



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 19 Number 10

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President's Message

Jim Horton

Hello Hoosier Herpers!

I hope that you were able to make the September meeting. Our Guest Speaker was Andrew Hoffman (student/researcher at Hanover University). He brought his knowledge of Indiana herps and put it to work with a great Powerpoint presentation featuring the herps of Southeast Indiana.

I would like to thank Mr. Jerry Zimmerman for helping out on my call to exhibit at the Brookview Elementary School on September 25. The exhibit was a free show but the science coordinator donated \$20 out of her pocket to the HHS anyway.

Speaking of free shows, David and Laurie Mitchell set up a program at the Coburn Place (a safe haven for abused women and children). Dave, Laurie, Ed Ferrer, and myself brought a few animals and took our turns telling the kids about them. The kids loved it! It was just one of many special projects that the HHS provides for the Indianapolis area.

Just a little reminder. We will have our annual Christmas/Holiday Party in December. We will keep you posted as to when and where it will be.

Yet another reminder. In 2009, the HHS will be 20 years of age! If you have any good ideas on how we can celebrate this anniversary, please contact me.

Our website will soon be more user friendly and have a positive outlook. HHS member Chad Thompson has agreed to lend his expertise to help renovate our HHS website. Pat Hammond has been working hard at the Administrative position on the website. He will tell you more about it in this issue.

Two events will be held in early November. The 24th Midwest Herpetological Symposium (Michigan) and the Midwest Reptile Expo at the fairgrounds. Several HHS members will be at the symposium and we hope to see you there!

Ed Ferrer will be at our HHS promotion table for the Expo here in town. If you have plans to be there, why not drop by the HHS table and say hello.

This month we will be taking nominations for 2009 Officers. We will vote for new officers in November.

Check this out

You herpers may remember some months ago I did an article about a group study of critter cams on snapping turtles in the Connecticut river and estuaries. The study is over and they are poring over the data and videos still. They have a web sight that you can read about the group of urban youth that helped and view a video of a jawless snapper swimming with the fishes. That site is

<http://hydrodictyon.eebuconn.edu/eebedia/index.php/snappingturtleresearchteam>

Enjoy Dave Mitchell

General Meeting: October 15th, 7:30 p.m.

**Guest Speaker: Rod Williams, Purdue University
Topic: "Amphibian Malformations and Inbreeding"
Butler University, Gallahue Center, room#108**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to announce that this month's guest speaker is **Rod Williams**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Purdue University. Rod has participated in many field research projects involving many reptile and amphibian species. He manages the vertebrate teaching collection within the department and teaches ecology and systematics of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals and fish.

His topic for this presentation is "**Amphibian Malformations and Inbreeding**".

We all understand that amphibians are particularly important indicators of the overall health of the environment since they are effected by various elements from both water and air. This will be our chance to view the findings of recent fieldwork done in Indiana. Be sure to attend to see this study of amphibians in our state. See you there!

Website update

I have taken over as the administrator of the HHS website. Our previous administrator had to step down to devote his time to his family. I have been trying to get accounts activated. There were around 2,800 names on the members list and all but about 80 or so are spam. I have approved all the accounts that I think are real. I have been working on deleting all the bad names but this is no easy process. If you have registered but not been approved please check back to see if your account has been activated. If not please send me a private message or email me at gnawbone92@yahoo.com and let me know what your screen name is and I will get you activated. For all new members please enter your city/town and state and what your herpetological interests are when filling out the online registration form so your account will stand out from the spammers.

Thanks,

Pat Hammond

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

New members:

Rick Garrett & Holly Smith
Mark & Susan Henderson, sustaining
Jacob Swails
Jeff Stone, sustaining

Renewals:

Top Hat Cricket Farm
Andrew Hoffman
Mike Mc Neely

Herp of the month

Burton's Legless Lizard *Lialis burtonis*

JIM HORTON

Sometimes referred to as snake-lizard, the Burton's legless lizard is quite unusual in its presents and food habits. This odd reptilian is found throughout most of Australia, much of Papua New Guinea, Irian Jaya and neighboring islands. There are approximately nine species within the genus of *Lialis*. The majority are confined to Australia. Two species are found in New Guinea, *L. burtonis* and *L. jicari*. The later (*jicari*) is endemic and is the only Pygopodid that doesn't occur in Australia. It prefers loose soil and damp ground vegetation where it will burrow to remain inconspicuous to predators.

They are the largest of the Pygopodidae (limbless) family of lizards with snout to vent lengths of 74-291mm. It may reach over two-feet in length.

These lizards are different from most legless lizards simply by its elongated and pointed head.



Other differences are the vestigial 'flaps'(hindlimbs) or 'scaly feet' on the underside near the cloaca. Unlike most legless lizards, the small elliptical eyes of *Lialis* do not close but it can retract them while holding on to a prey item. It almost always strikes prey at the neck or head to prevent it from biting.

The similarities to legless lizards are the ear openings, long tail, and the ability of tail regeneration. It is also oviparous (egg laying) with a normal clutch size of two. They are crepuscular and will present vocalization when alarmed. The family Pygopodids are believed to have evolved

from geckos.



The coloration is quite variable. Brown, tan/buff, grey, or even pinkish dorsally and along sides. Longitudinal stripes or dark speckling are evident in some specimens. Ventral color is slightly lighter than above.

Strangely enough, these lizards are 'lizard eaters'. Skinks of the genus *Carlia* are killed and consumed whole, usually head-first. Other prey items include geckos and agamid lizards as well as small snakes. These ambush predators are able to take large prey items though the ability to unhinge the jaws (similar to that of snakes).

