



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 6

June 2017

Monthly H.H.S. Meeting

Holliday Park Nature Center

June 21st 7:00 p.m.

Topic: Annual "Show and Tell"

This month's meeting will be our annual "Show and Tell" meeting. It is a chance to see what other H.H.S. members are keeping and gain some information about other "herp pets." Maybe you will find some interest in a new reptile or amphibian that you may want to add to your collection. So bring your favorite one or two animals and briefly describe how you got it, any interesting facts about it and tell how you care for it. Or you could bring another herp related item such as a book, jewelry or other object that is herp related. Since it is summer and schools are out it is also a great chance for our students to participate. This is always a popular event so come join the fun of being part of our meeting.

SAVE THE DATE!

AUGUST 13 – HHS KAYAK/CANOE FLOAT



Hoosier Herpout – Review

By Jim Horton

The Hoosier Herpout was again, a pretty good success! The original date of May 17 was spoiled by unusual heavy rains and cool temps. In 17 years this was the only time we've ever had to postpone. The new date was June 3rd. The later date brought higher vegetation, more insects, and much warmer weather.

A few of us showed up a bit late so my apologies for those who waited patiently for us.

At our first stop, we encountered a large eastern hognose snake. Roger spotted it, went down for it, lost his footing and went down. Unfortunately, it quickly slipped into the large rocks and disappeared.



The group found something good!

At another stop, we found our first of many ringnecks. Up on a hill, Mary Hylton spotted a northern fence lizard. It quickly scattered around the back side of a tree and fell out of view.

Down at the water edge, we found one of two Eastern box turtles. One large male was completely submerged. This species takes this approach in dry weather in order to hydrate.

Another hognose was sighted but quickly slide into the brush. Lifting a slab of drift wood revealed a young Northern or

midland water snake (too young to tell the species). Rolling a rotting log brought out two gravid female five-lined skinks. Egg laying was most likely happening in the near future for these skinks. We got a few pics and released them back where they were found.



Five-lined skink (female)

Shane Delon found a female painted turtle heading to the water. She most likely had laid eggs up on the bank.

Roger Carter fired up the grill at the shelter house and we were all soon enjoying a nice lunch. Thanks to Roger and Holly for preparing some nice spiced up beef and turkey patties!

Our next trip was at a site called the Poke Farm, known for a large quantity of Poke weed that grows there. The weeds were above hip high and pollen dispersed as we trampled our way through the brush. This site has good roofing tin cover. Here we uncovered three Northern copperheads, a brightly colored Eastern milk snake and a few more ringnecks. A young Eastern box turtle was also found taking refuge beneath the tin from the hot sunlight.



Eastern box turtle

Not a bad day for only two stops. One is a longer drive and both of them were pretty good hikes.

Some of us camped at Hardin Ridge campground for the evening. Our tradition is to get out after dark and see what nighttime insects we can find. Many species of moths and spiders were found and photographed around the lighted bathroom facilities. We also visited a small pond where green frogs and a beautiful northern leopard frog showed up in our flashlight beams.



Northern fence lizard

Earlier that evening, I presented the Amphibians and Reptilians of the Hardin Ridge Area at the amphitheater.

In all, about 15 species of herps were found. Not too bad for a later date, warmer temps, and high weeds.

President's message

Jim Horton

June is here already! People are finding herps everywhere. It is also turtle nesting season. I'm sure you're all aware of our carapace covered friends crossing roads to reach their destinations. Please tell everyone to watch for them while driving.

The Herpout, was postponed due to poor weather conditions (and it was graduation weekend at IU) and was rescheduled for **June 3rd**. Read about what members found in this issue.

I'll be out of town for the July meeting to attend the International Herpetological Symposium in Arizona. Several other members will as well. I'm sure Ed and Heather will do a great job heading the meeting!

Our annual Kayak/Canoe float is coming up August 13. This is a chance to see many species of aquatic turtles. We also see good numbers of northern water snakes and even queen snakes. Another great HHS tradition!

Our website now has an Indiana native snake ID field guide that is phone-friendly. Check it out when you get a chance – www.hoosierherpsoc.org

Thanks to Pat Hammond and Neill Jones for submitting articles for this issue! Anyone is welcome to write for the Monitor. Keep them coming folks!

This month we'll have our annual Show and Tell meeting. Bring along some of your favorites to show the audience. Show and Tell is always a popular meeting. Please keep your presentations to a minimum so that all members will be able to participate.

