

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 30 Number 10

October 2019

H.H.S. Monthly Meeting Wednesday October 16, 7:00 PM Holliday Park Nature Center Auditorium Guest Speaker: Rick Marrs (HHS member) Topic: "Herping in Indiana"

Many of our meetings programs have featured travels from far away lands and the wildlife encountered. Most of us have never been to such exotic places. But what kinds of reptiles and amphibians can we find in Indiana? Our speaker Rick Marrs has been an active HHS member since 1991 and he was HHS president for several years. He was one of the co-creators of the annual Herpout (along with Jim Horton) and he specializes in Indiana herptiles. He conducted the original Ft. Benjamin Fort Harrison State Park amphibian and reptile survey in 1996. He teaches the Junior Master Naturalist and Master Naturalist classes there. He has also participated in numerous nature surveys throughout the state. Let's see what we can learn about our native herps so when the weather breaks we can get out and explore what herps we can find locally. Be sure to attend this informational and entertaining view of our own states wildlife.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

RENEWALS

Carl Schwartz
Holly and Roger Carter
Martha Horton
Jim Horton

NEW MEMBERS

Zac Stottss
Autumn Guthrie
Amanda Fry

President's message

Jim Horton

I'd like to thank Katherine Shoemaker for her presentation last month. Kat drove 4 hours from the Kentucky Reptile Zoo for our members to hear the pros and cons of reptile education.

Our group had a great time at the Louisville Zoo last month. The group had some up close, behind the scenes experiences. Thanks to Will Bird and Ed Ferrer for their efforts with this tour. Ed wrote a review in this issue.

The 35th Midwest Herpetological Symposium was also last month in St. Louis. We were proud to have had the largest attendance of any herpetological society at this annual event. I plan to write a review of it in the November issue of the Monitor.

Please welcome our new members. If you see someone you don't recognize at the meetings, say hi and introduce yourself and other members. Sometimes we all get a bit busy discussing our latest herps or field outings and don't see others sitting alone. We've all been there.

Next month, we will be holding our annual elections of officers. As always, if you are interested in running for office, please do! If you know of someone else who might be a good fit, you can nominate them at the next meeting.

HHS helps at Master Naturalist Program

Jim Horton

The HHS has presented for the Hendrix County Master Naturalist Program for several years now. This year was another great program. I presented a PowerPoint titled, *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana* for the group. This was followed by a live question/answer session and a chance for the group to touch and feel a live native Indiana snake. Pat Hammond assisted in discussing the biology of some of the live specimens. The audience met us with a barrage of questions and cell phone pics of unidentifiable snakes and other herps that they had encountered. We happily ID'd the animals in question and gave them ideas on how to attract or even, avoid these beneficial animals in their houses and yards.

HHS September Meeting Review

by Sheryl Lynn Mitchell & Ed Ferrer

Our guest speaker for September was Katherine Shoemaker from the Kentucky Reptile Zoo . She has worked at the reptile zoo since 2016 and besides various duties at the zoo, she also does numerous educational programs for various groups. The title of her talk was "10 Things I've Learned as a Herp Educator".

- (1.) You can make almost any topic about reptiles. She listed Jungle, Mythology, Overcoming Fear, Harry Potter, Digging (fossils), Outer Space, Other possible life forms, Venom & Medicine, Pet Care, EMS Snakebite Treatment all are logical connections for talking about reptile.
- (2.) It's education for and entertainment to your audience.
- (3.) Gimmicks aren't always bad (Another way of getting attention possibly)
- (4.) Adult laughing - is a good review. Be sure to play to the chaperones as well as the kids.

- (5.) Let people know that you are happy with what you are doing, people more likely will listen
- (6.) Disgust could be part of science.
- (7.) Reaching out can pay off.
- (8.) Kids can handle more than she expected sometimes. (Birds and the Bees)
- (9.) A little anthropomorphism can go a long way. (Name your animals especially for a reason to connect.)
- (10.) It doesn't have to be all words, using snake sheds or other props can help prove a point.

I think we all identified with a lot of what she said. (For example, I name all my animals usually to identify with someone famous or from a trait the animal has.) And we probably picked up an idea or two that we can use when talking about "herps". We thank "Kat" for sharing.

