



# 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 17 Number 4

April 2006

## President's Message

Ed Ferrer

Well it seems that spring is finally here and like many of you I have had a strong dose of spring fever after a relatively mild winter. I'm very excited because this year I will be attending Herpetology Weekend in Natural Bridge State Park in Slade, Kentucky on April 21st and 22nd. I have always wanted to attend but I have always had a conflict in my schedule. I am really looking forward to listening to herp lectures and doing some field herping in the red River Gorge area and making new friends involved with reptiles and amphibians. If anyone wants to share a room at the Hemlock Inn Lodge just contact me and it will make the trip more affordable for both of us.

Last month we had a great presentation by Dr. Michael Finkler of I.U. at Kokomo about his field studies of the snapping turtle. He studied two different sites and kept detailed records of the turtles success in hatching and surviving. I was amazed that only 23% of the eggs that were laid actually hatched, mostly due to predation by raccoons and skunks, and out of that only about 50% of the hatchlings survived their first year. Less than one percent of the hatchlings ever reach maturity yet the snapping turtle as a specie still is successful. This month we have a special all live presentation about raising and breeding herps by Scott Braustein, owner of House of Reptiles in Kentucky. We have been very fortunate to get quality speakers for our meetings so let's make a real effort to attend our meetings as often as you can.

We also have the opportunity and responsibility of hosting this years Midwest Herpetological Symposium in November 3-5. We have a great list of speakers and great activities planned so be sure to plan on attending and helping out if possible. The herp society is a 501C organization so all donations are tax deductible. Be thinking of friends, organizations, employers who may be able to contribute or help co sponsor this event. For sponsors we could offer space in our newsletter, symposium flyers and brochures for exposure. The worst they can do is say "No"! Every little bit will help make our symposium a success.

Lastly as the only sports fan in the Herp Society (or at least the "biggest" sports fan) I want to congratulate the University of Florida Gators on winning the NCAA basketball championship this past weekend in Indianapolis! Coach Billy Donovan's success at building Florida's basketball program somewhat mirrors the wild alligators fate in the wild, as they were once on the endangered species list but now thrive in the swamps of Southeast United States.

# Cave Salamanders

(Eurycea Lucifuga)

By, Elliot Stahl



Photo by Elliot Stahl

Cave Salamanders are some of the most interesting and rarely scene of Indiana's amphibians. They are one of my personal favorite salamanders to encounter in the wild. Cave Salamanders, (Eurycea Lucifuga) are a very unique species of salamander.

They have a base color of orange, and sometimes orange-red with black spots scattered on most of the upper parts of its body. The juveniles are a grayish brown color with three rows of small light spots on them. The adults are very slender with a long slender tail. Adult length of cave salamanders ranges from 4 to 6 inches in length. Juvenile salamanders are around 10mm when they hatch.

The Cave Salamanders range from western Virginia to northwestern Georgia and northern Alabama to southern Indiana. They also extend to southern Missouri, extreme southeastern Kansas, and up to Northeastern Oklahoma. In Indiana, cave salamanders occur mainly in the southeastern and and south central part of the state.

Most of the time cave salamanders are found in springs or in the twilight zone of caves. The twilight zone of caves is where the light from outside fades into total darkness. On a few occasions I have found cave salamanders in sinkholes and rocky areas not anywhere near caves. Most of the time I see them in large congregations just inside cave entrances, on the ceiling or in cracks in the wall. There have been many times when I have seen cave salamanders thousands of feet past the twilight zone of caves.

Most of the time this is in a cave that has a stream flowing through it but not all the time. I have found them far past the entrances of caves that are relatively dry as well. A few times I have witnessed cave salamanders miles back into a cave. It is also common to see cave salamanders in vertical caves as well. Numerous times I have rappelled into pit caves in Indiana well over 100 feet and have found cave salamanders in them.

The only way for a human to reach the bottom of these chasms is with special ropes and gear. Cave salamanders however can climb right up or down completely smooth walls into these caves. I have witnessed a cave salamander climbing straight up the smooth wall of a pit over 70 feet deep. In that same cave while ascending the rope I paused about 40 feet up the pit to observe a younger cave salamander, probably about half grown clinging to the totally vertical surface of the pit wall. It is astonishing to watch these little salamanders with great climbing skills defy gravity in deep pits that are very common in the range of southern Indiana's cave salamanders.

