

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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June 2019

H.H.S. Monthly Meeting Wednesday, June 19, 7:00PM Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium

Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Finkler, Indiana University Kokomo
Topic: "Cold as Ice: Freeze Tolerance in Some of Indiana's Frogs"

HHS speaker for June is Dr. Michael Finkler. Dr. Finkler is a Professor of Physiology at Indiana University, Kokomo. He grew up in Pennsylvania and Michigan. His BS degree is from Kalamazoo College and both his Masters and PhD. are from Miami University (Ohio). Although he is best known for over 25 years of work on snapping turtle eggs and hatchlings, he has been investigating the physiological and ecological differences between the sexes in spring-breeding amphibians from the 90's. Let's see what his research discovered as these frogs emerged from Indiana's winter ice and snow.

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

HERPOUT 2019

Jim Horton

After the need to reschedule due to cool/rainy weather, the herpout turned out great!



A good number of species were recorded, including, 9 species of snake, 3 species of lizard, 3 salamanders, two frogs, and several eastern box turtles!

Our first stop didn't turn up much, only a young Jefferson salamander. However, down the trail, we hit another spot with some tin and other debris. Here, we found 3 eastern milk snakes, a five-lined skink, an eastern box turtle, and a northern fence lizard.

On the way back we stopped at another *regular* for the annual herpouts. Not long after exiting our cars, an eastern hognose was found. Walking up and down a road with riprap (large rocks) along the side, we scared up a few snakes, probably water snakes. They zipped by too fast and disappeared into the

rocks below.



Northern copperhead

A short time later, another hog was found. Its always a good find when you turn up a hognose!

At lunch, Roger Carter grilled up some burgers and dogs. The HHS provided the meat and condiments. The rest was a pitch-in style picnic. After lunch, someone (Abbie) started filling up water balloons!



Water balloon toss

We had a water balloon toss game and then it was a free-for-all! We were all soaked and eager to get back in the field. After cleaning up the area of water balloon debris, we headed to the next site known as 'Mill Creek'. This

place is beautiful! I'm a plant guy as well as a herper so I enjoy the not so common species that are found here. The creek isn't silt or mud but has a rock bed so its incredibly cool, clean, and fast flowing.



Longtail salamander

The large flat rocks on the sides of the creek area great spots for longtail salamanders, two-lined salamanders, green frogs, pickerel frogs, crayfish, leeches, and darters.

Our last spot of the day was one of our favorites! We call it the Poke Farm. It was dubbed *Poke Farm* due to the high concentration of poke weed (plant) that is found in the area. You can always count on seeing good species here. To start off, we found an adult black rat snake and a northern ringneck under an old car hood.



Black rat snake

The ringneck displayed its defensive *tail curl* where they

show the beautiful yellow underside. The next find was a red-belly snake – always a good find. Onward, we found a feisty young eastern box turtle under some tin and a northern copperhead. More large, flat metal revealed two more copperheads.

I spotted a southern black racer in a thicket. It evaded us again and again. No pics this time. This is another good place for wildflowers

and birding. Firepinks (bright red wildflowers) grow here near shady areas in the rich soil.

Aside from the many ticks of all sizes and the irritating pollen that had everyone sneezing, we had a great time in the field. Oh, and if anyone ever finds my keys out there in the forest, please send them my way!

President's message

Jim Horton

The 18th Hoosier Herpout turned out great! We had good weather and some significant finds. Unfortunately, I had managed to lose voice and my only set of car keys in the forest somewhere – very expensive!

We're gearing up for our annual kayak/canoe trip. We usually see some great wildlife on this float, and of course - herps! The dates will be in the next newsletter. Hope to see you there.

If field herping interests you, look no further. One of our younger members, Thomas Raymond, is an Eagle Scout. His project is to survey a property near his home for herps! If you'd like to help, he could use your expertise. Please contact me if you are interested.

We have a great opportunity for you to show off your favorite animals. The HHS will again this year be displaying live herps at Holliday Park Nature Center for the **Pack the Parks** event. This show will be June 29.

Many of you are active on our Facebook page. We are now on Instagram (@hoosierherp) too! Hope to see some of you on our social media pages.

See you at the next meeting! Jim

Review of May HHS Meeting Program

By Ed Ferrer

Our speaker for May was Dr. Ian Hahus. He received his B.S. in Agricultural Engineering from Purdue University in 2014 and a PhD in Agricultural and Biological Engineering from the University of Florida in 2018. He currently is employed as a Water Resources Engineer for Christopher Burke Engineering Co. He has always been interested in nature and during his four years in Gainesville, FL, he became involved in many outreach and educational programs with a particular emphasis in herps. His program concentrated on the many graduate programs and educational experiences in both volunteer and state organizations in Florida. Some of the organizations included the Orianne Society, the Rattlesnake Conservancy, The Florida Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and the Florida Museum of Natural History among others.

