



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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President's Message

Jim Horton

Spring is near, can you feel it!

This month is the start of our photography exhibit at the Zion Nature Center in Zionsville. Stop in and see what our members have been up to. The exhibit will run from 2/9 through 4/6 (weekends only).

The recent news story on Fox 59 has caused quite a stir in the local herp community. They, as journalists were trying to make a point that anyone can order a "hot" snake and get away with it. That is nothing new to most of us but probably is news to most of the general public. There is definitely a problem with that. The state of Indiana has laws already in place that prohibit the buying and keeping of venomous snakes but there are always those who won't follow the laws.

To those of us in the hobby and industry, we are always a bit unsettled when there is a local news story concerning any herps but especially when the Indiana General Assembly is in session.

If anyone is interested in visiting the woodland ponds for amphibian breeding activity, please keep your eye on the H.H.S. website message board. If conditions are right (warm/rainy) in the next few weekends, I'll post when and where we are headed and all H.H.S. field herp enthusiasts are welcome!

Don't forget our meeting this month featuring a presentation on herping Costa Rica!

In this issue, Elliot Stahl has yet another adventure with underground herps! Angela Thomas shares information on gecko species, and more!

SPECIAL NOTICE

**We are slated for Room 105 at Butler for the Feb.,
Mar., Apr., and May meetings.**

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

New

Jason Stoots
Travis Nerding

Renewals

Jeff Wines
Eugene Holmes, Peoria, Ill.
Ed Ferrer (Sustaining membership)

H.H.S. Meeting February 20th, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Speakers: Zach Howe & Jacob Marsh

Topic: A Herp Field Trip of Costa Rica

Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#105

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to announce that this month's speakers are Zach Howe and Jacob Marsh. Both are currently students at I.U.P.U.I., one studying media communications and the other environmental science and biology. Their areas of study make them the perfect team to explore, study and document their findings in the field.

They worked at an animal sanctuary for three months in Costa Rica. They were in charge of caring for all the wide variety of animals at the site. They explored some of the wildest and most pristine jungles and rain forests in Western coastal Costa Rica. During their adventures they captured and studied many exotic herps, including the venomous fer-de-lance and eye lash vipers, spectacled caimans and many more. Their DVD presentation allows us to see how they captured the species and then they will stop to discuss each specie. **I have seen a portion of their program and it is a can't miss presentation! Be sure to attend this program!! See you there!**

Smile! You're on Candid Carapace!

Most herpers are interested in other species of wildlife. I guess most have seen the academy award winning documentary, " March of the Penguins". This movie has made the crittercam famous around the world. It has been attached to whales, seals, lions and other beasts. I saw short clips at the IMA. The camera was on a tortoise, a duck, a gator, a wolf, a cow, an armadillo, a hawk and others. It was amazing watching the things that the lens saw.

The creator of this device, Greg Marshall, has embarked on a study by attaching the camera to snapping turtles in the Connecticut River system. He plans to make a show for National Geographic's " Wild Chronicles" to air on PBS television. The study organizers plan to have snappers of at least 25 pounds fitted with the Crittercams.

Mister Marshall is excited with the study for 2 reasons. First, the vast accumulation of turtle views and the opportunity to learn about the roles the turtle plays in the river system. Research will hopefully reveal snapper eating, mating and nesting habits. However, the second aspect is the educational opportunity. A group of inner city teens had completed a vacation summer employment program. These teens are part of a nonprofit youth development agency in Hartford, Ct. called 'Our Piece of the Pie.' They spent 6 weeks on the river collecting info on aquatic wildlife for the inland fisheries division of the state EPA. Mister Marshall is very excited by the involvement these young men and women have committed to this cutting-edge scientific and conservation project. "Good things happen with this type of commitment to the environment and I'm proud to be part of it." The teens also built a snapper trap prototype and submerged it in a local cove. Project planners hope these young adults will continue to be involved in this study for the year or two it takes to accumulate data.

The crittercam will be attached with small adhesive patches. National Geographic states that animal behavior returns to normal almost immediately after having the camera put on them. The cameras cost between \$7000 and \$13000. Besides the video, the camera collects data such as depth, temperature and speed readings.

I look forward to learning what info this study will produce. I'll try to keep you posted.

Dave Mitchell

RE: Hartford Courant; Steve Goode

Herping the Tennessee Underground

By, Elliot Stahl

(All photos by Elliot Stahl)