Searching for spots

By Pat Hammond

Jim Horton and I have been looking for spotted turtles *Clemmys guttata* in Indiana for many, many years. We have been unsuccessful for the most part with the exception of a glimpse of one from far away just before it slipped off its basking perch into the deep abyss. Last spring Jim Horton, Neill Jones and I took a trip to a sight in northern Indiana where we knew spotted turtles could be found. Jim and I had briefly seen one there a few years before so we knew we had the right location to search for these shy turtles. We got to the site late morning on a spring day where temps were ideal for basking turtles and other reptiles to be out and about. We walked for quite a good while when Neill looks down and finds his first spotted turtle right at his feet. We were able to see it up close and get several photos of our target species.

This was Neill's first trip to this spot so as the new guy he had all the luck.



This was the only spotted turtle we were able to photograph on this trip. Jim had spotted another turtle or two basking far away with his binoculars but they dropped into the water before he could get any photos of them.

This spring Jim and I headed back up to this site to try our chances again at locating and photographing the state endangered species one more time. Luck would be on our side this trip as we were able to locate and photo at least six

spotted turtles. We finally did it! On this trip we also were able to photo several blanding's turtles *Emydoidea blandingii* also listed as endangered in Indiana.

I hope to spend more time at this location in the future to see and photo more of these interesting species.

Spotted turtles are the smallest turtle species in the state of Indiana. The turtles we found were all adults measuring under four inches in total length. Habitat destruction, vehicle mortality and illegal collection for the pet trade are the challenges this species faces which keep it on the endangered species list in Indiana and most parts of its range. If you are lucky enough to see a spotted turtle in the wild take a photo if you can and leave it where you found it so it can enjoy its freedom and reproduce to help the species survive in the wild.

Keeping Crocodilians

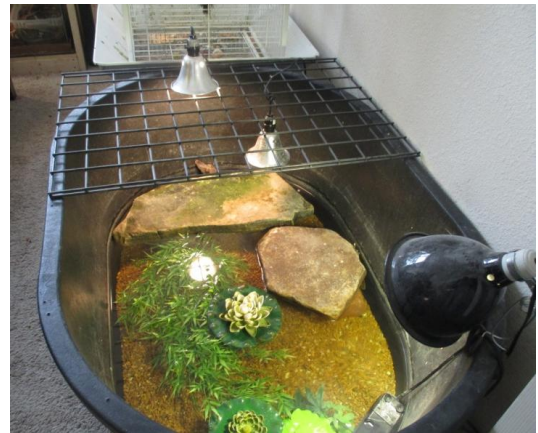
By Neill Jones

I've had a few years experience keeping various species of crocodilians. They're very intelligent animals and can be very rewarding to keep in you know what you're doing. There are three orders of crocodilians: Crocodylidae (crocodiles), Alligatoridae (alligators and caiman) and Gavialidae (gharials). There are about 23 species of crocodilians in the world.

Crocodilians are sold in the pet trade, but I don't think they should be sold to anybody who walks the streets, a pet store or reptile show for a number of reasons. #1: their size. Crocodilians get huge! Some reaching over 1000 pounds. Would you want a half ton reptile living in your house? If you decide to get one, do you're research. A permit may be required once the croc reaches a certain size. #2: enclosure maintenance. Crocodilians defecate, urinate, eat, drink and sleep in the water they live in. Therefore, constant cleaning is required. This must be done very carefully as some crocodilians can be very aggressive. You may want to house them in a large outdoor enclosure during the summer months. #3, Cost. Crocodilians require lots of food, proper lighting, filters, and cage décor if you choose and of course, the enclosure itself. Be prepared to budget.

I keep my crocodilians in giant livestock tanks. Each tank has a basking rock, filter, full spectrum lighting and lots of water for them to swim around

in and explore. I feed them pieces of chicken, mice, fish and cockroaches. Feeding them a variety of food is always great. I hope to have the opportunity to work with these fascinating animals until the day I die. Of the 23 species of crocodilians, most of them are threatened or endangered. Conservation and education helped bring back the American Alligator from the brink of extinction, but a lot of them aren't so lucky.



Personal set up for young crocodilians

In conclusion, crocodilians are very rewarding to keep, but are not for everyone. A lot of research and preparation is required before obtaining one. I feel it is my duty as a member of the Hoosier Herpetological Society to help conserve, educate and raise awareness about these awesome and misunderstood animals.

2017 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

June 21, 2017 – HHS meeting. Guest speaker – YOU! Our annual Show and Tell meeting is very popular every year. Bring along a few of your animals or herp related items to show the audience. 7:00 PM, Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium.