He described the many conservation and educational activities in which he participated during those four years in Florida. Some of the most impressive news was the project regarding the gopher tortoise. The gopher tortoise is an important "keystone specie" because their burrows are important habitat of indigo snakes and many other reptiles and other small animals that depend on them for survival. In the past construction companies would just bulldoze these sites destroying whole ecosystems. It was also great to hear that throughout Florida the practice of "Rattlesnake Roundups" have been changed to mostly educational programs telling the true story of rattlers' role in nature in place of the senseless slaughtering of hundreds of rattlers and spreading fear and false information of these snakes. That is just two of the many programs he described in his presentation. At the end he showed a map of Florida and outlined several areas and described the various species we could expect to find if we went to Florida. It made us all wish we could make plans to visit the "Sunshine State".

Since returning to Indiana Ian has finished his Indiana Master Naturalist classes with the Indiana DNR and he looks forward to getting to know the "herps" and the "herpers" of Indiana.

PACK THE PARKS

HHS Live Herp Exhibit!

The HHS will be part of the *Pack the Parks* event at Holliday Park, Saturday, June 29. We need a good showing of HHS members and their animals for this show. This one day event is usually well attended by curious visitors. A few of our members who usually exhibit here will be out of town. We hope that you, our members, will support the HHS on June 29!

Please contact Ed Ferrer for information regarding set up, etc.

pythonpals1@msn.com or call 317-787-7448

HAND HELD HERPS

Article and photos by Roger Carter

The Eastern Hognose Snake, *Heterodon platirhinos*, is a fairly, stout bodied snake approximately twenty inches long to forty-five inches long with keeled scales and an upturned snout.



These snakes are quite variable in color with dark blotches on a background of either yellow, orange, red, brown or tan, there is even a melanistic phase that is black with little, if any, pattern. When these snakes feel that they are being threatened they might act aggressively by hissing and flattening their neck, which makes some people believe that they are some sort of cobra-like snake, giving them names like “spreading adder” or “hissing adder”.



If this behavior doesn't discourage its tormentor then it may thrash around like it's in great pain, maybe regurgitate any meal it has and/or defecate and finish its performance by laying on its back with its mouth open and its tongue hanging out of its mouth “playing dead”. It can be picked up and it will remain completely limp but, when set back on the ground right side up, they will immediately roll over onto their back again.



The playing dead act is interesting to see. These snakes are harmless, and they eat mostly toads and frogs. Some of these snakes in captivity has been tricked into eating

rodents but they don't do very well on a diet of rodents. They seem to need the toxins that are in the toads. These snakes are found from most of the East coast, the southern states, into parts of Texas, Oklahoma, and as far north as parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota in sandy areas and lightly wooded forests.



The snakes shown in figure 1 and figure 2 are two different Hognose snakes that we found during the Hoosier Herp Out on May 17, 2019, in southern Indiana. The Hoosier Herp Out is our annual day of field herping with a picnic. The snakes are both dark with a little pattern, but one was a little larger than the other. The snake shown in figure 3 was a Hognose snake that we have found for several years during the Hoosier Herp Out in the same general area where we found the first two. Figure 4 shows a yearling that was found on June 13, 2014, at a different location in southern Indiana. This one would not stop “playing dead”. It even defecated a little.

Red-legged frogs thriving in Yosemite after long absence

May 6, 2019 Source: tribstar.com

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — Red-legged frogs made famous by Mark Twain are thriving in Yosemite Valley after a decades-long absence.

Officials said Monday they have documented the first breeding by the frogs in Yosemite since 2017. That's when adult red-legged frogs were first reintroduced after a 50-year absence.

Yosemite National Park Superintendent Mike Reynolds says ecologists found clusters of eggs in meadows and ponds this spring when it normally takes years to see such results.

The California red-legged frog is named for its colorful legs and belly. It was featured in Twain's short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

The frog disappeared from Yosemite in part because non-native, predatory bullfrogs first introduced to a reflection pond spread throughout the valley and, over time, gobbled them up.

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2019 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

June 19, 2019 – HHS meeting. Guest Speaker – Michael Finkler. Topic – “Cold as Ice: Freeze Tolerance in Some of Indiana’s Frogs.”

August 25, 2019 - Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. **Harvest 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 dates, 11/10

September 27-29, 2019 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO. Friday and Saturday presentations, ice-breaker, live and silent auctions, field trip to Snake Road. See St. Louis herp society facebook page for details.



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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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