group of young girls who were working at the event were eager to help out with the HHS display. They had volunteered to hold and show snakes to the campers most of the day. I didn't get their names but would like to thank them for their help.

Snakes control blood flow to aid vision

November 4, 2013 sciencecodex.com University of Waterloo

A new study from the University of Waterloo shows that snakes can optimize their vision by controlling the blood flow in their eyes when they perceive a threat.

Kevin van Doorn, PhD, and Professor Jacob Sivak, from the Faculty of Science, discovered that the coachwhip snake's visual blood flow patterns change depending on what's in its environment. The findings appear in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

"Each species' perception of the world is unique due to differences in sensory systems," said van Doorn, from the School of Optometry & Vision Science.

Instead of eyelids, snakes have a clear scale called a spectacle. It works like a window, covering and protecting their eyes. Spectacles are the result of eyelids that fuse together and become transparent during embryonic development.

When van Doorn was examining a different part of the eye, the illumination from his instrument detected something unusual.

Surprisingly, these spectacles contained a network of blood vessels, much like a blind on a window. To see if this feature obscured the snake's vision, van Doorn examined if the pattern of blood flow changed under different conditions.

When the snake was resting, the blood vessels in the spectacle constricted and dilated in a regular cycle. This rhythmic pattern repeated several times over the span of several minutes.

But when researchers presented the snake with stimuli it perceived as threatening, the fight-or-flight response changed the spectacle's blood flow pattern. The blood vessel constricted, reducing blood flow for longer periods than at rest, up to several minutes. The absence of blood cells within the vasculature guarantees the best possible visual capacity in times of greatest need.

"This work shows that the blood flow pattern in the snake spectacle is not static but rather dynamic," said van Doorn.

Next, the research team examined the blood flow pattern of the snake spectacle when the snake shed its skin. They found a third pattern. During this time, the vessels remained dilated and the blood flow stayed strong and continuous, unlike the cyclical pattern seen during resting.

Together, these experiments show the relationship between environmental stimuli and vision, as well as highlight the interesting and complex effect blood flow patterns have on visual clarity. Future research will investigate the mechanism underlying this relationship.

"This research is the perfect example of how a fortuitous discovery can redefine our understanding of the world around us," said van Doorn.

Green Tree Python Myths vs. Facts

by Ed Ferrer

(images – www.scenicreflections.com & www.sevenstring.org)



When I first started my snake collection for my science class room, my first snake was a neonate boa constrictor. My students were fascinated by the serpent and that led me to add more snakes for my collection. I was always tempted to add a green tree python because of its obvious beauty but was hesitant because I had always heard that they were very aggressive and quite expensive. But I did a little research and decided to take a chance. I first bought a neonate but it only lived about two months. After a few more months of more research, I bought another neonate but this time I had better knowledge of its requirements and have it today about 15 years later. So I decided to investigate the many myths regarding green tree pythons and share my experience so I might assist some other hobbyist in their decision about purchasing a green tree python. Let's examine some of the more common myths about green tree pythons.

Myth #1: "Green tree pythons are very irritable and anyone handling them is in danger of getting bitten".

This belief probably had its origin when most green tree pythons were wild caught. These animals were no doubt infested with parasites and stressed out when they were shipped, etc. and therefore were notoriously irritable. But captive bred specimens have been much better behaved. However, neonates are often very insecure and react defensively. Wouldn't you be defensive if some large being a couple of hundred times your size picked you up? I used work gloves when I first handled my young GTP. Keep in mind that any snake is startled by fast movements and is "head shy". I have only had three serious bites with my two green tree pythons. Twice when I was assisting my Biak GTP in removing his shed skin I was bitten. He had had enough of my handling then and let me know. The other time my Sorong GTP had escaped its enclosure and it struck me as I was getting it untangled from its hiding place. Now I just take them out off their perches with my bare hands when I take them to do programs without incident. However I would not put them in the same category of corn snakes or ball pythons. I would suggest a

beginner first handle snakes such as ball pythons or corn snakes before graduating to green tree pythons.

Myth#2: "Green tree pythons are way too expensive!"

When I bought my first green tree python I paid \$500.00 for it. That was the going price for a normal neonate at that time. My Sorong cost me \$400.00 after I bargained with the owner. Of course there are special "designer" specimens that are going for a few thousand dollars! But in the last reptile show I attended I saw some neonates priced at \$225.00. So the price seems to be coming down as more people are breeding them but they are still a bit "pricey" for a beginning "herper".

Myth#3: "Wild green tree pythons eat a lot of birds since they live in trees".

Their habit of living in trees has led to the conclusion that their prey must consist mostly of birds. I am sure that baby birds may be taken from their nests occasionally but field research and examination of fecal matter does not support the theory that birds are a major part of their diet. Most field research finds that green tree pythons normally are nocturnal hunters that descend into the lower branches close to the ground with their head pointing down in a striking position to prey on animals on or near the ground.

Myth#4: "Green tree pythons need 100% humidity."

Since green tree pythons inhabit tropical habitats, they do need somewhat higher humidity levels than many other snakes to thrive and shed properly. However, most research suggests that humidity levels of 40% to 70% would be sufficient. As in nature, they actually benefit from a cycle that includes a drying out time along with a damp period. They may suffer problems if they are kept in a constantly stagnant, wet environment. A drying out time will help inhibit the growth of bacteria, mold or fungus inside the enclosure. Also, if the owner regularly sprays the

snake directly, as the water evaporates there is a cooling effect that will lower the core body temperature of the snake. (Think of the chill you often feel when you leave the water at your local swimming pool.)

