



THE MONITOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the
Conservation of all reptiles and amphibians

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President's Message

Ed Ferrer

As I am writing this, I am making preparations to attend the Midwest PARC (Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation) Conference with my herp buddy, Wendell Zetterburg at the Touch of Nature Environmental Center near Carbondale, Illinois. I am really looking forward with meeting fellow herpers and sharing ideas and experiences. We also plan to explore the legendary "Snake Road" area in the Shawnee National Forest. Due to some unforeseen circumstances I haven't been able to get out as much as I had hoped this summer. I hope to make up for lost time during this conference September 7-9.

We have a great line up of speakers the rest of the year so be sure to mark your calendars for the third Wednesday of each month to attend if you possibly can. Look for our meetings to be posted in the fall Indianapolis Pet Quarterly magazine.

Thank you to all the herp members who exhibited at the Johnson County Library in Franklin. We got very good comments and they said they would invite us back in the future.

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED H.H.S. MEMBERS!

New:

Carter Ball
Kelly Harmon

Renewals:

Robert Hansen (Sustaining member)
John Olson
Barry Hammer
Jim Gasper
Steve Nard

CONGRAT'S

By Dave Mitchell

The Hoosier Herp Society would like to extend hearty congratulations to Indiana Turtle Care for their being the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the Nina Pullium Trust. It's wonderful to hear that all the hard work and dedication put forth by Marty and John LaPree and their assistants have been acknowledged by this endowment foundation. The Chelonian world has been grateful and their "words" have been answered. Indiana Turtle Care's "humanitarian" works started with 2 box turtles and just blossomed from there over the years. Keep up the wonderful work and hope they get more such help in the future.

JAMAICAN IGUANAS HATCH AT INDY ZOO

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Three endangered Jamaican iguanas have been hatched at the Indianapolis Zoo, officials said today.



⊕ zoom

One of the three Jamaican iguanas that have hatched. - Indianapolis Zoo

It was believed to be the first time the breed has been hatched outside Jamaica. What's more, the iguanas are thought to be the first hatched via artificial incubation.

The hatchlings are about 8 inches long and weigh a little less than 1.8 ounces.

Zoo officials said Jamaican iguanas are considered the second rarest lizard in the world, with only about 100 still surviving in the wild. They are just slightly less endangered than their cousin, the Grand Cayman blue iguana.

"Chester," age 15, and "Myrtle," 14, are the parents of the first three hatchlings.

One additional baby could emerge from the group of eggs that yielded the hatchlings, and the zoo has a second group of 20 viable eggs that are scheduled to hatch in one to two weeks.

The Jamaican iguana was thought to have become extinct in the 1940s. They were rediscovered in 1990 in the Hellshire Hills of Jamaica by a pig farmer and his dog.

H.H.S. Editor's note:

Congratulations to our friends and fellow H.H.S. members at the Indianapolis Zoo! The successful hatching of these rare iguanids is a huge milestone for the zoo's *Cyclura* program. The captive reproduction of *Cyclura collei* is a great start for the future survival of the species! (Hey guys: We are wondering when the naming contest will take place?)

“The Croc hunter” DIES

Reprinted from the official site of The Croc Hunter –
www.crochunter.com

Media statement – 4 September 2006

Steve Irwin

At 11am today, 4 September 2006, Steve Irwin was fatally wounded by a stingray barb to his heart while filming a sequence on Batt Reef off Port Douglas for a new TV series.

Emergency services were called from Cairns Rescue Base and met *Croc One*, Steve's rescue vessel, at Low Isle on the Great Barrier Reef. The *Croc One* crew performed constant CPR during the thirty-minute dash to Low Isle, but Steve was pronounced deceased at 12 noon by Queensland Ambulance Services personnel.

His producer and closest friend, John Stainton said on *Croc One* today, "The world has lost a great wildlife icon, a passionate conservationist and one of the proudest dads on the planet. He died doing what he loves best and left this world in a happy and peaceful state of mind. Steve would have said, 'Crocs Rule!'"