Cave salamanders are said to lay eggs from October to May. Their eggs have been found in streams just outside caves, and inside caves. Their larvae can vary greatly in the time it takes them to transform. They can transform in the autumn after they were or they could spend another winter in their larvae stage.

I have witnessed cave salamander larvae in small pools of water in caves, as well as streams. On another trip into the earlier described vertical cave we went down a second drop of 20 feet, past the 84 foot entrance drop. At the bottom of the second pit we followed a stream through the passage that required you to crawl in the water. While pushing my way down the passage I paused to look at small cave salamander larvae swimming around the perfectly clear stream. I have found cave salamander larvae in caves bodies of water from small pools only inches across to streams eight feet across and maybe 3 feet deep.

The diet of cave salamanders consists of mainly spiders, flies and beetles as most of their diet. They will also eat mites, ticks, and pseudo scorpions. Cave salamanders are not known to be cannibalistic but on one occasion in a cave west of Bloomington, Indiana I witnessed a very

skinny adult cave salamander consuming a fully-grown zig zag salamander. The two salamanders were just past the small entrance of the cave in the twilight zone. This was a very strange occurrence. Usually cave salamanders do not feed only inside caves, many time they leave the caves to feed or they catch bugs and spiders in the twilight zone of caves were they spend most of there time.

Cave salamanders are such a neat species of salamanders, and they are very interesting to observe in the wild. As a caver I get the chance to encounter these animals almost every weekend I go caving. They are always just as exciting to find as they were the time before, because you never know were they will be or what they will be up to in the darkness of the caves they inhabit.

References:

Minton, Sherman A. Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana. 2ndnd ed. Indianapolis: Indiana Academy of Science, 2001. 83-85.

## ***WELCOME NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS!!!***

***New–Toby Barker, - Indpls. IN***

***Renewals - Dave Stahl, Fishers, IN***

***Sheryl Mitchell, Bloomington***

***Wanda Horner, Carmel***

***Juan Horner, Kennesaw, Ga.***

***Paul Hofsommer, Indpls***

**General Meeting: Wednesday April. 19th, 7:30 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Scott Braunstein, *House of Reptiles* Owner**

**Topic: Do's and Don'ts of Herps**

**Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Lecture Room #108**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to present Scott Braunstein, owner of **House of Reptiles** in Dry Ridge, Kentucky as this month's guest speaker. Scott's **House of Reptiles** is a 3,800 square foot facility with over 100 different types of reptiles and amphibians on display as well as a few insects and arachnids. His emphasis is on educating the public about herps. He has had over 20 years experience, breeding and caring for most any kind of herptile that are available. He has bred successfully all types of snakes, from pythons and boas to colubrids such as corn snakes, milk snakes and king snakes. He has also bred various frogs, lizards (geckos), turtles, and tortoises. Perhaps his favorite reptiles are crocodilians. He will bring live examples of several species to share with our members.

His presentation will be a special all live program describing the best way to care for and breed these animals. So if you are contemplating adding to your herp collection, you want to make sure to attend this meeting as this is a perfect opportunity to answer any of your questions with someone who has practical experience instead of just reading a book. See you there!

## Editor's Corner

Jim Horton

There has been some concern from membership about one of the headlines in the last issue of the Monitor. The headline read: "Symposium Funds Needed". I would like to clear up a discrepancy on my part. I simply chose the wrong headline. The HHS doesn't desperately need funds for the 06 Symposium. But, like many events, monies are a very important part of getting it started in a good direction and the more funds, the better.

Dave Mitchell, our treasurer, was only trying to find another way that may help out. It definitely can't hurt. We have a great event planned for November and along with the Indy Reptile Expo, it is sure to be one of the best symposiums in a long time! Thanks for your concerns.

By the way, Dave's correct email is: [turtlelovin@comcast.net](mailto:turtlelovin@comcast.net)

***Herpetology Weekend*** April 21st – 22nd  
***Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, Kentucky***

Learn about nature's most misunderstood critters! Experienced herpetologists will lead field trips in to the Red River Gorge to observe reptiles and amphibians in their native habitat. Collection is prohibited. Demonstrations will include live venomous snakes! Evening presentations will focus on reptile and amphibian conversation. Registration fee is \$5 per adult and \$2 per child.

