



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 20 Number 3

March 2009

President's Message

Jim Horton

Thank goodness Spring is here! We've already been to the vernal ponds and have seen our share of amphibians so far. Can't wait to see more!

We have our first HHS educational live animal exhibit this month. Saturday, March 21, 10-2 at Garfield Park Conservatory. Herpetology Weekend is May 1&2 in Slade, Ky. It features field trips and presentations in the evening. Several HHS members will be attending this weekend event.

Don't forget, we are pushing our choice for State Reptile. The Kirtland's snake is our candidate. Please help the HHS in our efforts to designate this worthy reptile as our State Reptile. Please see me if you need petitions and any other information to participate.

Next month is the first Annual Save the Frogs Day (April 28). Visit their website www.savethefrogs.com to find out more.

This month's Guest Speaker will be driving up from Columbus, Ohio. Let's give him a good crowd for our March meeting.

Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, March 18th, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Jeff Dawson, Columbus Zoo

Topic: "Herping in Vietnam and Thailand"

Butler University, Gallahue Center (science building) Room#108

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to announce that our guest speaker for March is **Jeff Dawson** from the **Columbus Zoo**. His topic will be "**Herping Vietnam and Thailand**". Jeff grew up in western Ohio and was always fascinated by animals, especially reptiles and amphibians. He graduated from Ohio State University in 2002 with a B.S. degree in Zoology. After graduating, he assisted on a research project by radio-tracking sidewinder rattlesnakes in California. For the past five years he has worked as a full-time keeper at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. He also keeps and breeds a number of reptiles at his home. He recently was accepted into a distance learning M.S. program in Biology through the University of Nebraska. Although he is interested in all herps, he is especially fascinated by turtles and tortoises. Included in his presentation will be a discussion of some of the problems that are threatening turtle survival in Vietnam and speak about some conservation efforts that are trying to save them. He will also talk about a trip to Thailand that he plans to take next year as part of his research for his Master's program. Another great speaker! See you there!

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

NEW MEMBERS

Marisa Featherston

RENEWALS

Eugene Holmes

Thanks for you membership and continued interest in the HHS!

Report on Invasive Pythons in the United States

by Ed Ferrer

When I gave a live snake presentation to a school group in Lafayette, IN, a interested student came up to me after the program and gave me a newspaper article published in the **USA Today** regarding the possibility of the Burmese python, *Python molurus bivittatus*, colonizing about the southern one-third of the United States. I told her that I didn't think that was probable but that I would look into the situation. The article based its theory on models of future global warming predictions and matched up the predicted temperatures with the current temperatures of the Burmese python's present range throughout Asia. It showed a map of the United States and shaded in a vast area of our country that included just about all of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina. The shaded areas also included parts of California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia and a few parts of Kentucky. Such a prediction of the Burmese python's invasion of such a large area naturally caused some concern by the public. The problem with this sweeping prediction is that it only took into account one factor, average temperature without considering other factors such as extreme temperature, suitable habitat including cover vegetation among others.

I have read a few scientific reports on this subject, the last one published by The Center for North American Herpetology in Lawrence, Kansas. These reports concluded that the Burmese python is and will continue to be limited to a small area of suitable environmental conditions in the Everglades National Park in southern Florida and in the extreme southern tip of Texas (highly unlikely). Furthermore, these reports predict that further global warming would actually indicate a contraction in suitable habitat in these areas for the Burmese python. Global warming is causing parts of the Everglades to become more dry and is shrinking suitable habitats for many species of the Everglades.

Another example of an exotic species that has gained a foothold in the United States are two species of iguana. The spiny tail iguana, *Ctenosaura pectinata*, has been introduced in a small area in eastern coast of Texas and the southern tip of Florida. The common green iguana, *Iguana iguana*, was introduced and now has a breeding population in the southeastern tip of Florida. Of course, we are all familiar with the case of African honeybees that escaped from South America where they were subject of biological experiments to try to increase the honey making ability. These bees were identical looking to our honeybees but were dangerously much more aggressive than our native honeybees. They have proceeded northward through Central America interbreeding with the native honeybees, causing them to have the same aggressive nature. Any sort of disturbance such as a lawn mower vibration can cause them to swarm and attack repeatedly any living person or animal in the area. The last I have heard they have entered the southern part of the United States through Texas and have been the cause of several severe attacks.

Of course, invasive exotic species is a problem that needs attention by the various agencies that protect our natural environment. We in the herpetological community do our best to educate the public regarding all species of amphibians and reptiles, both native and exotic and promote the conservation of these animals. We denounce the irresponsible practice of releasing exotic species into our lands and in many cases try to adopt and find homes for exotic pets that are no longer wanted by their owners. But the possibility of an all out invasion of Burmese pythons is just not possible.