HAND HELD HERPS

Article and photos by Roger Carter

The Midland Painted Turtle, *Chrysemys picta marginata*, measures four and one-half to five and one-half inches long and a record length on seven and five-eighths inches long. The carapace can be brown, black or light green with red markings on the lower part of the carapace, their legs and neck, and yellow stripes on the side of their head. The plastron can be either yellow or a flesh color with a slightly darker blotch in the middle. This turtle can be found in the Northeastern states, part of Canada, west to Indiana and south to Tennessee. This aquatic turtle is found in shallow water in lakes, marshes, large streams and retention ponds where there is some aquatic vegetation. They can bask in the sun in large numbers on old logs in the water but are easily startled and get into the water as quick as they can. They will eat some vegetable matter, crawfish, frogs and worms.

The Midland Painted Turtle in these pictures was an injured male that was brought to us because it had been hit by a car, but the damage wasn't too serious. Small pieces of its carapace were broken off at the rear end and some small pieces were broken off at the front end of its plastron. Some of the damage can be seen in these pictures. This turtle was eating well and was released after a few days.



The Monitor is printed courtesy of



Field Trip to the Louisville Zoo

by Ed Ferrer (photos – Abbie Watson)

On Saturday, September 24th, sixteen HHS members went on a field trip to the Louisville Zoo. Fourteen of us were able to arrive at 10:00 for a "behind the scenes" tour of the HERPAQUARIUM.

Bill McMahan and Will Bird talked about the many projects and species that are not on the regular public view. Will first pointed out that all the cages with red name cards housed venomous snakes. He also described the intensive training that needed to be completed before a zoo employee can be certified to work with the venomous species. This included timed drills and various skills that needed to be done.



He showed us the alarm system set up at the beginning and ending of each department and the tools and antivenin that were available. So far the training has been so successful that there has never been such an emergency. The zoo is also a partner to many zoos and other organizations regarding endangered species. One such program involves their Cuban crocodiles. Cuban crocodiles are wired a bit different than most crocodiles. Besides being very intelligent they are also

very fast and agile on land while most crocs are rather slow out of water. Bill explained that because of global warming the sea water has risen and allowed the American crocodile to invade some of the few swamps that are the habitat of the Cuban crocs. This means some interbreeding have occurred and the resulting offspring genetics is a hybrid of the two species. If this is allowed to continue the full blooded Cuban croc would eventually become extinct. The zoo is involved in DNA testing to try to keep a viable population of Cuban crocs stable.

Bill also showed us how they transfer the Cuban crocs from one tank to another to allow for cleaning and other upkeep. We were then taken to the Galapagos tortoise exhibit and we were allowed to enter the enclosure and actually touch and take photos with these giants! It was a great experience and we thank Bill and Will for taking the time out of their busy schedule to provide us with such a unique experience.



We then toured the rest of the HERPAQUARIUM on our own to see the many reptiles, amphibians and fish on display. One of the major attractions was "King Louie", a huge white albino crocodile.



Also a popular part was a nocturnal enclosure featuring vampire bats viewed with the aid of red lights. All the "herps" were displayed in natural settings that mirror their habitat in the wild.

We then went to the Islands exhibit that featured Cuban crocodiles and also large fruit bats, penguins and as we left there was a large enclosure that featured a family of orangutans and the gigantic male was standing at the window. At either end of the family was a tapir and a Sumatran tiger. I have been

told that every week they switch enclosures which allows each animal to investigate new smells a form of stimuli. We also had a snack at the Lakeside Smokehouse which is right next to a large lake where one can relax and watch the ducks, geese and turtles.



Along the way there were informative talks about the sea lions and seals, snow leopards, and Amur tiger. Each show how the animals respond to different cues to allow zoo staff to check their health. The gorilla forest was very impressive featuring a whole family or troupe from large silverbacks to small scampering babies. It was very impressive to see not only the way this zoo educates the public but also how they work with other zoos and other conservation organizations to solve complex issues. For families with small children there are a number of activities set up for the including a train ride, splash

park, petting zoos, feeding stations camel and pony rides among others. If anyone is traveling in the area of Louisville KY I would encourage anyone to set aside a whole day to explore this awesome zoo.



Setback to Radiated Tortoise Conservation

Submitted by Angela Thomas

The Turtle Survival Alliance suffered a major setback September 28th, when their Tortoise Conservation Center in Tsihombe, Madagascar was completely destroyed by fire, leaving 4 staff members homeless and imperiling the organization's efforts to save the critically endangered Radiated Tortoise from extinction.