During my fall break this passed October Dave and Tristan Stahl and I took a week-long trip to mid Tennessee to go caving. While doing so we found quite a few not normally cave dwelling herps along with a few late in the season finds above ground. The third day of our trip we hiked a long ways up and down steep hillsides to visit a deep pit cave called Jive hole, in Putnam Co. Tennessee. The entrance is a hole about eight feet across. Immediately below the entrance the pit drops free for 180 feet into a large cavern below. After rappelling into the pit, I immediately found a small juvenile Ringneck Snake lying on the floor unharmed. I put him in my pack to rescue out of the cave. Then while examining the rest of the floor I spotted an adult Green Salamander. The Green Salamander was missing his tail and looked a bit skinny but other then that he was okay and could probably live well in the cave. Later on after ascending the pit I released the Ringneck Snake away from the entrance. Then on the hike back to the jeep, Tristan found an adult Eastern Box Turtle lying in the leaf litter. Further into the hike he also spotted an adult Eastern Garter Snake lying on a steep hillside. I took a photo of the snake that looked like it had eaten recently, and then let it go. The next day we visited another vertical cave called Big Laurel Falls Pit, the entrance was a small crack in the side of a limestone bluff. The pit dropped 112 feet to the cave floor below. At the bottom I found another juvenile Ringneck Snake, which I rescued out. I also found 3 Wood Frogs congregated amongst the rocks on the floor. I had nothing to rescue the frogs out with, so I just took a picture of them. Then later on that day at the bottom of a 40 foot pit that takes in the water that fall from a large water fall; Virgin Falls, I found a mid sized Bull Frog swimming around in a deep pool at the bottom. The Bull Frog quickly dove under water though before I could get a picture. On the last day of the trip we visited a pit in White Co. near Spencer Tennessee, known as Bo Allen Pit. On the hike to the entrance I found another adult Eastern Box Turtle that was buried in the leaf litter, I looked at it and did not disturb it. The small entrance to the pit led to a free fall drop of 157 feet to a rocky floor below. Upon reaching the bottom I found a dead bullfrog that looked as though the fall into the pit had killed it. There were also 6 different grey tree frogs amongst the logs and rocks spread out on the floor of the pit. As I was looking at one of the frogs I spotted a small snake that turned out to be a juvenile Mole Kingsnake that was active and in excellent health, it had probably fallen in not long before. After putting the snake in a bag to be rescued out of the pit I also found a large Tiger Salamander in the leaf litter at the bottom, and put him in my pack to be rescued as well. Then before climbing out I spotted a small red back salamander also on the floor of the pit. I climbed out and successfully rescued the small Mole Kingsnake, and the large Tiger Salamander. The next day we returned home after an excellent trip herping the Tennessee underground.



Green salamander



Mole Kingsnake

H.H.S. MEMBERS ACCEPT AWARD

Long time Hoosier Herpetological Society members, Roger and Holly were recognized at the January General Meeting for their contributions to the club over the years. HHS President Jim Horton awarded the Carters with a plaque and a gift certificate to Red Lobster restaurant. Roger and Holly have been active members since the early formation of the HHS in 1989. Holly is the current Treasurer and Roger has held offices on the Board as President and Vice-President.



REPTILES FARE BETTER THAN EXPECTED

(Indiana Living Green – Nov/Dec 2007) submitted by Brain Callahan

Arlington, Va. — A newly completed assessment of the conservation status of North American reptiles shows that most of the group is faring better than expected, with relatively few species at severe risk of extinction. The comprehensive international assessment was carried out by zoologists from the nonprofit conservation group NatureServe, in partnership with reptile experts from universities, the World Conservation Union and Conservation International. The study covers 721 species of lizards and snakes found Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

About 84 species of lizards and snakes were found to be threatened with extinction, with another 23 species labeled Near Threatened. For 121 lizards and snakes, the data are insufficient to allow a confident estimate of their extinction risk, while 493 species, or about two-thirds of the total, are at present relatively secure, compared to the rest of the world. A comparable recent global assessment of amphibians found nearly one-third of the planet's amphibians to be at risk of extinction. Details are available at the World Conservation Union: www.iucn.org

Photo Contest Winners

- First Place – Todd Pierson – Green snake on branch over water**
- Second Place – Elliot Stahl – young black racer**
- Third Place – Angela Thomas – Garter snake eating toad**

Other participants

Laurie Mitchell – sulcata tortoise (eating apples), sulcata tortoise (close-up), Todd Pierson – Green salamander, Hellbender. Pat Hammond – eastern hognose (spreading), Copperhead (in crevice), Cottonmouth. Roger Carter – trio of milksnakes, Eastern box turtle. Jim Horton – marbled salamander, chorus frog (calling), bullfrog. Ed Ferrer – green tree python, eastern diamondback rattler, retic python (close-up). Elliot Stahl – timber rattler, midland watersnake, green snake (on leaves), cottonmouth (gaping). Angela Thomas – Chinese leopard gecko, baby racer, crested gecko, four-toed salamander, bearded dragon.

EMBARRASSING MOMENTS IN HERPING

Ed Ferrer

From time to time in my 30 years of keeping snakes I would need to take some of them to the veterinarian. Occasionally one of my Burmese pythons needed a shot of antibiotics. These shots were to be given once every three days until the prescription ran out. These injections were to be administered in the front third of the body into the muscle at a 30-degree angle under a scale, alternating the right then the left of the backbone. When I was teaching school I always made it a two-person operation. I always had a large number of students who wanted to help. I would put the snake on a lab table, putting a pillowcase over its head and have the student volunteer hold the neck. I would then hold the rest of the snake's body between my legs and administer the shot. Normally there would be a little twitching of the snake's body as they are very sensitive to touch but there was never a problem. Once I retired and moved the snakes to my home there were no volunteers to be found. My wife and my neighbors wanted no part of the procedure. So when the need for a shot came, I would curl up the 'Burm into one of the traveling containers to restrict its movements, cover the head in a pillowcase and give it the shot.

