



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 10

October 2017

Monthly H.H.S. Meeting Holliday Park Nature Center

Wednesday October 25th, 7:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Yatin Kalki, University of Illinois

Topic: "Herping in Southern India"

This month's guest speaker is Yatin Kalki. He grew up in Bangalore, India where he started catching snakes at the age of 17. When snakes found their way into his neighbors' houses they would call him and he would catch them and relocate the snakes for them. After high school, he moved to Illinois to get his bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences with a concentration in Wildlife Conservation. He did an internship under herpetologist P.Gowri in Agumbe, India. During that time he lived by himself at the research base in the Western Ghats rainforest and spent most of his time surveying the area for reptiles and amphibians. He has also traveled to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. His program, "Herping in Southern India", will feature his many reptiles and amphibians and other wildlife he encountered in his many trips throughout India. **Important note, this meeting is October 25th, the fourth Wednesday instead of the third Wednesday because of Holliday Park's events on the third Wednesday. Be sure to attend this excellent program.**

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

President's message

Jim Horton

This month we will take nominations for 2018 officer positions. Please give this some thought as to whom you might want as an officer for the HHS board. You can even nominate yourself.

I'd like to thank Ethan Estabrook for his presentation on a trip to the Everglades. We learned that he has a map turtle named *Atlas* (couldn't ask for a better name for a map turtle). He showcased a variety of local bird species, alligators, crocodiles and a host of non-native species (boa constrictor, veiled chameleon, knight anoles, agamas). Although the latter species are aliens to Florida, it's still interesting to see them in the wild. Great stuff!

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 every year! All members are welcome to show your animals at this event. Again, please be courteous and professional during our public events. We ask that you have clean, well lit enclosures with proper identification of each animal.

Thanks to Mary Hylton and Roger Carter for their contributions in this issue! 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.

MARBLED SALAMANDER (*AMBYSTOMA OPACUM*)

Jim Horton (text/photos)

The marbled salamander is one of Indiana's only fall breeding salamanders.

Length – 3 ¼ -4 ¼ inches

Breeding – Females deposits eggs in a low depression, which will be filled by the autumn rains. The female guards the eggs until the rains hydrate them. Eggs do not hatch until covered with water.

Breeding season – September/October

Number of eggs deposited – 40-200

Breeding habitat – temporary ponds in deciduous woodlands

Length of larval stage – 4-6 months

Life span of adults – At least four years.



Male



Female with eggs.

HAND HELD HERPS

Article by Roger Carter

Photos by Shane Delan and Roger Carter

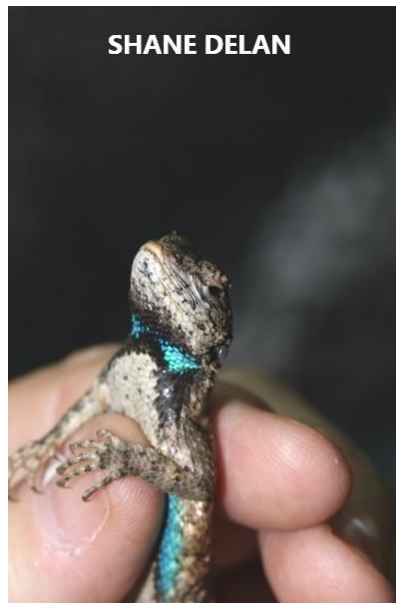
The Northern Fence Lizards, *Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus*, are five to six inches long as adults. Adult males have dark brown sides and dark wavy crossbands and they have almost fluorescent blue/green markings at the base of their throat and on the side of their body close to their underside. Females are a lighter brown with more noticeable crossbands and smaller amounts of the blue/green markings than on the males. They are found from southeastern New York to Kansas and the southern states to eastern Texas and inhabit rocky forested areas. They are often seen on tree trunks and they eat a wide variety of invertebrates.

During this year's Hoosier Herp Out in June we found a male Northern Fence Lizard that was about six feet up in a tree and, as they like to do, when we try to get a good look at them they climb around to the other side of the tree to avoid us.



I asked someone to go around

the tree to force the lizard to come back around where the rest of us were waiting. It obliged and after everyone got pictures of it on the tree, I was able to carefully grab it for more pictures. The blue/green markings were vivid, too bad they won't show up in the black and white pictures in this newsletter.



Some lizards, like skinks, are quick to bite when they are picked up and handled but I have never been bitten by a fence lizard. After everyone got the pictures that they wanted I placed him back on his tree.

On a recent trip to southern Illinois, Jim Horton and I found a spot with many neonate fence lizards, there might have been up to ten of them at a pile of walking sticks that hikers had left for other hikers to use.



We were able to catch a couple of them just to get some pictures. These are the smallest fence lizards that I have seen.