The family wishes to advise that all donations go to Wildlife Warriors Worldwide

H.H.S. Editor's Reply:

On behalf of The Hoosier Herpetological Society, would like to express my personal condolences to the Irwin family and all of Steve's fans.

As it read, "*the world has lost a great wildlife icon*", rings true. This individual has single handedly brought herps to the fore-front by introducing them to the public as what they are – creatures existing peacefully, just doing their thing in nature. He has brought herps out into the living rooms of the T.V. viewing public, showing how beautiful they are and how dangerous they may be as well. Who would have thought someone (in the public eye) would have described a large ferocious reptile as "A little beauty, or "Isn't she gorgeous?"

Sure, he made mistakes; we all do. It seems that he was almost too strong to die. He seemed larger than life – a T.V. herp icon. To me, it still seems that we should expect Steve to jump back into the scene and say, "It's alright mate."

He died doing what he loved. We should all be so lucky.
Jim Horton

Steve Irwin Remembered

by Ed Ferrer

All the herpetology community was shocked to hear the tragic news about Steve Irwin's accidental death. Apparently he was trying to hang on to the back of a large stingray when he was struck by the poisonous, serrated barb in the heart while filming a documentary along Australia's Great Barrier Reef. It seems ironic that the famous "crocodile hunter" was killed by a stingray as they are usually very docile and unaggressive. The animal probably felt threatened by Steve's actions and reacted defensively. I remember my favorite part of my Cayman Island vacation several years ago was swimming with sting rays and feeding them squid. Steve was always pushing his luck. I remember when he was bit by an alligator in the hand and a croc bit him in the leg. It seemed he led a charmed life. I recall Steve being charged by elephants, chased by Komodo dragons, handling mambas, cobras, and rattlesnakes and of course his exploits with his beloved "croc". He brought the wonder of wildlife into new generations with his wildly popular T.V. programs on Animal Planet. What was always obvious was his enthusiasm, passion and love he displayed for the animals he presented. He was also a committed conservationist and much of his profits from his T.V. programs were put back into conservation projects especially in his homeland of Australia. He is survived by his lovely wife Terri and a daughter and infant son. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to them. Hopefully Steve Irwin's legacy will be a greater respect for all wildlife and protecting environment so the animals that Steve loved can survive. We have lost a true giant in our field and he will be missed forever. His impact can never be truly expressed in words it must be carried on through our responsible actions.

**General Meeting: Wednesday September 20, 7:30
p.m.**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Finkler

**Topic: "Salamander Springtime Love In: A Look at
Ambystomatids During Reproduction"**

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

Our guest speaker for September is Dr. Michael Finkler, Associate Professor of Biology at Indiana University at Kokomo. He will be giving a power point presentation discussing his field research of *Ambystomatids* reproduction (a group of salamanders that include tiger salamanders, Jefferson's salamanders and many others). Many of you will remember the wonderful program he did for us last year on the snapping turtle. We can certainly expect the same type of presentation regarding the amazing reproduction strategies of salamanders! Make it a point not to miss this presentation! See you there!