Captive conditions

I keep only one specimen (It's the only one I've seen in person) and it resides in a 10-gallon tank. Heat tape lines one side and a spot light is timed at the same location. Misting is offered 2-3 times a week.

I've tried scenting rat and mouse pinks to no avail. I'd been given small deceased snakes and lizards for possible meals for my Burton's but it will only eat live lizards. It has thus far eaten longtail lizards, anoles, and five-lined skinks. It remains healthy and active but one day I hope to get it to feed upon frozen/thawed rodents.

I was lucky enough to hear some vocalization while photographing my specimen in my yard. I had accidentally startled it and it let out an errrrrrraaa. At the time, I didn't know they could make any sound and I was quite surprised.

Searching for the Pit Vipers of Brown County

by Ed Ferrer

Pat Hammond and I arranged to meet Brittany Davis, the interpretive naturalist of Brown County State Park, on Friday August 10th. Our goal was to find my two favorite Indiana snakes, the northern copperhead, *Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*, and the timber rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*. When we arrived, Brittany said, "Ed, you are going to help be give two rattlesnakes a bath". I was surprised but agreed figuring that she knew what she was doing. She led us to the back of the Nature Center office where we saw three large timber rattlesnakes in big plastic tubs. Brittany explained that late in the summer and early fall the timbers are moving more than normal and are found occasionally at camp sites and on the park's roads. Visitors are encouraged to report these sightings to either the Nature Center or park security. They then take these snakes to the Nature Center and then release them after the weekend close to where they were found. She explained that one female and one male rattler had defecated in their tanks and she wanted them to be washed before they were released so that maybe they would smell the pheromones so they might mate. We took the containers outside and she lifted the two "dirty" snakes and put them on the ground. My job was to walk along and sprinkle them with a hose to clean them as they slithered along. Then we took the snakes to the sites where they were found and released them away from the road. As we watched them each slither away, I was reminded at how well their patterns served as camouflage with the fallen leaves and shadows of the forest floor. Pat took some photos as they settled into leaf litter.

We then went to find copperheads. She showed us seven copperheads in the neighborhood of the Nature Center. Brittany said that they were all gravid females and they don't move much during this time. We hooked three of them and these were to be saved until they gave birth to their neonates and then they would be released after the neonates first shed. Brittany led us

to several other locations in the park but we only found two more copperheads around a huge tree with a lot of exposed roots and other fallen branches where the snakes could find adequate cover within which they could feel secure.

After lunch we went back to the Nature Center where Brittany was scheduled to give a program about the snakes in Brown County. She introduced the audience to general snake biology and talked about how she originally was afraid of snakes when she first took her job as naturalist which brought laughs from the audience. She first showed an Eastern hognose snake, *Heterodon platirhinos*, with a striking orange and black pattern scales. The next snake shown was a black rat snake, *Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*, one of Indiana's largest and most common snake. She then surprised the group by inviting them outside to discuss copperheads and timbers. She arranged the people in a circle and put a copperhead on the ground as she talked about it. When asked why the snake didn't try to get away, Brittany explained that the serpent saw the people through its heat sensors as one large living organism instead of several individuals so it didn't want to approach it. She then put the timber rattler on the ground as she discussed its features. As I watched her program, I wished that more people could see these two vipers as we had seen. They would see how beautiful, docile and beneficial these snakes really are instead of their negative myths and legends. I made plans to revisit this park again to check on the copperheads after the neonates arrive.

Now Get Your Feeder Rodents at H.H.S. Meetings!

Ed Ferrer

I remember the "good old days" when we "herpers" could count on the last Sunday of every month there would be a Midwest Reptile Show" at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.

Then the shows were changed to apparently match up with other events at the fairgrounds so it wasn't as easy to plan your shopping for reptile needs. This past year it has been reduced to once every other month. Next year I hear that it is going to be a quarterly event, only four times a year. I have heard many complaints by hobbyists that it is now more difficult to get their herp needs, especially feeder animals!

The Hoosier Mouse Supply has offered a solution to the members of the Hoosier Herp Society! They have offered to bring feeder animals to the monthly Hoosier Herp meetings!

Mark and Susan Henderson started supplying feeder animals to zoos, pet shops, nature centers and private herpers for 13 years. I have been a regular customer for the past 12 years and have always been impressed with their quality, service and competitive prices.

They offer mice, rats, and rabbits (live or frozen in all sizes Just call them at (317) 831-1219 and they can bring your order to our next meeting on Oct. 15th. If you desire live feeders be sure to bring a container!

HERP HAPPENINGS

October 18, 2008 – HHS public amphibian/reptile exhibit JDRF Military Park, Indianapolis.

October 18 2008 - Midwest Frog Fest, Joliet, IL, midwestfrogfest.com - presentations, workshops, auction (proceeds go to the Costa Rican Amphibian Research Center), Animal and supply sale.

November 7-9, 2008 – 24th Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Detroit MI Hosted by the Michigan Society of Herpetologists.

November 8-9 2008 – Midwest Reptile Expo, Indiana State Fairgrounds. Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm
www.midwestreptile.com

November 22, 2008 – Evansville Reptile Show and Sale.

classifieds

For sale: Jungle Carpet pythons high yellow parents 150.00 each.

Red blood pythons 175.00 each. savu pythons 100.00 each, all are c.b.2008 babies, guaranteed healthy, feeding, and properly sexed. Mike Wood 574-269-3441 2bears@embarqmail.com

For sale: Argentine Boas (cb 8/08) \$90.00, Corn snakes (Okeetee phase) cb 8/08, parents-(female bright, male deep red) \$20.00. Jim Horton (317) 865-0464 email – stardali84@hotmail.com

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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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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