One time in southern Illinois years ago I found a fence lizard on the ground in the woods, I reached out and picked him up without any fuss. We looked at each other for several seconds and then I put him back down. That same day at more-or-less the same place I picked up another fence lizard but this one jumped out of my hand. There have been other times where I could almost get close enough to touch them and then they would scamper just a few feet away almost daring me to try again. To my mind they seem to either have little if any fear of people or maybe they are just curious about us. These guys are fun to find.

The Hopi Snake Dance

By Mary Hylton



Image – news.stanford.edu

From 1880 to 1920 the Hopi Snake and Antelope ceremony, popularly known as the Snake dance, was far and away the most widely depicted Southwest Native American ritual. Usually performed in August to ensure abundant rainfall for the corn crops, it was only one ritual in the round of ceremonies that Hopis enacted throughout the year, but because it involved the handling of live snakes, it was the ceremony most often described by non-Indian observers.

Ethnographers began publishing accounts of the Snake dance in both the popular press and museum monographs in the 1880s. By the early 1890s it had become a national ritual for newspapers and magazines to report on the "Weird Arizona Snake Dance" or "Hideous Rites" in their August issues. Photographs, drawings, and paintings of the Snake dance appeared in the press, on postcards, and as stereographs. The ceremony also became a major tourist attraction; thousands of people, including many celebrities and luminaries, descended on the Hopi mesas every year, and detailed accounts of the ritual appeared in travel narratives, guidebooks, and railroad promotional pamphlets.

The Hopi Snake Dance is typically observed for 16 days every two years in late August. Many believe the Snake Dance worships snakes—since they play a major role in the ceremony—but that's not true. The purpose of the Dance is to worship Hopi ancestors and to help bring rain.

Hopis believe that snakes were the traditional guardians of springs and so the dance was originally

a water ceremony. Today it is primarily a rain ceremony because the Hopi regard snakes as their "brothers" and rely on them to carry their prayers for rain to the underworld (where they believe the gods and spirits of their ancestors live). Tourists, however, who come to see the "hideous" Snake Dance are more interested in the spectacle of it rather than the belief that it has power to influence the weather.

The dance is performed on the last day of the 16-day celebration. It is performed by members of the Snake and Antelope clans from all three of the mesas in Arizona—home to the Hopis. This dance is the grand finale of the celebration and the start of the Niman Katchina --a ceremony that goes back to the Katchinas, their ancestral spirits. The Hopis believe that these spirits leave their home in the mountains and for six months visit the tribe, bringing health to the Hopi and rain to their crops.

Preparations for the Snake Dance take place during the last 9 days of the period and include the making of the pahos or prayer sticks, designing the sand paintings, and building the altar around the paintings. This altar includes bowls of water from a sacred spring, green corn stalks, and trailing vines of melons and beans which are all symbolic of the rain that is essential for the survival of the Hopi and their crops.

During the last 4 days, the Snake priests leave their villages to gather snakes, often taking young boys with them. Hopi legend says that boys of the Snake clan capture and handle snakes without fear from the time they are born. They stroke the snakes with a feather to make them straighten out their coils. Then they grab the snake behind the head. The priests are usually armed with a digging stick to dig the snakes out of their holes and a snake whip (a rod with two eagle feathers attached).

On the last 2 mornings of the celebration, foot races are held. The runners streak across the plain and up the steep slope of the mesa just before sunrise in a symbolic gesture that represents rain-gods bringing water to the village. At one time, these runners were naked with their hair loose to imitate falling rain.

Today, they wear underwear and cut their hair short. The winner of the first race gets a ring

and a prayer-plume that he plants in his field to ensure a good crop. The second race winner gets a jar of sacred water which he will also pour over his field to bring rain.

On the day the actual dance is held, the snakes are washed in a large jar filled with water and herbs and then thrown on a bed of clean sand. Young boys guard the snakes to keep them from escaping. They will use their snake whips to stop the snakes from coiling up and then gather the snakes into a huge bag. They are carried to the village plaza and placed in a Kisi (snake-shrine).

The big highlight of the Snake Dance Ceremony is when the Snake priests reach into the kisi and grab a snake. They carry the snake first in their hands and then in their mouths!

Each priest is accompanied by an attendant who uses the snake whip to prevent the snake from coiling. As the Snake priest and his assistant dance around the plaza, each is followed by a third man called the "gatherer" whose responsibility is to make sure that when the time comes for the dancer to drop the snake, it doesn't go into the crowd. So,

at just the right moment, the gatherer touches the snake with his feathered wand, drops meal on it and catches it behind the head. Then he lays it over his arm and goes after another one.

As many as 50 or 60 small whip-snakes, long bull-snakes, and even rattlesnakes can often be seen curling around the gatherers' arms and necks.