Early spring frogs

Photos - Jim Horton



Wood Frog *Rana sylvatica*



Spring Peeper *Pseudacris crucifer*

Kind Of A “ Drag”

Submitted by Dave Mitchell

Researchers have learned that South African, young lizards mimic the female. This copying fools the mature males into ignoring them. This is a prime example of transvestism in natural reproduction.

The lizards, thus, were not being harassed, but they achieved access to the ladies, while being ignored by the “manly” rivals. Scientists from Australia and South Africa reported this from their studies. Young male Augrabies flat tailed lizards did not change to the vibrant coloration of the more sexually mature rivals, until, grown to a size to defend themselves.

“Experienced males will chase and bite their young rivals,” stated associate professor Martin Whiting of Johannesburg’s University of the Witwaterstand. “By delaying the onset of colour to a more convenient period, these males, termed she-males are making the best of a bad situation.

There is a glitch in the lizard’s transvestite costume. Like large hands and a prominent Adam’s apple in male humans, they can’t conceal the male hormones. A male suitor will pickup the scent with their sensitive tongues, even if duped by the costume.

“University of Sydney researcher Jonathan Webb said the she-males had to be really nimble to avoid advances from dominant males taken in by their fake female allure, Males are fooled by looks, but not by scent.” “She-males are able to maintain this deception by staying one step ahead of prying males, and thereby avoiding a nosey tongue that might give the game away.”

Research was published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society. Melbourne {AFB}

Attention HHS members:

Member and operator of Indiana Turtle Care Marty Lapree had open heart surgery last week. She was in bad but not critical condition. She is recovering slowly and her heart is not beating as fast as it should and her blood pressure is a little high. The doctors are implanting a pace maker on March 9th. She is eating lightly and walking a little. I ask all members who pray to do so for Marty and the rest keep her well being in your thoughts.

Dave Mitchell



HHS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT PROFILE

Name – Dave Mitchell

Town or city – Indianapolis

Age you found interest in herpetology? At age four or five. Had my first snapper hatchling at age six.

What got you interested in herpetology? Walking in the woods by my home. I used to get baby snappers on my grandparents farm and take them home to the parents.

What amphibians/reptiles do you like? I like them all but I'm partial to Chelonians.

What amphibians/reptiles do you keep? I have eleven turtles and six tortoises. Have had salamanders, toads, lizards, a newt and a snake.

How long have you been a member of the HHS? I moved to Indiana in September 1996 and joined in October 1996.

Do you exhibit your animals at HHS shows? I try to attend all shows.

What do you like most about the HHS? All I have learned from other members. I enjoy all the speakers who educate me in all matter of herps.

Do you field herp? If so, where have you been? I used to go everywhere but now I'm limited by my lungs.

Where do you get your herps? Most of my Chelonians are adopted.

Have you ever bred any herp species? (if so, what kind?) My spotted turtles have given me eggs but have had only one hatchling. Unfortunately

Other hobbies? Photography and classic car models.

Anything else you would like to add? I see species and I want them all. I just don't have enough room. I'm open to all suggestions.

Herps and the Science Olympiad

by Ed Ferrer

On Saturday, February 28th, Butler University hosted the local regional Science Olympiad. Included in the categories for Junior High and Middle school was "Reptiles and Amphibians". Among the High School categories was "Herpetology". As in the past, the Hoosier Herpetological Society provided questions, live specimens, and generally assisted the two-member teams of students during the competition. The students really enjoyed this part of the competition because they were able to make observations (as they might in the field) regarding real specimens and, using their Peterson Field Guide as a resource, they were able to identify many of the various amphibian and reptile specimens and answer questions about them. A big hit this year with the students was Roger Carter's alligator. I want to thank H.H.S. members Wendell and Peggy Zetterberg, Jim Horton, David Mitchell, Rick Marrs, Roger Carter and Angela Thomas for their help in making this event a success. It was great to see students engaged in team work, problem solving and academic competition.