One time Melvin, my largest 'Burm at 14 feet and 90 plus pounds, was resting up next to the cage door. So I thought I would just open the door and reach in and give him the shot there and save the time and effort of removing from the cage, etc. As I put the needle in, he twitched (It is just amazing how strong he is!) and the needle went flying in the air and stuck in my right forearm! I took the needle out with my left hand. I didn't lose any of the medicine so I sterilized the needle and waited for him to calm down a little. Then I took him out of the cage and curled him up in the container and gave him the shot as usual. It just goes to show that when dealing with your herps, you need to concentrate on what you are doing and not try short cuts.

LITTLE-KNOWN RELATIVES OF THE LEOPARD GECKO

ANGELA THOMAS

Everyone is familiar with the leopard gecko, *Eublepharis macularius*. But did you know that there are also four other species in the genus *Eublepharis*? They are the Western or Iranian Leopard Gecko, *E. angramainyu*, the West Indian Leopard Gecko, *E. fuscus*, the East Indian Leopard Gecko, *E. hardwickii*, and the Turkmenian Fat Tailed Gecko, *E. turkmenicus*. These four species rarely make it into the pet trade, so many hobbyists are unaware of their existence. Here is a short introduction to these relatives of the leopard gecko.

Perhaps one reason that the other species in the genus receive so little attention is that several of them closely resemble *Eublepharis macularius*, and could easily be mistaken for that species at first glance.

Juveniles have a bold pattern of light and dark bands, while adults are spotted. It requires a closer examination to spot the morphological characteristics (details of size, scalation, and body proportions) that set these species apart from one another. The Western or Iranian leopard gecko, *Eublepharis angramainyu*, is found in parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. These geckos are very similar in color and markings to the more familiar *E. macularius*, but are more slender in build and a bit brighter in color than is typical for the wild type of the common leopard gecko. The Turkmenian fat-tailed gecko, *E. turkmenicus*, is known from only 20 specimens found along the border between Turkmenistan and Iran, where they inhabit stony mountain slopes. This species also closely resembles *E. macularius* in coloration.

The West Indian leopard gecko, *Eublepharis fuscus*, while still a tan to yellow gecko with dark spotting, has a somewhat different patterning than the above species. The juveniles have only two wide, dark bands on the body, and in adults, these dark bands break up into large dark spots while the light bands around them fill in with much smaller spots, spaced a bit further apart. The West Indian leopard gecko is also the largest species in the genus, and can reach a total length of 20 cm. As the name suggests, they are native to western India, but little is known about their habitat preferences or the exact extent of their range.

Eublepharis hardwickii was actually the first species in the genus to be described, and it is also the least similar in appearance to the familiar leopard gecko. Though the common name is the East Indian leopard gecko, they are not spotted: this species retains the juvenile banded pattern throughout its life, and adults are dark brown and a golden tan. East Indian leopard geckos are found in forests and hilly areas with thorn bushes in central and eastern India.

Very few of these relatives of the leopard gecko have been kept in captivity, which seems a shame. Given their close relation to one of the easiest to keep and breed gecko species, it is likely that they would do well in captivity and become interesting addition to the herp hobby.

References: The Eyelash Geckos, Care, Breeding and Natural History, by Kirschner & Seuffer Verlag. ©2005



Herpetology Greats

Laurence M. Klauber – 1883-1968

He was an American herpetologist who studied rattlesnakes intensively, culminating in the two-volume - *Rattlesnakes: their habits, life histories and influences on mankind* (1956). He also produced many papers on other reptile taxa of the southwestern United States.

Classifieds

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HERP HAPPENINGS

February 24, 2008 – 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 Other dates, April 13, June 29, August 24.

March 14, 2008 - Reptile Day School Festival – Indiana State Museum, from 9:30 to 2:00

March 28, 2008 – Friday Night Frog Watch, Eagle Creek Park, 8:30 PM-10 PM, \$5.00, Learn frog calls, and visit ponds to search for frogs. Bring flashlights, rain gear, and boots/old shoes. (317) 327-7148

April 19, 2008 – HHS live amphibian/reptile exhibit at Garfield Park, Indpls. 10am-2pm

May 2 & 3, 2008 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, Kentucky,

Reptile Days public event -Indiana State Museum - July 26 from 11 to 4 & July 27 from 12 to 4

June 14,15, 2008 – Reptile Invasion, Wesselman Woods Nature Center, Evansville, IN 10-4

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Indiana Turtle Care, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to the conservation, rehabilitation, education and rescue of turtles and tortoises.

Central Indiana Frog Watchers

(the local chapter of the National Wildlife Federation's Frogwatch). Monthly meetings are held at the Camp Cullom Nature Center in Frankfort, IN. For more info. Contact Wendell Zetterberg at

wzetterberg@hotmail.com or (765) 249-2298

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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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