Once the bag of snakes is empty, one of the Snake priests makes a large circle of meal on the ground. The gatherers throw all of their snakes into the circle, while the women and girls scatter meal on the wriggling pile of snakes. The Snake priests then hurry in quickly and scoop up armfuls of snakes and then hurry out of the plaza.

The Snake priests carry the snakes off to special shrines where they are released so they can carry the prayers for rain from the mouths of the priests to the underworld where the rain gods live.

The dance ends with the drinking of an emetic, a medicinal substance which makes the dancers vomit and this is believed to purge them of any dangerous snake-charms. With any luck dark clouds will form later in the day and rain will come.

http://jashm.press.illinois.edu/11.4/11-4_12-1Representing_Dilworth453-496.pdf
<https://www.brownielocks.com/snakedance.html>

[Disclosure: I take no credit for the writing—merely the compiling of information into one place—this article—for your convenience.] --Mary A. Hylton

Top 10 Questions Overheard at HHS Exhibits

1. Does it bite?
2. Can I touch it?
3. What does it eat?
4. How to you tell male from female?
5. Are these yours?
6. Where do you keep them?
7. Where does it live?
8. Does it lay eggs?
9. Does it know you?
10. Is it poisonous?

SPECIAL MEETING NIGHT

Wednesday October 25th, 7:00 p.m.



2017 Midwest Herpetological Symposium

October 20, 21, and 22, 2017

Hosted by the
MINNESOTA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The event will be held at:
Best Western Hotel
1901 Killebrew Dr, Bloomington, MN 55425
Phone: (952) 854-8200
(just a block from Mall of America!)

SPEAKERS

FRIDAY NIGHT ICE-BREAKER
Dav Kaufman & Jeff LeClere — Field Herpetologists
Herpers, Herpers 2, and Herpers 3 DVDs

SATURDAY PRESENTATIONS
Michael Starkey — Save the Frogs; International Events Coordinator — "The Amphibian Extinction Crisis; Current threats facing amphibians and what you can do about it"
Matt Goode PhD — Viper Institute; School Nat Resources and Environment, U of Arizona
"Ecology and Conservation of King Cobras in India and Southeast Asia"
Anne Stengle PhD Candidate — University of Massachusetts
"Shake Rattle and Roll, From Snake Fungal Disease to the Quabbin Rattlesnake Introduction"
Barney Oldfield DVM — Crotaphytus Photographer, Hesperus, Colorado — "Crotaphytology"
Michael Ogle — Curator; Department of Archelosaurs & Lepidosaurus, Zoo Knoxville
Chelonian Captive Breeding Techniques

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
Whit Gibbons PhD — Professor Emeritus of Ecology, University of Georgia — "Their Blood Runs Cold: Adventures with Reptiles and Amphibians"



- Ice Breaker
- Speakers
- Videos
- Photography
- Hospitality Room
- Auction
- Banquet
- Vendors
- Live Reptile Display
- and more!

COME FOR THE TALKS —
STAY FOR THE FUN.
HOPE TO SEE you!



Registration forms at:
<https://mnherpsoc.org/midwest-herpetological-symposium>

Welcome new members!

RENEWALS

Kimberly Scott
Nancy
Kloskowski
Mary Hylton
Zane Libke
Will Brown

NEW MEMBER

Kiley J. Neal

2017 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

October 25, 2017 – HHS meeting. Guest speaker: Yatin Kalki, University of Illinois. Topic: "Herping in Southern India".

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

November 5, 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

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

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

Harding Poorman



Your HHS Board of Directors for 2017

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	stardali84@hotmail.com
VICE-PRESIDENT	Heather White	(765) 404-2860	dogcatrvt@yahoo.com
SECRETARY	Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP	Roger Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
SERGEANT AT ARMS	Neill Jones	(317) 385-9763	neilljones92@gmail.com
EDITOR	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	stardali84@hotmail.com
PROGRAM DIRECTOR	Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	pythonpals1@msn.com
WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR	Angela Thomas	(317) 882-5266	necali@comcast.net
WEBSITE COORDINATOR	Barbara Filtri		webmaster@hoosierherpsoc.org
MEMBERS AT LARGE	Pat Hammond	(317) 656-9496	gnawbone92@yahoo.com
	Rick Marrs		rickmarrs@gmail.com
	Dale Schoentrup		eyelashviper@hotmail.com
	Will Brown	(765) 278-1480	wrbrown15@aol.com
	Mary Hylton	(317) 966-4591	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 Meetings.**

MEMBERSHIP FORM

____ New Member

____ Renewal

____ Name

____ Address

____ City

____ Email Address

____ Individual/Family Membership \$20.00

____ 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!