CARE IN CAPTIVITY OF ROSY BOAS **(Mexican Variety) *Lichanura trivirgata trivirgata***

By Amy Baird

RANGE	The Mexican Rosy Boas are indigenous to Central and North America. This variety ranges from Baja California, Northwestern Sonora, into Arizona and Mexico.
SIZE	These boas attain an average adult size of 30-40 inches. They are medium bodied snakes with a 2.5-3.5 inch circumference.
HABITAT	Rosy Boas prefer dry habitats including oases into Western American deserts. They are ground dwellers and prefer areas with little plant growth.
TEMP/LIGHT	A gradient temperature is best. Provide a hot spot of 90-95 F and 80-85F elsewhere in the cage. The nighttime temperature can fall to 74.5 F. The rosy boa is a nocturnal species. It is best to keep a light on during the day and off at night. Normal daytime illumination with an incandescent bulb shining on a basking rock is often sufficient as the heat source. In cooler climates, an under tank heater may be necessary to keep the cage temperature within an acceptable range.
FOOD	Offer prey items that are slightly smaller than the circumference of the snake. It is better to feed a smaller meal. Some snake can only eat one item per feeding or regurgitation may occur.
WATER	The presence of water at all times is not essential. A shallow dish may be placed in the snake's cage several times weekly. Allow bowl to dry a day or two in between refills. This allows the boa access to fresh water, but keeps the overall cage humidity low.

HERP HAPPENINGS

March 1, 2009 – 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

March 21, 2009 – HHS live amphibian/reptile exhibit. Garfield Park Conservatory. 11am – 2 pm

May 1 & 2, 2009 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Park, Slade, KY.

May 16, 2009 – Hoosier Herpout, Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Monroe Reservoir, Bloomington. Hiking, herping, camping, and a cookout!

June 13, 14, 2009 – Reptile Invasion, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, Evansville, IN

ANNUAL ENCORE

By Jim Horton

For many, it's the start of "March Madness", the NCAA basketball tournament and the familiar brackets.

For nature enthusiasts and amateur and professional herpetologists, it's more than that. It is the height of the amphibian breeding season here in Indiana and much of the United States as well. Amphibians are one of the first signs that spring is here!

Herpetological enthusiasts gather to their favorite annual haunts and take in the sounds and sights of those marvelous and fascinating amphibians. Many study, video, and photograph the activities around vernal ponds and other breeding sights.

Several Hoosier Herpetological Society members are heavily involved in Frog Watch programs and studies of their own concerning the monitoring of amphibians. Some have been monitoring amphibians for nearly 20 years! The more information taken in over the years, the more an expert an individual will become with amphibians. All of this knowledge is useful in delivering an important message.

As I'm sure you are probably aware, amphibians are the indicators of a healthy watershed. And many of them are losing numbers in the wild.

Part of the HHS message is to educate the public about amphibians and reptiles of Indiana. So I urge you to spread the word and deliver the message that those sounds people hear in the springtime are not insects. It is a sound that is disappearing before our eyes. There is a different world in the fields, ditches and woodland ponds that many folks are not aware is taking place.

I've talked to so many non-herp people that used to hear or see frogs and salamanders near their homes and neighborhoods. They've told me that they don't see (or hear) nearly as many as they used to.

Several members in the HHS are experts in amphibians. Angela Thomas is one of them who continues to learn all she can by attending amphibian conferences around the U.S. She has also been involved in Frog Watch USA for years.

Wendell Zetterburg heads the local Frog Watch chapter in his area. He was featured in USA Weekend magazine as a **volunteer of the year** for his work concerning amphibians. He has his own frog blog on the internet. Wendell also continues to produce the "Toad Times," a local newsletter about amphibians.

Education is the key. You can do your part. Write an article for the Monitor or any publication. Give a talk at a school or church or attend HHS exhibits and programs. Blog, chat or email what you've learned about the amphibian in Indiana and around the World. Don't forget April 28 is National Amphibian Day!

As President of the HHS, I feel it is my job to spread the word and to remind our members to do the same. Remind folks of the real indicator of spring. Lets make a little of our own March Madness.



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.**

Your HHS OFFICERS for 2009

PRESIDENT stardali84@hotmail.com	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464
VICE-PRESIDENT pythonpals1@msn.com	Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448
SECRETARY drymarchonzz@hotmail.com	Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP turtlelovin@att.net	Dave Mitchell	(317) 570-9643
SERGEANT AT ARMS bluemoosey8@yahoo.com	Brittany Davis	

Appointees for 2009

EDITOR Stardali84@hotmail.com	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464
PROGRAM DIRECTOR pythonpals1@msn.com	Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448
WAYS AND MEANS necali@insightbb.com	Angela Thomas	Cell - 727-7553 (317) 882-5266

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Richard Searcey	(765) 349-2347	ighaus@comcast.net
Dave and Elliot Stahl	(317) 842-2648	copperhead210@sbcglobal.net
Pat Hammond	(317) 241-2793	gnawbone92@yahoo.com
Roger Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
Rick Marrs	(317) 549-3673	
Mike Wood		twobears@embarqmail.com
Amy Baird		

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 4620-0544 or 7712 Miracle road, Indianapolis, IN, 46237. Articles on PC or compatible, formatted, 3½ dis4ks or CD's 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.