



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 8

August 2006

President's Message

Ed Ferrer

I want to thank everyone who participated in the Indiana State Museum's "Reptile Days" as part of the "Pets in America" event this past month. We had great number of specimens on display all three days and we did a good job of educating the public about the world of "herps". I heard nothing but good comments all weekend and the museum staff was very pleased with our effort. They have decided to have another three day weekend next year!

I wanted to congratulate Hoosier herp member Marty La Prees of Indiana Turtle Care for receiving a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Trust. With this grant money she will be able to install filtration systems, enlarge her turtle pens, install new liners, add electrical outlets for each pond and purchase a laptop computer and power point projector for educational presentations. We all know how hard Marty works and how dedicated she is to her turtles and we know that this grant was richly deserved. Keep up the great work Marty!

It is with great pleasure that I can announce that we have speakers scheduled for all the meetings through the end of this year. We have been very fortunate to obtain such quality speakers covering such diverse topics as salamanders, vernal ponds, herping Costa Rica along with this month's presentation on venomous lizards. Make it a point to attend these meetings and share these experiences.

Also, I wanted to thank all those members who participated in last month's "Show and Tell" program. I think we all learned a lot from each others experiences with herps.

Our meetings dates will also be featured in the Indianapolis Pet Quarterly magazine coming out this August 15th. We will also be featured in an article about National Geographic's Brady Barr and our Midwest Herpetological Symposium. They have decided to feature one reptile each issue. For August we have submitted an article on the corn snake discussing why it is the most popular snake in the pet trade and its care requirements with photos by Jim Horton.

Caving and Cruising for Herps

By, Elliot Stahl

On Saturday July 8th Dave Stahl and I made our way to southern Indiana to do some herping and also some pit caving. The first stop on that hot day was a few tin sites. Although we were there before midday, the tin was just way too hot for most herps. All we turned up under the tin was one ring neck snake. At another tin site we also found a black racer that was moving in the grass. We captured him and took a few picture then we let him go.

After flipping the tin, we planned on visiting a couple vertical caves. We drove south from the Lake Monroe area, down to an area of the Hoosier National Forest south of Bedford. Dave and I loaded up the caving gear and started the ½ mile hike through the woods back to the large beautiful entrance to Fuzzy Hole pit cave. Fuzzy Hole is a vertical cave that formed when an underground cave passage collapsed in. The sinkhole that contains fuzzy hole is more than 60 feet in diameter, and around 80 feet deep to the floor of the pit. There is a large slope that makes up for the added depth of the pit, the actual drop varies depending on what side of the pit you rig on. The far side of the pit there is only about a 15 foot drop to a large talus slope, here there are also a few tree branches sticking out of the pit which make this an excellent place for critters to easily venture into. The side Dave and I rigged to rappel made for about a 35-foot actual drop. I rigged the rope and took pictures as Dave descended first. Once Dave was on the bottom, I rigged in my rappel device and made my way to the edge of the pit. As I was nearing the drop Dave was getting in position to belay me as I came over the lip of the pit. Dave was getting ready to sit down, when he looked and saw a small head disappear under a rock next to him. Dave told me he thought it was a snake, so I quickly made my way over the lip and zipped to the bottom to investigate. As I reached the bottom Dave pointed out the rock that he noticed the critter briefly disappear into. I reached down and flipped over the rock, and I was delighted

with what I found. It was a snake indeed, and it was a beautiful eastern hognose snake. I set up some photos of the snake, and as I took pictures he layed very still and did not play dead as most wild hognose snakes would be expected to do. The snake appeared to be very well fed and was probably about 8 inches in length. Since the pit was so open the air temperature inside was the same as on the surface and so much light reaches the bottom that any herps would have no problem thermo regulating. Due to the fact that there were plenty of toads in the pit for the snake to eat, and that it would not be difficult for the snake to get out on his own I decided to leave the hognose in the pit and not remove him from his home. So after I finished photographing the snake I placed him safely back under his rock. Dave and I searched the rest of the pit briefly, but we did not find any more herps. We then climbed back out of the pit, and made our way back to our car.