Snakes on a Plane

A Movie Review

by Ed Ferrer

For months we all have been hearing about the movie "Snakes on a Plane". I don't remember a movie in the past few years that has had so much "hype" as this one. As a herp hobbyist I shuddered at what type of damage it might do to the image of snakes which, according to one Harris poll, are currently the group of animals that humans fear the most. I was afraid that "Snakes on a Plane" would have the same effect on snakes that "Jaws" had on sharks. I had to go view it to see how the snakes were shown. The movie itself was a typical disaster movie like "Airport". The plot was simply a witness to a murder was being transported by plane from Hawaii to California while being protected by Samuel L. Jackson of the F.B.I. The accused murderer tried to sabotage the plane by packaging a huge number of "poisonous" (of course the word is venomous) snakes in the plane's cargo area. As the plane got over the ocean, the boxes were opened automatically and the snakes created all kinds of havoc. The snakes in the movie were a mixture of real snakes, computer generated snakes and rubber snakes. Expert snake handler, Jules Sylvester, supplied the live snakes for the show. He was quite protective of his serpents. He supplied over 400 live snakes because that way he could rotate duplicates of the same species so the individual snakes would not get overly stressed. The cast had typical characters such as the Paris Hilton wannabe complete with toy dog, a snooty businessman (you know he was going to be a victim), a pampered rap star and his body guards, flight attendants, pilots, a woman with a baby, and two small boys traveling alone for the first time.

As the snakes made their way out of the baggage area some got entangled in the wiring which shut down some of the plane's electrical circuits. This has actually happened in the past. I remember some cases where snakes coiled in power generators that caused black outs in some cities in some Pacific islands. Other snakes attacked the passengers at random with gruesome results. But why did the snakes react so violently? Snakes would normally seek a safe hiding place and avoid confrontation. The plot revealed that the snakes were excited by pheromones that were sprayed on the leis that the passengers wore. Of course, in nature pheromones might make snakes a bit more aggressive as they attempt to mate but that is usually displayed as a wrestling test of strength by two males competing for a female. Of course horror movies typically take some fact and then exaggerate it to fit the script. At least it gave a reason for the aggression instead of portraying them as naturally savage killers. It was fun to try to tell which snakes were real and which ones were computer types and to try to identify the species of the real snakes being used.

After many scenes of violent confrontation between the passengers and snakes, with large casualties on both sides, Samuel L. Jackson decided that if all the passengers taped themselves to the seats and he would shoot a hole in a window. The theory would be that the air pressure outside the plane would suck the remaining snakes out of the plane (which it did). That is very funny to any of us herpers who have tried to pull a snake from a branch or try to remove them out of a cage. It is simply amazing how snakes will hold on to anything very tightly. If I was to choose whether snakes or humans would remain on the plane in that situation, my money would be on the snakes.

As a horror flick that portrayed animals as villains I have seen a lot worse situations. The "R" rating because of violence, cursing and some "skin" will probably keep it out of the viewing of most young children. Hopefully this movie will not prompt any more fear of snakes than already exists. Of course, it is up to the herpetology community to educate the public about the true nature of snakes and other reptiles.

Texas Herping Trip (part 1)

A two-part article By Elliot Stahl

(All photos by Elliot Stahl)

It was the summer of 2005 when Jim Harrison and Kristen Wiley from the Kentucky reptile zoo first asked us if we would like to join them on one of their herping trips to west Texas. We of course were certainly interested in going and we decided to plan on joining them the following summer. So in the spring of 2006 I contacted them and we got the dates set for the trip and my dad, Dave Stahl asked for the time off from work. The trip was planned for the last two weekends in June. This was not the optimum time of year for herping in west Texas; however Jim was supposed to go to San Antonio to give a talk at the annual International Herpetological Symposium. So the plan was to do a little herping the first week and attend the symposium, once the symposium was over we were going to head west and spend the whole following week herping.

Dave and I drove down to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo on Friday evening of June 16th. We were not leaving for Texas with Jim until the following Monday morning. This left Saturday and Sunday for my dad and I to hang out in Slade and do a little herping there. While we were in Slade we did a little road cruising on both nights. Saturday night we found two copperheads and a number of decay snakes on the road. Sunday evening we packed the Ford escape that Jim rented for the trip. That night we saw one more northern copperhead while cruising the gorge.

