



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

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June 2007

President's Message

Jim Horton

Greetings fellow herpers!

We have another Reptile Invasion under our belts. We have been a part of the Annual event for over 16 years. I would like to thank our members for their years of service with supporting the HHS and Wesselman Woods Nature Center in Evansville. Thanks to the generosity of the staff and fellow exhibitors in the Evansville area. I would also like to once again, welcome our members in the Evansville area!

The Hoosier Herpout was great fun and an educational event for everyone! Thanks to our members for attending one of our favorite events.

Our last Special Guest Speaker, Dean Allesandrini, gave us a chilling look at the medical expenses, pain, and other hardships that go along with the unfortunate news of envenomation from a venomous snake bite. He was at "Snake Road" in Southern Illinois and was just reaching to the ground for his camera while focusing on a cottonmouth when he was hit with another unsuspecting cotton. Everyone was left with a different perspective on field herping.

I would like to ask our membership, "how are we doing?" Do you enjoy the articles in this publication? Would you like to see more or different subjects such as care and husbandry? Keeping our members interested, keeps the membership strong so I ask the membership to please sound off in the form of email, snail mail, or in our message board on the HHS website.

"REPTILE DAYS"

Indiana State Museum

July 14 & 15

Saturday, 11 A.M. - 4 P.M. & Sunday 12 - 4 P.M.

Be sure to plan on participating in this year's Reptile Days at the Indiana State Museum! This is one of the busiest days of the year at the Indiana State Museum and the Hoosier Herp Society always has a big showing of members displaying their reptiles (and amphibians). So clean up your cages and show off your herps. It is a great chance for us to educate the public on the importance of reptiles and amphibians to our environment, introducing the world of "herps" and educating people on safe ways of maintaining these fascinating animals in captivity. **Be sure to have only one animal out at all times and make safety a first priority!**

Hoosier Herpout 2007 (In Review)

Jim Horton

Was Hoosier Herpout 2007 a success? It all depends on how you look at it (or who you ask). We had the usual cookout and the walk to the edge of the lake in search of fence lizards and five-lined-skinks. We herped the familiar spots and even took a night hike to the ponds around the campgrounds (as we do every year). The usual herps were found under tin such as ringnecks, racers, fence lizards. Unfortunately, no milks or copperheads showed up under cover. Box turtles didn't show up either. We had hoped to show our newer members an example of these commonly encountered reptiles.

Our cookout was good fun with good food as usual. Thanks to everyone who helped with the serving and cleanup. Special thanks to Chris Wehrle for his work at "manning the grills" for everyone!



Working the grills



The trek to the tin sites

Our afternoon trip to what we call "Mill Creek" yielded a nice number of longtail salamanders (both adults and larvae), green frogs, a few pickerel frogs and a young northern water snake. This clean, cool, slate-lined waterway holds a plethora of aquatic life. Darters and crayfish were easily found under rocks beneath the crystal clear water. Aquatic insects and several species of minnow inhabit the area. Moss covers flat rocks on the creek edge and Geodes (rocks with crystals lining the inside walls) are common here. I have an interest in plants and wildflowers and this creek is a great spot for a nice variety of these too!

Every year or so, we welcome new, younger members to our roster. This year at the Herpout, we welcomed a few of them to our annual event in the field. HHS member, Carter Ball and his father, Kurt, camped and herped the weekend with us. I've never met someone so enthusiastic about herpin' than this young man. HHS member, Mitchell Wehrle and his father, Chris stayed the day with us on Saturday. He is another of our younger herpers who can't seem to get enough of our hobby. As I understand, he was feeling a bit under the weather that day and still wanted to be at the herpout.

Our normal evening trip to the campground ponds was full of herps. Several green frogs and leopard frogs, tadpoles, and newts were found along the pond edge. We spied a large midland water snake intermittently popping up on one side of the pond and someone caught a smaller one at the other side. Amy Baird's husband, Peter, spotted a hatchling Musk turtle that was netted for photos. Shortly after that he found an adult Midland painted turtle with a fishing hook lodged in its mouth and protruded through its nose. Carter Ball had a first-aid kit and he and Amy went to work on the turtle relieving it of the painful hook. We took photos and sent it back to the water.