Then we went and visited one more vertical cave in the area, before we headed back up north to do some road hunting. Dave and I drove to an area that we knew would be good for road cruising, and since it had been very warm that day we supposed that the conditions were right to find snakes on the road. We started to cruise the paved road just as it was getting dark. We drove the road once and turned around. We had been driving for about 15 minutes when I spotted something moving off the road. I yelled "SNAKE", Dave slammed on the brakes and I jumped out of the car and ran back to what I had seen. I spotted the snake with my headlamp and I was astonished to find that it was a timber rattlesnake. I hollered "TIMBER", and Dave quickly came over with the cameras. The snake was about 2 feet long and he remained very calm and did not move while we photographed him. It was a beautiful snake and an awesome find. We were very pleased with our success. When I finished taking pictures, we made sure that he got safely off the road before returning to our car. We decided to cruise that road for a little while longer, but we did not see anything else. Dave and I decided to call it a night and we returned home very satisfied with our findings.

General Meeting: Wednesday August 16, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Byram Feltner

Topic: Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards

Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Lecture Room#108

Our guest speaker for August is Byram Feltner of the Kentucky Reptile Zoo in Slade, Kentucky. He will be discussing the family *Helodermatidae*, venomous lizards. This family consists of the only two venomous lizards that exist on earth today, *Heloderma horridus*, the beaded lizard and *Heloderma suspectum*, the Gila monster. Gila monsters live in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico while the beaded lizard occurs in western Mexico and southern Guatemala. Byram has worked with both of these lizards at the Kentucky Reptile Zoo. Come learn about their habits, general husbandry and the research that is being done with their venom of these fascinating lizards. It should be an interesting presentation. Be sure not to miss it.

**22nd Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium,
Nov. 3-5, 2006**

By the time you read this newsletter we will have the promotional flyer and registration sheet completed for our upcoming Midwest Herpetological Symposium this November 3-5 in Indianapolis. We have a great line up of speakers for Saturday followed by a banquet and auction, live music by Mark Heinrich and a live reptile demonstration by Larry Battson plus refreshments for our Friday ice breaker, free access to the Indy Reptile Expo across the street at the Convention Center and free admission to the Indianapolis Zoo and behind the scenes tours of the desert biome on Sunday. It will be a great event so make plans now to attend. For more information check out our website: www.HoosierHerpSociety.org.

We are still accepting donations, sponsors and items for our auction to help fund this event so let's see what we can all do to help.

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An Inconvenient Truth

(a movie review)

by Ed Ferrer

Last month I went to the Art Cinema at the Keystone at the Crossing Complex to view **An Inconvenient Truth presented by Al Gore**. As a retired science teacher and an individual interested in the environment I thought I needed to view this to see just how serious global warming could be. This documentary movie follows the former vice president as he shares his slide shows to various audiences. I was surprised by the sense of humor and easy warmth displayed by the former vice president, not a bit stiff or boring as he is often portrayed. He used charts and graphs to clearly show the causes and effects of global warming. Stunning before and after photos show that there is very little snow remaining on Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro and entire ice shields and glaciers are melting drastically affecting the climates around the world. These dwindling ice shields have caused many rivers and lakes to dry up or reduce noticeably causing many droughts. He dramatically showed how industrialization and unchecked emissions have increased the "greenhouse" gases that have caused the oceans around the world to begin reclaiming land and redefining shorelines. Remember the many hurricanes of last year including Katrina? Well there is more water in the oceans and warmer temperatures today so there is more "fuel" for the same or greater damage this year! His charts and diagrams clearly dispute the claims that the Earth is just undergoing "natural" climate changes. The changes are too easily traced to human activity.