**INDIANA STATE MUSEUM**  
**UPCOMING SUMMER SHOWS & EXHIBITS**  
*June 3-4, June 9-11, July 14-*

**Hoosier Herpout '06 Coming soon!**

# Early Season Indiana Herping

By Rick Marrs

It was a dark and stormy night... two nights ago. But with temperatures remaining in the 50 and 50 degree range, I thought it likely that some amphibians might still be striving to pass their DNA on to yet another generation.

With this in mind, prodigal HHS member Barry Hammer and I went for the in search of the elusive crawfish (or crayfish) frog *Rana areolata circulara*. This is a State Endangered Species that once was common enough to be hunted for food. They are only found in large numbers when they congregate during their brief breeding season. There-after they lead a secretive life, seldom straying far from the sanctuary of the crawfish burrows for which they are named. Pollution, habitat loss, and possibly over-harvesting have contributed to the decline of these large chunky frogs. They sort of look like a cross between a bullfrog and a leopard frog.

On a rainy July day back in '98' I found a crawfish frog near Dugger, Indiana. Minnehaha State Fish and Wildlife Area and Green Sullivan State Forest and lots of open farmland are nearby, so that area became our destination.

Barry said that Wendell Zetterberg had mentioned that crawfish frogs had recently been found at a place called "Goose Pond". Dr. Sherman Minton had also made references to Goose Pond in connection with this species.

Just one problem, where the heck is Goose Pond? It certainly wasn't in my Rand McNally map of Indiana.

We grabbed some burgers at the Cloverdale exit and headed south on highway 59. Just past Clay City, Barry exclaimed, "I don't believe it! Check out that sign!" At the limit of my astigmatic field of vision I spied a weather-beaten wooden sign declaring 'Goose Pond Pizza, Seven Miles ahead on HWY 59 S. Linton.'

"I wonder if they serve frog legs?" mused Barry.

Driving through Linton we kept our eyes peeled for the pizzeria, but alas, no such establishment seems to currently exist.

A few miles south of Linton we passed hundreds of acres of flooded pasturage. This was potential froggy heaven, and we decided to stop and listen at this spot on the way back home.

I suggested we stop at Green-Sullivan-State Forest and see if one of the numerous small lakes that lie within its boundaries might happen to be the elusive Goose Pond.

The local bait shop was open, so we stopped to see if the proprietor might be able to enlighten us. I explained our mission to the owner and he said that a Goose Lake lies about five miles west of Dugger but also that the DNR now runs the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife area on highway 59, just a few miles south of Linton! The hundreds of acres of flooded pastures we had driven past was the very place we had been so fervently seeking!

I thanked the bait-monger for this serendipitous bit of information and trotted out to tell Barry the good news. Nightfall was still an hour or so away, so we drove on to Dugger figuring there was time to check out the site where years ago I briefly held an adult Crawfish Frog in my shaking hands. Cruising the gravel roads, we neither saw nor heard crawfish frogs. However, we found leopard frogs and a young beaver crossing in our high beams. "How do we get back to Goose Pond?" asked Barry, now that darkness had fallen! "No problem. Just turn left up here and it'll will back to 59", I confidently answered. So, we turned left and drove. And drove. And drove.

Eventually we realized we weren't so much lost, we just didn't know exactly where we were. On the horizon we saw the glow of lights such as one might see over a fair-sized city. "Let's go that way", I suggested. "Where is that?" Barry asked. "Terre Haute, or maybe Brazil," I guessed. (We had been driving for quite a while.) As it turned out, the lights belonged to a prison. A very, very big prison. "Let's not pick up any hitchhikers", mumbled Barry.

In a small town called Carlisle, Barry stopped to ask directions from an older gentleman who was apparently just leaving the local tavern. "How do we get to Linton?" inquired Barry. "Wahl, yuh goes back th' way yall came 'til yuh pass the prison, when yuh git to th' train tracks, turn right an' it'll take yuh right into Linton", he drawled while climbing into his F150.

Somehow we found our way back to the Goose Pond FWA and pulled onto a designated parking area. Gazillions of Spring Peepers and Chorus frogs were singing their tiny brains out. Barry stuck his head out the window and exclaimed, "I hear them!" A minute of straining my ears rewarded me with the barely audible drone recognized as the call of the *Rana a. circulara*. We approached the water and listened

“Waaaaah, waaaah, waaaah.” We were hearing at least a hundred male crawfish frogs calling unseen in the darkness. Barry had the more powerful flashlight and he managed to pick up some of the frogs’ eyeshine. But, to get a good look at them we needed a boat. They were way out there. I pointed my camcorder at the inky darkness and began taping—at least the audio should turn out good.