The fire broke out early in the morning in the main office and living quarters of our senior staff there. With staff unable to control it, the fire consumed the entirety of the facility's insides. With it, the Tortoise Conservation Center rapidly lost its entire solar power grid and distribution system, computers and printers, security system, tortoise records, and staff living space and personal items. It's believed that the fire was of an electrical nature, triggered by wiring in an upstairs bedroom, however, an investigation is underway. The epicenter of activity for this crucial center is now lost, and four senior staff members are homeless. For now, the displaced staff will reside at the TCC's hospital, while actively working to restore internet and communication capabilities.

As this devastating fire has left the TCC in a vulnerable and incomplete state of operations, time is of the essence for rebuilding infrastructure, restoring security and communication capabilities, and ensuring the safety and well-being of our staff and the roughly 9,000 tortoises who reside on the center's grounds. Aside from our newly upgraded facility for confiscated tortoises in Lavavolo, and our headquarters in Antananarivo, the TCC is key to implementing TSA's "Confiscation to Reintroduction Strategy," a comprehensive plan to reintroduce these endangered tortoises into the wild. The TSA estimates the cost of restoring the facility and its essential components to be ~ \$45,000.

Please consider donating to this very worthy cause! You can donate at the Turtle Survival Alliance's website, turtlesurvival.org.

Marbled Salamander

(*Ambystoma opacum*)



Text and photo – Jim Horton

Size: 3 ½ – 4 inches

Species Status: Seldom seen but common in its range

Range: More common in south to central Indiana but a population exists in the Dunes region along Lake Michigan and an isolated population in southeast counties.

Description: A stocky black salamander with grey to white crossbands. Dark gray to black background with wide, grey or white bands across back from head to tail. Limbs are dark and mottled or lightly speckled. 11 - 12 costal grooves on sides. Belly is dark slate or black. Tail is round and ends at a pointed tip.

Habitat: Hardwood forested uplands and floodplains with temporary or permanent wetlands or ponds

Habits: Inhabits moist woodlands with loose soil. This species is known to burrow and utilize rodent burrows. Found in or beneath rotting logs, leaf litter, or large stones.

Diet: Earthworms, slugs, snails, and other invertebrates

Reproduction: Mating occurs in autumn (unlike most of our other salamanders) Heavy fall rains trigger breeding activity. Mating takes place on land near woodland ponds or ditches. Females lay 75-200 round, silvery eggs (not in a jelly like mass). Females dig a depression close to a water source under fallen logs or rocks and stays curled with eggs. Females await heavy rainfall that washes eggs into the water and young soon develop.

Don't forget to check out the HHS on Social Media!



www.hoosierherpsoc.org

2019 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

October 16, 2019 – HHS meeting. Guest speaker – Rick Marrs (HHS member), Topic: “Herping in Indiana.”

November 10, 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

November 20, 2019 – HHS meeting. Election of officers. Guest Speaker: Mr. Andrew Ahl (Indianapolis Zoo)

December 21, 2019 – HHS Christmas party dinner. MCL South, 6 P.M. After party?

HHS Board of Directors - 2019

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|--|
| PRESIDENT | Jim Horton | (317) 443-4845 | president@hoosierherpsoc.org |
| VICE-PRESIDENT | Dale Schoentrup | | eyelashviper@hotmail.com |
| SECRETARY | Holly Carter | (317) 873-6561 | drymarchonzz@hotmail.com |
| TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP | Roger Carter | (317) 873-6561 | treasurer@hoosierherpsoc.org |
| SERGEANT AT ARMS | Rex Morrell | | wrmorell@gmail.com |

Appointed Board Members for 2019

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|--|
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| PROGRAM DIRECTOR | Ed Ferrer | (317) 787-7448 | pythonpals1@msn.com |
| WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR | Angela Thomas | (317) 882-5266 | necali@comcast.net |
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| PUBLICIST/MEDIA DIRECTOR | Abbie Watson | | adwatson.7792@gmail.com |
| MEMBERS AT LARGE | Pat Hammond | (317) 656-9496 | gnawbone92@yahoo.com |
| | Rick Marrs | | rickmarrs@gmail.com |
| | Mary Hylton | (317) 966-4591 | liblady81@hotmail.com |
| | Heather White | (765) 404-2860 | v-president@hoosierherpsoc.org |
| | Kimberly Scott | (317) 306-1597 | silverskydragon@att.net |

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 _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Phone _____

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!