I was surprised at how personal he made his appeal. He mentioned how his farm used to plant tobacco. But when his older sister died of lung cancer brought on by smoking the farm stopped producing tobacco. In a similar situation now that it is clear that human industrial activity and deforestation is adding to the global warming problem it is just as important to find solutions to this problem. It won't be easy because it will take unparalleled cooperation between nations and hard choices. It will mean actually finding alternative sources of energy and decrease our reliance on fossil fuels instead of just giving lip service to the problem. It will mean investing in the Earth's future at the risk of losing quick profits. Will we learn in time to stem the tide of more floods, hurricanes, droughts and other hardships brought on by our greed and short sighted profit taking? Most of us are concerned about the loss of species and others becoming endangered or threatened. Global warming is definitely a factor in many of these animals' declining numbers. Animals can adapt over millions of years to climatic changes but they can't adapt as fast as we are changing the environment in as short of a time span as 50 years. I would encourage everyone to see this movie and then decide for themselves what choices they should make for the future. Because as we watch other species become endangered or extinct it will ultimately effect us.

Welcome new and renewed members!

new

Stephen Waggoner, Sellersburg, IN

Nolan Hoffman, Brownsburg, IN

Renewals.

Rick Marrs, Indps. IN

Garry Bryan, Martinsville, IN

Python Swallows an Electric Blanket

by Ed Ferrer

By now I imagine many of you have heard about the Burmese python that swallowed an electric blanket. The story was featured on many T.V. news programs and internet sites. Apparently the Burmese python, in the process of swallowing a rabbit also consumed a queen-size electric blanket. The electric blanket was inside the cage and used as a heat source for the 12 foot 60 pound Burmese python. The rabbit must have gotten its feet or leg entangled with the blanket and the python just kept swallowing the whole combination thankfully pulling the plug out of the outlet as it was consumed. X-rays showed the blanket, cord and control box extending through 8 feet of the snake's digestive tract. Two veterinarians conducted a two-hour operation through an 18 inch incision to remove the blanket. Fortunately the operation was a success and the prognosis for the python named "Houdini" is great and he is expected to make a full recovery. The medical specialist guessed it would have taken the snake about six hours to complete swallowing the blanket. Without the operation the python would have probably died.

I have a few questions regarding husbandry issues that allowed this situation to occur in the first place. I have learned by experience that heating items should be placed under the cage and not in the cage. Many reptiles have burned themselves while resting on a "heat rock" placed inside the cage. Feeding time is a very important event for a reptile and must be watched closely by the pet owner to insure that problems like this will not happen. When I feed my snakes I always check them closely so if there is any problems I can quickly intervene. I can't help but wonder where the owner was during this feeding time. Hopefully a lesson was learned and he will be more observant during future dinner times.

HERP HAPPENINGS

August 16, 2006 - General Meeting, Special Guest Speaker – Byram Feltner, Kentucky Reptile Zoo. Topic: “Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards.”

August 27, 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

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

Show and Tell - July, 2006

Thanks to the following members for presenting their herps.

Mitchell Wehrle – Cornsnake, ball python

Elliot Stahl – Banded gecko, trans-pecos ratsnake, spadefoot toad.

Stacey Simison – Cone-head lizard, crocodile skink.

Blake McBee – Bearded dragon.

Roger Carter – Ball pythons.

Pat Hammond – Cal. King skake

Holly Carter – D'Alberts python, Hingeback tortoise.

Rick Marrs - Rough green snake, smallmouth salamander.

Ed Ferrer – Mex. Black kingsnake, carpet python.

David – Northern watersnake.

Jim Horton – Musk turtle, hognose snake.



Elliot Stahl and a
trans-pecos rat snake



Roger Carter and ball python



Mitchell Wehrle and a cornsnake



A mossy frog owned by Ange

Visit the H.H.S. website at:
[www. HoosierHerpSociety.org](http://www.HoosierHerpSociety.org)

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.