

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 37 Number 7

July 2026

HHS Monthly Meeting

Guest Speaker – **Katie Kulcon**

Katie is a naturalist and wildlife rehabilitator at Eagle Creek Park, as well as the Vice President of the Hoosier Herp Society.

Topic: “**Rattlesnake Field Day: Surveying Techniques for Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes in Michigan**”

Eastern massasauga rattlesnakes are a federally threatened species ranging throughout the Great Lakes region. Learn how researchers in Michigan locate, monitor, and study these secretive rattlesnakes, explore the habitats they call home, and discover why conservation efforts are critical to the species' future.

Wednesday, July 15, 7:00PM

Holliday Park Nature Center



President's message

Jim Horton

Last month, Katie Kolcun was scheduled to give a presentation for our members about surveying for eastern massasauga rattlesnakes. Unfortunately, due to inclement weather, we felt the need to cancel the meeting.

We couldn't take that chance. She has agreed to give another presentation this month! Thanks for your understanding and I hope to see you at the meeting!

The Annual SnakeFest at Brown County State Park is July 18. The HHS will be partnering with the park for the day featuring live snakes and presentations. Hope to see some of you there for the day.

Our annual river float will be next month, August 8, on the Driftwood River in Edinburgh. Weather has played a role in the cancelation of this event in the past. Please watch for any updates on our social media pages. You are welcome to call, text, or email me as well. Hope you can make it.

The HHS is hosting the 47th Midwest Herpetological Symposium in November! This MHS is a fundraiser for the HHS as well as an entertaining and educational gathering. We will need our members to help make this a successful conference. If you would like to help with this event, please contact any of our board members.

Welcome new and returning members!

New

Marcus Casey
Jeremy Chapman
Jazmyn Nouks
Stephanie Scurtu

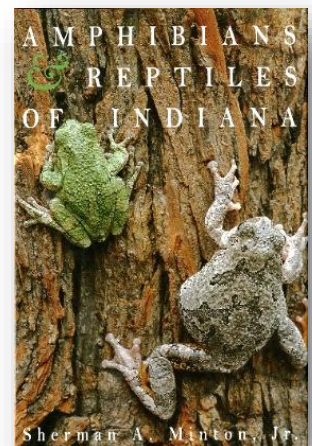
RENEWALS

Victor Carboneau
Pat Dodge

The HHS is selling new copies of this comprehensive Indiana field guide for \$40 each.

Now you can have your personal Indiana field guide!
Amphibians & Reptiles of Indiana, Revised Second Edition
Minton, Sherman A.Jr.

ISBN 10: 1883362105 / ISBN 13: 9781883362102
Published by Indiana Academy of Science, 2001



www.hoosierherpsociety.org



Snake-Fest 2026

Saturday, July 18th

Come join Brown County State Park naturalists and the Hoosier Herpetological Society for an exciting Saturday! We will have passive displays of reptiles all day, with opportunities for learning, petting, and pictures! Special presentations occur at the top of every hour. We will also have snake arts and crafts to take with you!



DNR
Indiana Department
of Natural Resources



SCHEDULE

11 am: Earth's Most
Venomous Snakes

12 pm: Snake Meet and
Greet

1 pm: Searching for Hidden
Herps

2 pm: Timber!
Understanding the Timber
Rattlesnake

3 pm: Snakes of Indiana

4 pm: Rattlesnake Walk

5 pm: Snake Meet and
Greet



The Northern Ringneck Snake in Indiana

Article and photos - Jim Horton



The northern ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*) is among Indiana's most common snakes, yet it is rarely observed. Unlike many larger species that bask in the open or actively cross roads, ringneck snakes spend nearly their entire lives hidden beneath rocks, logs, leaf litter, bark, and other surface cover. Their secretive lifestyle makes every encounter a memorable one for naturalists and herpers alike.

Despite their elusive nature, ringneck snakes occur throughout most of Indiana wherever suitable habitat exists. They are especially abundant in mature deciduous forests, wooded ravines, rocky hillsides, floodplain forests, and even suburban woodlots that provide ample ground cover.

This species is small and slender. It typically measures 10 to 15 inches in length, although exceptionally large adults may approach 18 inches.

It's appearance is unmistakable: Smooth, glossy scales that give the snake a polished look. A uniform slate gray, bluish-gray, or black back and a distinct yellow, orange, or cream-colored ring around the neck. The bright yellow, orange, or red-orange belly that is often marked with small black spots arranged in pairs. Juveniles resemble adults but often display brighter colors and a more vivid neck ring.

This snake is found across nearly all of Indiana, though populations are generally less common in areas where suitable woodland habitat has been heavily altered or fragmented.

It is especially abundant in: Brown County, Morgan-Monroe Forest, Hoosier National Forest, Turkey Run State Park, Shades State Park, Clifty Falls State Park, and many other wooded forests in southern and central Indiana.

Because they spend so much time underground or beneath cover, surveys that include turning natural cover objects frequently reveal ringneck snakes even where they are seldom seen otherwise.

