



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 2

February 2026

HHS Monthly Meeting

Guest Speaker – Owen Wright (Wabash College)

Topic: *Tracking Eastern Box Turtle Behavior Using a Shell-Mounted Accelerometer.*

Wednesday, February 18, 7:00PM

Holliday Park Nature Center

President's message

Jim Horton

Hello HHS members!

As of press time, the big snow has started to melt and spring won't be far off.

I'd like to thank our members who spent the day at Garfield Park for our annual amphibian and reptile exhibit. Our next live display is February 21st in Linton for Marsh Madness. It's a birding festival and they've invited us to show some herps. If you have live animals to exhibit and would like to help, please contact me.

We are hosting the 47th Midwest Herpetological Symposium in November! We've got some good speakers lined up already. This MHS is a fundraiser for the HHS as well as an entertaining and educational gathering. We will need all hands-on deck for this event. If you would like to help with this event, please contact any of our board members.

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

This month, one of the winners of the Sherman Minton Presentation Award will be our guest speaker. Unfortunately, I'll be unable to attend this meeting and hate to miss it. I'm sure Katie Kolcun will do fine job as MC for the evening.

Meet the Mole Salamander, One of Indiana's most Recently Discovered Native Amphibian species.

Jim Horton



Photo – Jim Horton

For a state with a long history of naturalist exploration, Indiana still manages to surprise the scientists who study its wildlife. One of the most striking examples came when researchers confirmed the presence of the *mole salamander* (*Ambystoma talpoideum*), a species never before recorded in Indiana.

The mole salamander is well known across the southeastern United States, with a range stretching from the Carolinas to Texas. Indiana, however, was never considered part of its distribution. That changed in 2004 when biologists from Purdue University surveyed a bald cypress swamp in Posey County and encountered a small but unmistakable population of the species.

The find was remarkable not only because the salamander had gone undetected for so long, but because the population sits far north of the species' typical range. This makes it a disjunct population—a group living in isolation from the main body of the species.

The mole salamander is a stout bodied amphibian, usually 3–5 inches long, with a broad head and a short, thick tail. Its coloration ranges from gray to brown, often sprinkled with subtle bluish flecks. The species gets its name from its behavior where they spends much of their lives underground or hidden beneath logs, leaf litter, and root systems.

The Indiana population was found in a bald cypress swamp, a habitat type more commonly associated with the Deep South than the Midwest. These wetlands offer suitable habitat for this species.

Because mole salamanders migrate to water only during the breeding season and spend the rest of the year hidden underground, it's easy to see how they could remain undetected for decades.

Disjunct populations often represent remnants of ancient distributions—survivors from eras when climates and landscapes were dramatically different. Isolated populations can be vulnerable to habitat loss, wetland drainage, and climate shifts may threaten them more than their widespread counterparts.

Indiana is known for its salamander diversity; more than any other state, including the presence of rare unisexual salamander lineages. The mole salamander adds another layer to this ecological richness.

The discovery of the mole salamander in Indiana is a testament to the value of field research and the resilience of wildlife. Even in a state mapped, farmed, and studied for centuries, hidden species persist in quiet corners—waiting for the right moment, and the right observer, to be noticed.

The mole salamanders are listed as State Endangered in Indiana

What you missed at the January 2026 meeting

Dawn Van Deman presented - "Isopods and Friends"

Dawn is a naturalist and Eagle Creek Discovery Center Park Manager. She discussed the role of isopods in nature and their ability to maintain bioactive terrarium habitats.

Many people think of roly polys as being insects found under mulch in their yards. They are really related to the crustaceans (crayfish, lobsters, shrimp and others). Other names for these are woodlouse, pill bugs, porkys and assorted other names. There are about 10,000 species of these: 4500 are marine, 500 are fresh water and 500 are terrestrial. She discussed the terrestrial species as these have become part of the bioactive terrariums that many people have started using for keeping small lizards, salamanders, frogs and toads. A few are being used with larger lizards and snakes in a more limited way.

The roly polys are known for being small, oval -shaped with 7 pairs of legs and being able to conglobate (roll into a ball) when disturbed. Females have a pouch on their underside to carry their eggs in and there is even a sub-species that is parthenogenic (Able to breed without a male present). They feed on detritus, dead leaves, moss, feces and other organic items. They have been known to nibble at frogs and spiders especially when molting. They help to keep terrariums in good shape by recycling these nutrients into the soil and keeping the substrate loose. Some of these species are bred in captivity but others are still wild caught. A USDA permit is required to sell these animals out of state as all of these (including backyard isopods even though they have long been here).

Dawn went on to explain the setup for a bioactive terrarium. The PRO side is less overall maintenance (once it is set up) makes an appealing natural enclosure and provides enrichment with burrowing and feeding opportunities. The CON side is that the initial setup cost can be somewhat expensive, but it depends on what amenities are wanted. Some of the rarer tropical species are still a little costly as they do not breed as well as others. Some of the larger varieties are being seen in the pet trade as they are easy care and have different colors and activities.