We remained listening to the lust-inspired symphony for about an hour and then cruised the road looking for crossing frogs or DOR’s. We identified leopard frogs and a couple of bullfrogs hopping about. As for the DOR’s, something as soft and small as a frog getting hit by a vehicle going in excess of 50 MPH usually leaved a pretty unidentifiable smear on the pavement. “I’m pretty sure this one is a leopard. What’s that one on your side?” “Umm, it looks like, uh, well, like spaghetti.” Or Goose Pond (Road) Pizza.

**Editor’s note:** Just a small update. Since the article, Ken Lane, Berry, Rick, and myself had gone back through Linton and we saw that ‘Goose Pond Pizza’ was in plain view on Main Street. Rick and Barry must have had their *frog goggles* on that night.

Also, we did hear sporadic calls from the crawfish frogs and were able to get close to them to no avail. These frogs were incredible ventriloquists and had thrown us off completely.

## A Burned Muffin

By Steve Nard

*Director of Monty’s Reptiles  
Education and Adoption*

In the middle of February we were contacted by a young lady from Michigan deeply in need of help. She had went away to college this year and left her pride and joy with a friend. Her pride and joy just so happened to be a young ball python named Muffin. On returning home from college she discovered that Muffin had received 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns on  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her belly from a heat mat that was placed inside the aquarium. In fact the burns were so bad the vet had to remove about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch of burned flesh from her belly. The burns happened in October of 2005 and poor muffin had not eaten since. Muffin’s mom contacted us and inquired if we could take her and give her the proper care she requires now. Upon arrival muffin was surrendered with her aquarium, burn cream, and vet records. It broke the young lady’s heart to give up her baby, and it probably took everything she had not to ball her eyes out.

Muffin was extremely dehydrated, and obviously emaciated. Most of the burns had healed, all she needed now was to get her appetite back, and keep her exposed skin clean. We immediately took measures to get her re-hydrated. Twice a week we force feed her liquid electrolytes. I have not observed her drinking on her own but she does keep the electrolytes down. We also are force-feeding her three to four pinkie mice once a week in hopes to get her enough strength to eat on her own. Like all snakes Muffin protests but she does not regurgitate, which is always a great sign when dealing with unhealthy snakes. We are optimistic about the future of Muffin, and she will probably survive the entire ordeal, but she will probably keep her “arched” slither for the rest of her life. To describe the “arched” slither it is kind of like a side winder movement except the middle does not touch the ground, depending of how fast she is moving determines the height of the arch, most of the time she keeps her belly two-three inches off the floor. Through all the force feeding, antibiotic cream application, and just the overall restraining she goes through on a daily basis she doesn’t even offer to bite. When she does finally regain her strength she will be a great example for why certain heating elements are dangerous.

Pictures of Muffin are on our website under the sad stories link if anyone would like support Muffin or just our program in general please visit our website or contact Steve for more information. Steve Nard 812-201-8505 [www.montysreptiles.org](http://www.montysreptiles.org)

## Winters End At Eagle Creek

By Barry Hammer

For those of us who enjoy experiencing herptiles in the field, here in the Midwest, the month of March means it's time to get serious about our passion. The coming of the rains and rising temperatures provides us with our preferred treatment for Spring fever. The 9<sup>th</sup> of March, while only about 45 degrees, was rainy and it had rained the night before. I decided to start my herping season with a trip to Eagle Creek Park in the northwest portion of Marion County.

Before I'd even parked it was clear my visit would not be in vain. It was mid-morning and large numbers of Western Chorus Frogs could be heard from the road. These tiny frogs are very difficult to find at first. They call from concealed spots in tufts of emergent vegetation and they have longitudinal stripes which provide them with good camouflage in such locations. Once you see one or two, you form a search image in your mind and it becomes easier to locate them.

One breeding pool I explored has several small pieces of plywood placed around its edge. This provides cover that is easily checked for sheltering herps. Under these, I was able to find Smallmouth Salamanders. This member of the Mole Salamander Family is fairly common in the park. This salamander is usually dark gray with slightly lighter mottling along its sides. The head is narrower than the torso and appears to be too small for its stout body.