Getting out in the field with our members is educational, fun, and good for our organization. I'd say that showing our younger members what is out in the field made this Herpout very successful!



Longtail salamander



Carter Ball holds a black racer

Hoosier Herp of the Month

Northern Water Snake

Nerodia sipedon sipedon

by Ed Ferrer

The Northern water snake, *Nerodia sipedon sipedon*, is a large snake from 24" to 55 1/2" commonly found throughout Indiana in ponds, marshes, streams, lakes and any other aquatic habitats. Adult snakes normally have a background color of grey or tan with dark brown cross bands or squarish blotches bordered with black scales along the dorsal sides and throughout its sides. The coloring throughout its range is quite variable with bands sometimes being reddish, brown, or black and the color may be gray, tan, yellow or reddish. Most specimens darken with age as the black pigment tends to obscure the markings in some cases leaving a mostly all black snake. The young snakes have a much more striking contrasting pattern against a much paler background. The belly is normally white, yellow, or light gray with half moons or crescent shaped markings scattered along its belly scales. Its scales are keeled and its anal plate is divided.

This serpent may be active during the day or night. It often hunts frogs found along the shoreline particularly after a rain or gorges itself on minnows caught sleeping in the shallows at night. It also preys on crustaceans, salamanders, juvenile turtles and small mammals. This snake is often found basking on rocks or logs during the day. When encountered it will flee when given a chance but if cornered it will flatten itself and strike repeatedly. The Lake Erie water snake, *Nerodia sipedon insularum*, a closely related subspecies of the Northern water snake was

recently featured on Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs" program. The program had host Mike Rowe working with researchers collecting specimens of the Lake Erie water snakes. They weighed them, sexed them and had them regurgitate their most recent meals to find out what they had been eating. While handling the snakes, there was a lot of biting that of course Mike played up for the cameras. This was a good indication of how aggressive they could be when handled. When I was a science teacher, I often took students on field trips along Sugar Creek near Crawfordsville to look for fossils. Along with the crinoids, brachiopods, and coral pieces they would often find Northern water snakes and frogs along the shoreline. My students were amazed at how "fiesty" the young snakes were and I had to warn them not to bother them because wounds caused by their bites often bleed profusely due to an anitcoagulant in the snake's saliva, but there is no poison. Because of their large size, dark coloring and often aggressive nature, these snakes are commonly mistaken for the venomous "water moccasins" and killed on sight when encountered.

Northerns usually mate between April to June and typically 15-30 young are born between August to October. This snake is one of the most common and widespread snakes found in Indiana. If while herping if this snake is encountered treat it with respect and don't try to handle them. Just enjoy watching them at a safe distance.

References: Peterson Field Guide, Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern/Central North America
National Audubon Society Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of North America
"Dirty Jobs", Discovery Channel

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

New

John and Linda Jett – Taylorsville, IN
Thomas Plake (sustaining)
Todd Russell
Don Trumpower
Faith Trumpower
Katherine L. Toon

Renewals

Dave and Laurie Mitchell (sustaining)
Juilus E. Sneed IV
Shawn L. Miller
Brandon and Amy Osborne
Clint Bartley
Angels and Scott Felty
Ernie Lanier
D.J. Mosley

Herpetology Greats

Sherman C. Bishop 1887-1951,
An American herpetologist and author of *Handbook of Salamanders* (1943).

HELPFUL HERP HINTS

By Barry Hammer

If you use distilled water for misting vivariums, it will largely eliminate the problem of water spots on the glass, plants or other cage furnishings.

Slithering Out of a Speeding Ticket

by Ed Ferrer

A couple of years ago I was returning to Indy after presenting a live snake program for Eastwood Middle School's outreach outing at Versailles State Park. I was traveling up state road 421 in the dark through some small towns when I saw the flashing lights of a patrol car behind me. I pulled over and asked the officer what I had done. He said "Do you know how fast you were going?" I of course said "no" and he replied "You were going 42 in a 30 m.p.h. zone." He asked to see my driver's license and registration. I handed him my driver's license and explained that my registration was in my glove compartment. I had my 12 foot alibino Burmese python in a clear plastic container with a green tree python in a Neodesha cage in the driver's side front seat. I told the officer that I would have to take both snakes out of the front seat so I could get my registration. He looked at the two snakes and then looked into my back seat which had other containers of snakes and then shrugged and said, "Never mind. I'll just give you a warning ticket this time. Be sure to drive safely on your way home". I thanked the officer and promised that I would be more careful from now on. I guess the officer did not want me moving the snakes out of the car and so my snakes helped me "slither" out of a speeding ticket.