Monday morning we awoke early and began the long drive. Jim drove the entire trip and the first day we were on the road for about twelve hours before we retired to a hotel in Mt. Pleasant Texas, about 35 miles from the Arkansas/ Texas Border. Tuesday morning we woke early once again, and we drove to a Town north of Austin where we met Tim Cole who is the owner of *Austin Reptile services*, and *Designer Atrax*. Jim had arranged with Tim to stop by and take a tour of his house. This was quite a treat; Tim had turned an old garage into a snake house. This was quite impressive and besides snakes his girlfriend and him were well into turtles and we got to see some really neat herps including a very large alligator snapper. Of course being that Tim breeds designer western diamondback he had a great collection of beautiful rattlesnakes including pattern less *Crotalus atrox*. It was a lot of fun to meet and tour Tim's house, and I want to thank him for letting us do so.

That afternoon we drove south of San Antonio to an area where we could do some herping. At about 6 we headed out to a paved farm road and we cruised it for a while. We drove south on it towards an area with some other good cruising roads. We were a bit dismayed when we saw a large storm off in the distance. It was quite impressive to be in such wide open spaces. We decided that it would be best to cruise the farm road we originally turned on to, so that we would avoid the storm. The first animal encounter we had was with a large bull that was standing next to the road this is quite common out west and it was not the last large cow we saw wandering around the road. Next we saw a pack of young javelinas, these are the western version of wild boar and they are quite a common site on the back roads. The first small critter we spotted was a large Texas tarantula crossing the road. These are another very common site that was seen during our trip. Not a night went by when we did not see at least one of these big black tarantulas walking across the road. We saw one dor garter snake before it got dark, then we drove for a while when I spotted the first live snake. I jumped out of the car and discovered it was a black necked garter snake



After a quick picture we sent him on his way. Not to far up the road another larger black neck garter was found. It was a while after the garter snake encounters before we found our next snake. Jim slammed on the brakes and I ran over to the larger snake lying along the road. I was a little surprised to find that the snake was a diamondback water snake. We were in the desert, but as dry it may be there was stream along the road which these snakes inhabit along with water barrels set out for cattle. I took a quick picture of the snake before Jim moved him off the road. We drove until about midnight after that and saw nothing so we decided to retire to the hotel room. Wednesday morning we drove back up towards San Antonio and along the way we stopped and drove some back roads to see if we could see any critters. It was pretty hot and approaching midday so we weren't surprised to not see anything moving. We got a hotel outside of San Antonio and that evening we drove to the hotel where the International Herp Symposium was to be held and we picked up our registration. There was an icebreaker that night for the symposium so we hung out awhile and talked with some other herpers before we went back to our hotel.

Thursday morning we braved the horrible San Antonio traffic once again and safely made it to the Holiday Inn for the symposium, where we were going to be staying until Sunday morning after the Symposium was over. That day we listened to the excellent talks and we also viewed the photo contest entries. Friday was another day full of great herp talks. After the talks on Friday all of the attendees piled on to buses and we were taken to the San Antonio zoo for a free dinner and a behind the scenes tour of the entire zoo. The San Antonio Zoo which was hosting this year's symposium has a very wide variety of herps. They have very interesting crocodylians including gharials and false gharials. My personal favorite of the herps viewed were the giant Japanese salamanders that we got to see behind the scenes. Saturday was the last day of the symposium and I once again enjoyed all of the talks and that evening we listened to the best of them all, the banquet speaker David Barker gave an excellent presentation on hunting for Ridge Nosed Rattlesnakes in Mexico. As my first IHS I had a great time and learned a lot from all of the wonderful speakers.

(Look for Part II of *Texas Herping* in next month's Monitor.)

HERP HAPPENINGS

September 20, 2006 – General Meeting, Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Finkler, (I.U. Kokomo), Topic – “Salamander Springtime Love In: A Look At Ambystomids During Reproduction.”

September 24, 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

September 30, 2006 – HHS herp exhibit at the Juvenile Diabetes Walk , IUPUI Track and Field, Indianapolis. 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. Call Roger Carter for more info. (317) 873-6561

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

Visit the H.H.S. website at:
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.