Dawn also demonstrated an Inwan camera that has a swing arm and platform for easy closeup viewing of these creatures in their enclosures. This is hooked up to a computer and provides for keeping track of them.

- Holly Carter

Over 5,000 iguanas captured in Florida during 2-day cold weather roundup: FWC

The Sunrise location collected the most, with 3,882 of the invasive reptiles dropped off.
By NBC6 • Published February 4, 2026



Green iguanas stunned from the cold temperatures
(Photo – National Geographic)

More than 5,000 iguanas were captured and turned in during Florida's two-day roundup amid cold temperatures, state wildlife officials said.

The 5,195 invasive green iguanas were removed from the ecosystem during the temporary capture period that ran from Feb. 1-2, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officials said Wednesday. The FWC had allowed people to remove the cold-stunned iguanas and bring them to five locations in the state. The Sunrise location collected the most, with 3,882 of the invasive reptiles dropped off. The FWC's Tequesta location received 1,075 green iguanas, the Marathon drop-off site received 215 green iguanas, and the Fort Myers location received 23 green iguanas.

As the cold front swept through South Florida, bringing historically low temperatures, the invasive reptiles were left cold-stunned and immobile.

Green iguanas are an invasive species in Florida and pose significant environmental and economic risks to the state, officials say.

Any iguanas turned into FWC that could not be transferred to permit holders were humanely killed by trained staff.

"As an invasive species, green iguanas have negative impacts on Florida's environment and economy. The removal of over 5,000 of these nonnative lizards in such a short time span was only possible thanks to the coordinated efforts of many staff members in multiple FWC divisions and offices, our partners, and of course the many residents that took the time to collect and turn in cold-stunned iguanas from their properties," FWC executive director Roger Young said in a statement.



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Look for the HHS
on social media





Sherman A. Minton Jr. Award

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to offer a \$400 award in honor of Sherman A. Minton Jr. to support outstanding herpetological research projects. This annual award is open to students from Indiana-based academic institutions, with research topics welcomed from anywhere in the world.

The recipient will be invited to present their research at a 2026 or 2027 Hoosier Herpetological Society meeting, held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM at Holliday Park (6363 Spring Mill Rd, Indianapolis, IN).

Application Details:

- **Submit a one-page or less description of your research topic.**
- **Be sure to include details on:**
 1. **Why this research is important**
 2. **How and why you chose this topic**
 3. **Where your research might lead in the future**
- **Include your contact information.**
- **Applications are due by June 1, 2026.**
- **Email materials to treasurer@hoosierherpsociety.org.**

For more information, visit: <https://www.hoosierherpsociety.org/sherman-a-minton-jr-studentpresentation-scholarship>

We look forward to supporting and showcasing innovative herpetological research!



FrogWatchUSA Training/Certification

**Friday, February 27, 7:00PM
Holliday Park Nature Center**

Native frogs and toads need our help!

This Citizen Science project enables anyone with an interest in frogs and toads to collect valuable data. This data is used to develop strategies for environmental protection and amphibian conservation.

Join us at 7:00pm for a PowerPoint presentation and testing for certification.

HHS Garfield Park Exhibition

Jim Horton

Photos by Bandy Russell and Jim Horton

HHS members assembled February 7th at the Garfield Park Conservancy for another *show and tell* day of education. The free event ran from 10AM to 2PM. The display featured amphibians and reptiles from Indiana and around the globe. Attendees were thrilled to get the chance to touch and hold a variety of these misunderstood creatures. HHS members offered information on each animal such as biology, temperament, natural habitat, and captive requirements. The room was crowded throughout the day and didn't let up until 2PM when our exhibit time was up. Big thanks to Kashena Hottinger and the rest of the park staff for their assistance throughout the day. Thanks to our dedicated members who gave up their Saturday to support herpetological education!



HHS Board of Directors - 2026

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2026 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

February 18, 2026 – HHS monthly meeting. Guest speaker: 2025 Sherman Minton Award Winner, Owen Wright (Wabash College). Title – *Tracking Eastern Box Turtle Behavior Using a Shell-Mounted Accelerometer*.

February 21, 2026 – HHS live native herp exhibit, Marsh Madness festival, Linton, IN. Humphreys Park and Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area.

March 1, 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

March 18, 2026 – HHS monthly meeting

May 16, 2026 – Hoosier Herpout. A day of field herping, cookout, and (optional) camping.

July 18, 2026 - Snake Fest, Brown County State Park. Presentations and live snake displays.

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.

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 _____

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Individual/Family Membership \$25.00

Herpetological Interests

Hoosier Herpetological Society
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If this box is checked, it's time to renew your membership