Ringneck snakes require moist environments with abundant cover. Preferred habitats include: Hardwood forests, Forest edges, Rocky outcrops, Hillsides, Floodplain woods, and moist ravines

They are commonly found beneath: flat rocks, decaying logs, fallen bark, leaf litter, boards and other artificial cover. Unlike many snakes, they seldom bask openly during daylight.

Ringneck snakes feed primarily on small, soft-bodied prey. Common food items include: earthworms, Slugs, salamanders, Small frogs, smaller snakes, and insects and larvae.

They are especially effective predators of woodland salamanders and earthworms, helping maintain ecological balance within Indiana's forest ecosystems.

Ringneck snakes are primarily nocturnal and secretive. During the day they remain hidden beneath cover where temperatures and humidity remain stable.

When disturbed they rarely attempt to bite. Instead they may: Curl the tail upward to expose the brightly colored underside, release a foul-smelling musk, twist their bodies into loose coils and (or) remain motionless in hopes of avoiding detection.

Although they possess mild venom delivered through enlarged rear teeth, it is used only to subdue small prey and poses no danger to people or pets.

Breeding generally occurs during spring after emergence from winter hibernation.

Females deposit three to ten elongated eggs beneath logs, inside rotting stumps, or under rocks during early summer. The eggs hatch in late summer, producing tiny snakes only four to five inches long. In Indiana, ringneck snakes are typically active from April through October.

Peak activity often occurs: Following warm spring rains, during cool, humid summer evenings, beneath cover after rainfall, and during mild autumn weather. Winter is spent below the frost line in rock crevices, mammal burrows, root systems, or communal hibernation sites shared with other snake species.

Despite their secretive habits, ringneck snakes are preyed upon by many animals, including: Hawks, owls, raccoons, possums, skunks, larger snakes, and domestic cats. Their cryptic coloration and underground lifestyle provides their best defense.

The ringneck snake remains common throughout Indiana and is not considered threatened statewide. Nevertheless, habitat loss, forest fragmentation, excessive removal of logs and rocks, and unnecessary killing of snakes can reduce local populations.

Protecting mature forests and leaving natural cover objects undisturbed benefits not only ringneck snakes but countless amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates that share the same habitat.

Though seldom encountered, it quietly performs an important ecological role beneath the forest floor, feeding on small invertebrates and serving as prey for larger wildlife.

For kids, hikers, naturalists, and herpetologists, discovering a ringneck snake beneath a moss-covered log or flat rock is always a reminder that some of Indiana's most fascinating wildlife lives just out of sight. Small, gentle, and beautifully marked, the northern ringneck snake is one of the Hoosier State's true woodland treasures.

47th Midwest Herpetological Symposium

Indianapolis Indiana

November 13/14, 2026

La Quinta Inn & Suites, 5120 Victory Dr, Indianapolis
Hosted by the Hoosier Herpetological Society



Featured guest speakers:

Dr. Thomas Pauley - Marshall University
Nate Engbrecht - State Herpetologist, Indiana
Jason Holzworth - Wildlife Photographer
Terry Vandeventer – Herpetologist, Miss
Bethannie Perrine – Indiana State University
Twan Leenders – Researcher/Conservationist
Steve Thompson – DVM – Purdue University

Join herpetologists, conservationists, photographers, educators, students, and reptile & amphibian enthusiasts from across the Midwest for a weekend of presentations, live animals, networking, book signings vendors, auctions, and herpetological education.

[47th Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium | Hoosier Herp Society](#)

WOULD YOU LIKE TO DONATE TO THE HHS MIDWEST SYMPOSIUM AUCTION?

We are looking for unique herp-related items for the auction. Artwork, books, or any item(s) that might help raise funds.
Please contact any board member for information on donating to the symposium auction.



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Look for the HHS
on social media



HHS Board of Directors – 2026

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2026 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

July 15, 2026 – HHS monthly meeting. Guest Speaker: Katie Kulcon (HHS/Eagle Creek Park). Topic – “Rattlesnake Field Day: Surveying Techniques for Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes in Michigan”

July 18, 2026 - Snake Fest, Brown County State Park. 11:00AM-5PM, Presentations, live snake displays, rattlesnake walk, and more.

August 8, 2026 – HHS river float. Join HHS members in a kayak/canoe for a day of enjoying nature. Water snakes, turtles, and other wildlife are abundant on this trip.

August 19, 2026 – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker: John Burris. Topic – “Field Herping China”

September 16, 2026 – HHS meeting, Topic – Show and Tell meeting. Members are encouraged to bring their favorite live herps, artwork, field guides, or other herpetology related items.

September 20, 2026 - Midwest Reptile Show – Indiana State Fairgrounds, Agriculture/Horticulture Bldg. 10:00AM-5:00PM Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis. \$9.00 admission, reptiles, amphibians, books, cages, feeder animals, and other supplies. www.midwestreptile.com

November 13/14, 2026 - Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Hosted by the HHS. Guest speakers (Fri/Sat) Ice-breaker, Live and silent auctions, banquet and more.

Membership Form

☐ new member

☐ renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Email Address _____

Individual/Family Membership \$25.00

Herpetological Interests

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

Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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