Fighting Back

By Roger Carter

People like us are at war with organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) who want to take away our rights to keep the animals that we like. It's time to fight back in any way that we can.

The web site www.ActivistCash.com has an interesting article that is very critical of the animal activist groups like PETA and the HSUS. When you read these, please take note of the organizations that are affiliated with these groups and I hope that everyone will stop supporting them. There are new, subtle fund raising activities by these groups to watch out for. There is a new cell phone deal that, while it sounds good, a percentage goes to the HSUS. One of our local banks has some checks for consumers and a percentage from that also goes to the HSUS. Please don't give any of these groups a chance to get any money.

At the web site www.ConsumerFreedom.com there is a link (take a bite out of PETA) to an electronic petition calling for the removal of PETA's tax exempt status. Currently, it is at the bottom of their web page in a box labeled "most popular pages". I encourage everyone who reads this to sign the petition and tell everyone you know about the petition and even tell every pet store you can find. They have not yet responded to my e-mail about a non-electronic petition, but, to anyone who reads this and doesn't have a computer or internet access, get this information to all of your friends who do have internet access. To all the other herpetological societies that the Hoosier Herpetological Society exchanges newsletters with, please place this information in your newsletters and your web sites. Anyone who breeds herps and sells the offspring, anyone who sells merchandise for any kind of pet (cages and aquariums, snake hooks and tongs, books, t-shirts, feeder animals [mice, rats, rabbits, crickets]), veterinarians and anyone who works in a veterinarians office should sign this petition. Please inform people who like to go hunting and fishing, also.

There was a bill introduced here in January that, among other restrictions, would have prohibited us from keeping any constrictor that could POTENTIALLY reach six feet long, certain monitors were prohibited, including the KOMODO DRAGON (get real), we would have been prohibited from breeding and selling any reptiles, we would have been forbidden to show animals to the public, you could not replace any of these animals when it died, and there would have been a one hundred dollar a year permit per prohibited animal. At the public hearing here, several individuals from all over Indiana and the Hoosier Herpetological Society packed the meeting room with opposition (there was standing room only) to this restrictive bill and the legislators sent it back to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources who co-authored the bill with the HSUS.

Let's get this information to everyone in America and the whole world!

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HERP HAPPENINGS

June 17, 2007 – 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. information booth.

For info: (317) 861-5550, www.midwestreptile.com

June 20, 2007 – General Meeting, “Annual Show and Tell”. All members are invited to bring one or two herps and give a bit of information on them.

July 18, 2007 – General Meeting, Mark Jordan from Indiana/Pudue at Fort Wayne will present a program on the Galapagos Islands

July 15, 2007 – Midwest Reptile Show, Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis.

July 28, 2007 – HHS live amphibian/reptilian exhibit at the Johnson County Library, Franklin, IN

November 3-5 – Indiana Pet Expo, Indiana state fairgrounds, Indianapolis.

November 10-11, 2007 – 23rd Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Des Moines, Iowa. www.iaherp.org

Classifieds

For Sale: For sale: female Dummeril's boa almost three feet long, \$125; female carpet python, partially stripped, four feet long, \$125; female womas, \$650 each. Call Roger (317)873-6561 or e-mail at drymarchonzz@hotmail.com.

For Sale: Blair's phase greybanded kingsnakes, red and orange wide bands 50.00 each. Blair's phase red and orange wide bands with black heads(blackcaps) 75.00 each. Quantity discounts available. Mike Wood 574-269-3441 e-mail 2bears@myvine.com

For Sale: Captive bred (4-07) Green Basilisks, healthy and eating well. \$20.00 Call Jim Horton (317) 865-0464.

Monty's Reptiles, Education and Adoption

A non-profit organization based in Terre Haute, IN dedicated to educating the public about local and exotic reptiles. We also take in unwanted reptiles, and find new appropriate homes for them.

Website: www.montysreptiles.org Steve Nard (812) 201-8505 email – montysreptiles@yahoo.com

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 PC 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.