Another member of the Mole Salamander Family that occurs in the park is the Tiger Salamander. While I did not see any, I did observe masses of eggs that appeared a bit large to be from the smallmouths. I hope with further visits, to either confirm or deny this. Steve Perill, our friend at Butler University, guided me to this location for Tiger Salamanders when he was the very first speaker for the H.H.S.

Two days after my initial visit, Rick Marrs and I returned to the park. I wanted a second opinion of the egg masses plus you never know what day will be the day. This day was the day to add more species to my list for '06.

While making our way to the pool with the plywood pieces, Rick found a Blanchard's Cricket Frog. This smallest Indiana frog calls and breeds a bit later in the season but can be found in March. This particular frog was a very dark brown, showing almost no pattern. At cool temperatures many of our local frogs will be darker than usual.

It was not raining on this afternoon visit but again the Chorus Frogs were calling. Arriving at the pool, we began checking the plywood first thing. Expecting frogs and salamanders, I was surprised when Rick found a Kirtland's Snake. It was not under the plywood but in the grass next to a piece. A few yards away there was another Kirtland's. This one was under the wood and quickly disappeared into a hole. This location is referred to, by some, as "The Kirtland's Release Site." Eleven years ago a large number of this Endangered Species were removed (with permission) from a well-known population that was threatened with destruction. They were released in Eagle Creek by Jim Horton, Rick Marrs, Ken Lane, Dennis Brown and myself. I hope I'm not leaving anyone out. A good many more were also relocated to other sites by Rick Marrs and Dale Schoentrup.

Rick and I included a stop at the park nature center on our visit. Along with several kinds of turtles, frogs, and snakes, the center is a good place to see Mudpuppies. Many people never see these large, aquatic salamanders but you can here and it's only 25 cents to get in.

Later this same day I had another great herping adventure. It's a tale I'll leave for another to tell. Get out, go herping and tell us your tale.

Note: There is a \$4.00 per car admission charge to enter the park.

## WILD "FACTS OF" LIFE

Submitted by Dave Mitchell

Humans and dolphins are the only species that have sex for pleasure.

[ Is that why Flipper was always smiling?]

The ant can lift 50 times its own weight, pull 30 times its own weight and always falls over on its right side when intoxicated.

[ From drinking little bottles of...? Did the government pay for this research??]

Butterflies taste with their feet.

[ Ah, geez.]

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

[ I know some people like that.]

Starfish don't have brains.

[ I know some people like that, too.]

Turtles can breathe through their butts.

(And I thought I had bad breath in the morning!)

## HERP HAPPENINGS

**April 29, 2006** – 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. info. table. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)

**April 21-22, 2006** – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge Park, Slade, KY. Programs, talks, field trips, Kentucky Reptile Zoo. Some HHS members will be staying at the Red River Inn as well as the Hemlock Lodge.

**May 17, 2006** – General Meeting, Special Guest Speakers: Jim and Kristen Harrison, Topic – *Mohave Rattlesnakes in Arizona*

**June 10-11, 2006** – Reptile Invasion, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, Evansville, IN A very popular event that includes programs and live animals. HHS members display their herps. One of our largest fundraisers!

**June 21, 2006** – General Meeting - Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Robert Broadman, St. Joseph College. Topic: *Amphibian Field Studies in Northwest Indiana*.

**July 14-16, 2006** – Reptile Weekend, Indiana State Museum, Indpls, IN H.H.S. members will exhibit live amphibians and reptiles to the public.

**November 3-5, 2006** – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Westin Hotel, downtown Indianapolis. In coroporation with the Indy Reptile Expo, Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana

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 7:30 p.m. at Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room 105 or 108. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**

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Suggestions and articles for *The Monitor* are welcome. Submit your typed or legibly hand written articles by the first Wednesday of each month to: PO. Box 40544, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0544 or 7712 Miracle road, Indianapolis, IN, 46237. Articles on IBM or compatible, formatted, 5¼ or 3½ disks are accepted. To have your disk returned, you must provide a self addressed, stamped envelope within your mailing to us. Back issues of *The Monitor* are available. Send requests to our PO. Box, or contact Holly Carter. Quarterly Advertisement Rates for publishing your ad in *The Monitor* are: ¼ Page - \$10.00; ½ Page - \$15.00; and Full Page - \$25.00. Classified Ads are free to all paid H.H.S. members and will be printed for two months. All ads must be submitted in writing to the Editor by the first Wednesday of each month. All artwork is copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without written permission from the artist.