These are a few of the more common myths concerning the care of green tree pythons. There are many more situations to research when considering purchasing a green tree python. An excellent source would be "The More Complete Chondro" by Greg Maxwell or many of the articles about green tree pythons published in "Reptiles" magazine. The most current article can be found in the June 2013 issue written by Rico Walder.

I would remind you that these beautiful serpents are "quite addictive" and you might not be able to stop at just one.

References:

"The More Complete Chondro" by Greg Maxwell, 2013, ECO Herpetological Publishing and Distribution
"Reptile" magazine, June, 2013, by Rico Walder, pages 34-43
Personal experience by author for over 15 years

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

Harding Poorman



Species Spotlight - Copper-bellied Watersnake

Bruce Kingsbury

Midwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) newsletter-Summer, 2012

The Copper-bellied Watersnake, *Nerodia erythrogaster neglecta*, is pretty handsome for a watersnake - adults are uniformly dark brown to black on their dorsal surface, and yellow-orange to red on the belly. Unfortunately, this fine snake is in trouble. Many populations are in decline across their range, and those around the tri-state area where Indiana, Michigan and Ohio come together are nearly gone and listed as federally threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, a principal reason for copperbelly decline is: habitat connectivity, or the lack thereof. Copperbellies are associated with shallow open wetlands, but they are also one of the most terrestrial of the watersnakes. They routinely travel overland as they "hop" from wetland to wetland, and also spend a great deal of time away from wetlands all together. Copperbellies use large areas. Single season activity ranges for individuals in the threatened populations are 15 ha or more. Within this area, copperbellies exploit wetland networks, using 3 to 5 wetlands and moving between them regularly. Because the copperbelly is a highly agile species that uses multiple wetlands across a large area, a mosaic of wetlands and safe terrestrial uplands within the landscape is needed for population persistence. Consequently the species is particularly vulnerable to wetland loss and to the addition of barriers such as roads and farm fields inserted into the habitat. Efforts are thus underway to enhance wetland density and improve corridor quality using reforestation, while we simultaneously examine how to mitigate roads as barriers. By expanding the usable landscape and removing barriers, we hope to recover the threatened populations of the copperbelly so the species will remain a member of the region's diverse herpetofauna.



Copperbelly watersnake/ photo-Jim Horton

HHS Exhibit at Holliday Park



The Hoosier Herpetological Society was in full force at an annual autumn event at Holliday Park in Indianapolis last month. Thanks to Roger and Holly Carter, Pat Hammond, Rick Marrs, Ed Ferrer, Neil Jones, and Jim Horton for their help in displaying live herps at this event.

2013 EVENTS

November 17, 2013 - Indiana Reptile Breeders Expo, Tri County Shrine club 701 Potters Ln, Clarksville, IN

November 20, 2013 – HHS meeting, Guest speaker: Nikki Shonk (HHS member), Topic – “*Field Herping Costa Rica*”. 7:00 PM, Holliday Park Nature Center.

December 8, 2013 - 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

March 15&16, 2014 – North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC), Tinley Park, IL. Sat 10:00AM-5:00PM, Sun 11:00AM-4:00PM Tickets - \$15.00 adults, kids under 13-\$8.00, under 5-free

June 4-7, 2014 – Biology of the Pit Vipers 2 Symposium, Tulsa, OK. biologyofthepitvipers.com

Mostly Reptiles

Von Cowper Ruth Cowper
317.695.6210 317.695.6212

Email: cvon24@hotmail.com
cowperra@yahoo.com

“Snakehead Ed” Ferrer

Live hands-on snake programs
Have snakes, will travel

www.snakeheaded.com
ph. 317.787.7448 cell: 317.727.7553



Black Magic Reptiles

Chris Young
(317) 796-7946

BlackMagicReptiles@gmail.com
www.Black-Magic-Reptiles.com

Your HHS Board of Directors for 2013

PRESIDENT
VICE-PRESIDENT
SECRETARY
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP
SERGEANT AT ARMS

Jim Horton
Ed Ferrer
Holly Carter
Dave Mitchell
Will Brown

(317) 865-0464 Cell 443-4845 stardali84@hotmail.com
(317) 787-7448 Cell - 727-7553 pythonpals1@msn.com
(317) 873-6561 drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
(317) 570-9643 turtlelovin@att.net
(765) 278-1480 wrbrown15@aol.com

EDITOR
PROGRAM DIRECTOR
WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR
WEBSITE COORDINATOR
MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jim Horton
Ed Ferrer
Angela Thomas
Barbara Filtri
Pat Hammond
Mary Hylton

(317) 443.4845 Stardali84@hotmail.com
(317) 787-7448 pythonpals1@msn.com
(317) 882-5266 necali@comcast.net
webmaster@hoosierherpsoc.org
(317) 241-2793 gnaubone92@yahoo.com
liblady81@hotmail.com

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 Meeting**

Parking at Holliday Park

7:00pm to 9:00pm is our new meeting time at **Holliday Park**.

Holiday Park entrance gates close automatically when it gets dark. **After darkness hours, drive your car up to the gates and they will open.** Also, we need to park behind the hill or knoll. Parking is allowed closer to the center on the other side of the knoll only if the vehicle has a handicap sticker. Park rangers do patrol the lot and will tow vehicles that are parked in the wrong lot.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Email Address _____

☐ Individual/Family Membership \$15.00

☐ Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

Herpetological Interest(s)

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



Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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