June 25, 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 Other show dates: August 27, November 5

July 19, 2017 – HHS meeting, Guest speaker TBA

July 19-22, 2017 – 40th Annual International Herpetological Symposium, Chiricahua Desert Museum, Rodeo, NM. www.internationalherpetologicalsymposium.com

August 13, 2017 – HHS Canoe/Kayak float trip. Blues Canoes in Edinburgh, IN

October 20-22, 2017 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium. Bloomington, MN, Hosted by Minnesota Herpetological Society

HAND HELD HERPS

Article and photo by Roger Carter

The Redback Salamander, *Plethodon cinereus*, is a small salamander from three to four and one-half inches long. This salamander's body has a dark background with a red or orange stripe with borders that are mostly straight and run from its head to part way down its tail. It is found from southern Quebec to northeast Minnesota to North Carolina and hides under rocks and rotten logs.

The Zigzag Salamander, *Plethodon dorsalis dorsalis*, is also a small salamander from two and one-half inches to three and one-half inches long. This salamander's body also has a dark background color with a stripe that may be orange or yellow but not red as in the Redback Salamander and the borders of the stripe are more jagged. This stripe also runs from its head to part way down its tail. It is found from southern Illinois through most of western Kentucky, most of central and eastern Tennessee, northern Alabama and part of southern Indiana up to about the middle of the Indiana-Illinois border and also hides under rocks and rotten logs.

Both of these salamanders have a dark unstriped phase that is often referred to as a "lead" phase and both eat small invertebrates.



The tiny little salamander shown on someone's fingertip was found in May 2015 when several of us were participating in a Bio-Blitz with members of the Indiana Forest Alliance in southern Indiana. The Bio-Blitz is a survey of plants and animals that are found in specific areas of the forest.



I don't know what kind of salamander this is but we were in an area where we were finding a lot of Redback Salamanders and Zigzag Salamanders. I think this little salamander looks superficially like the Redbacks or Zigzags and is probably one or the other. It is also the smallest salamander that I have seen. In the other picture, which was taken in April 2017, Holly and I found the Redback and the Zigzag salamanders under wood fragments at two different sites where there had been logging years ago in southern Indiana. The lead phase salamander was found under the remains of a tree branch. All three salamanders were returned where they were found.

Welcome new members!

Renewals

Jet Kaiser

Silly Safari

New

Melanie Fox

Bradley Linderman

MAY MEETING REVIEW

Jim Horton

Our May 17th meeting featured two guest speakers. Mr. Ethan Kessler and Seth LaGrange from the University of Illinois. These two gentlemen put on a great presentation. They even brought along live specimens and preserved items for the audience.

Ethan fired up the PowerPoint and gave us an in-depth description of Alligator snapping turtles! He discussed the biology of the species and the differences between Alligator and common snapping turtles.

He noted that they are currently protected in 14 states but not federally... Yet. Some of the main reasons for their decline started early in the 19th century with the damming of rivers. Over harvesting these giants also contributed to a major reduction of numbers in the wild.

The first years of their study began with questions. How many were out there? They set turtle traps – 553 of them around the state and found zero alligator snappers. So from these findings, they knew something needed to be done to help save the species in Illinois.



Ethan and a carapace

Together with the Peoria Zoo and the Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery, they raised young for future release in to the wild. They had to have at least a 40% survival rate for their newly released young turtles. 13 were released in 2008 and only 4 survived winter. 30 (two-year-olds) were again released in 2009. 44% survived. They found these numbers to be in their projected range and considered it a success.

The releases continued for the next 8 years with 72 mixed-age snappers. 62 of them were equipped with radio transmitters.

Some also had temperature censoring buttons attached to the shell for more data collection.

These devices allowed for a plethora of data to be recorded. The majority of young appeared to have stayed near their release sites. Daily movement on some turtles was as far as one mile. 80% of them were found in log jams and underwater root masses. Turtles were found in silty muck 74% of the time – often buried.

Turtles were tracked all year in all kinds of weather conditions. The guys donned wet suits for the job. The turtles were obviously more active from May through October and more deaths occurred November to April.

Ethan was excited when they found that two turtles doubled in weight. 26 of them had gained 10% more in mass.

While radio tracking one of their male study turtles, they discovered an adult female alligator snapper near a log jam! This was so far, the only wild alligator snapper found during this ongoing study.

They plan for five more years of releases. The ages of the turtles will be bumped up as well for the hope of more success. Starting off with 20 turtles at four years old. Then 20 at 5 years of age, and 20 more at the age of six.



Young alligator/common snapping turtles.

The guys brought two live young snappers of both common and alligator genus. They showed the characteristics between them as young and what changes will happen as adults. A large skull of a deceased alligator snapper was impressive. The preserved carapace was also really cool!



Alligator snapper skull

Thanks for a fantastic presentation!

I hope you can attend our next meeting to see what you're missing!

Jim

Your HHS Board of Directors for 2017

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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.**

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

More photos from the Herpout



Northern ringneck



Eastern box turtle



Roger Carter grilling out

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