



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 27 Number 1

January 2016

Hoosier Herpetological Society Annual Photography Contest



Two adult categories: *Wild and Captive*

Kids Category: kids ages 5-16

All entries must be 8x10 formats. (Framed work is welcome but not necessary)

Entry fees are \$1.00 per entry. Enter as many times as you wish.

Entries must pertain to herpetology.

Must be a current HHS member(s) to enter contest.

Judging will be from your peers (the audience).

Prizes

Adult winners in each category

1st place \$25.00, 2nd place 1-Year HHS membership, 3rd place \$15.00

Kids category

Grand prizes - \$10.00 & \$5.00

Afterwards members are welcome to show short video clips of herping in the field.

(No prizes will be awarded for this presentation)

A Herper's View of "Jurassic World"

by Ed Ferrer

The public has always been fascinated by dinosaurs and they were always big hits in the earliest movies such as "The Lost World" and "Godzilla" to the modern "Jurassic" franchise. The current "Jurassic World" ruled the box office as number one for the first four weeks as it smashed all records! The computer graphics were amazing and the actors from Bryce Dallas Howard (Ron Howard's, daughter) and Chris Pratt along with the other players were believable and did their part to get you involved in this movie thrill ride. But as a former science teacher and geology major in college I always pay close attention to how the dinosaurs are portrayed.

Since their first discovery dinosaurs were always presented as huge lizards. In fact the name dinosaur actually means "terrible lizard". Along with that they were thought to be slow and stupid and that perception was reinforced by how they were seen in early films as actors in clumsy costumes or by stop action clay figure techniques. Dinosaurs were reconstructed as lizards with a splayed stance. In fact, Tyrannosaurus rex was depicted as standing on two legs but with its tail dragging the ground in a tripod stance. But in the early 1970's Robert Bakker, a paleontologist (a scientist specializing in the study of dinosaurs) at John Hopkins University, presented a renaissance in new image of dinosaur reconstruction. New fossils showed the dinosaurs legs were positioned under the body instead of to the side which meant that it took a lot more metabolism. (Anyone who worked on their feet all day long can attest to the energy that is needed.) As far as being stupid, Tyrannosaurus rex had one of the largest brain cavities in the animal kingdom. Furthermore when dinosaur fossil bones were viewed under microscopes they revealed many blood capillaries similar to birds and mammals which help maintain a high metabolism generating heat internally instead of relying on outside sources as reptiles. Further studies showed that the tails instead of dragging the ground were in the air probably used for balance like that of a cat. Some dinosaur fossils showed imprints of feathers! In fact a couple of years ago our Children's Museum exhibited feathered dinosaurs from China. Since they weren't used for flying this implied that they were used for warmth. Other evidence has showed that some dinosaurs migrated and moved in herds, formed colonial nesting sites, and showed parental care of their young. Measuring dino footprints showed that many were fast. These are all traits of warm blooded mammals and birds, not cold blooded reptiles. In fact many books when showing the evolutionary family tree of life now place the dinosaurs in their own branch either called Arcosauria or Dinosauria.

Dr. Jack Horner, one of the world's foremost paleontologists, served as the technical adviser for the Jurassic movies. So these movies not only entertained audiences but also educated them with the new evidence regarding dinosaurs. As many as forty new dinosaurs may be found each year meaning there will surely be more evidence that will give us a much more clearer view of these magnificent creatures. And the public won't have to wait some twenty years for the next in the series as there are already plans for a new Jurassic movie set for release around 2018.

Senate Bill 195 Passes

Jim Horton

Senate Bill #195 was introduced to the Indiana House of Representatives in early January. The bill was written to reinstate jurisdiction for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to regulate "wild animals." This authority was overturned last year in court. The bill will reenact the law previously on the books in Indiana. For reptiles, that means venomous reptiles and crocodilians over 5' will require permits.

The previous language in the bill stated that you must notify neighbors with approval of your intent to keep venomous reptiles and/or dangerous wild animals. This was removed from the new bill.

The HHS had suggested this in our official statement. We also suggested permits be required for all crocodilians at time of purchase. This was not added to the bill.

In all, we were pleased with the outcome.

The hearing was January 11 at the Indiana State House. HHS officers in attendance were: Ed Ferrer, Roger and Holly Carter, and Jim Horton. HHS member Shane Delon was also at the hearing.

President's message

Jim Horton

Hello and happy New Year!

Another year has ended and a new one has begun. I'm excited about the year ahead! We hope to grow the HHS with memberships, events, and education. Last year we were able to do our part in conservation by donating monies to needed organizations/conservation projects. This year I hope to take it a step further by getting our members involved in an outdoor project(s). One conservation event is already in the works. The Morgan Monroe EcoBlitz will take place again this year and your help is needed.

I'd like to thank everyone for all of their hard work and contributions last year. We couldn't have done it without you. This includes all board members and other members who helped show animals at events. Thank you to our members who show up every month for the general meetings. Special thanks to Ed Ferrer, Roger Carter, and Angela Thomas for their work all year round at meetings and club functions.

We had a great time at the HHS holiday party – **December 12 at Dale's Family Dining** in the Beech Grove area. Dinner was delicious and the white elephant exchange was fun too! Thanks to everyone who was a part of it.

I'd like to thank Robert Tyler and Jason Lee for their donation of snake hooks to be used in our monthly raffle.

Our annual Photo Contest is this month. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone's best images!

Congratulations to your for 2016 officers

President – Jim Horton
Vice-President – Mary Hylton
Treasurer – Roger Carter
Secretary – Holly Carter
Sergeant-At-Arms – Will Brown

Welcome New Members!

New Members

Emma Kalbaugh Cassidy Tigrett Sammy Stark

Returning Members

Pat Hammond John & Linda Jett Richard Marrs Janice Kucera
Henry Westphal MaryAnn Watson Leonard Gray Caleb Wood

HHS Receives Donation

A big THANK YOU to **Roger Carter** for his efforts in obtaining a donation from his employer.

In the fall of 2015, the HHS received a check in the amount of \$1,000.00 from the **Bridgestone Americas Trust Fund**. The HHS is delighted to be the recipient of this donation.

Feeding Your Snake(s)

by Ed Ferrer

As I talk with other people interested in snakes, I am often asked questions about how to feed snakes. I have changed my mind about feeding snakes based on my own experiences over the past 25-30 some years of keeping snakes. When I began keeping snakes, I wanted to keep everything as close to what the snake would be in nature. That included feeding my snakes. I started out feeding my snakes live rodents and I would watch as they would track their prey, then strike and constrict then swallow the prey whole. That presented two problems. One, captive snakes were not always successful in striking the rodent sometimes missing them and maybe striking the glass or side of the habitat potentially injuring their jaws. (Of course, in nature they often miss with a strike but that isn't usually portrayed in T.V. documentaries making the snakes seem more successful than normal.)

Secondly, the live prey item would also try to defend itself during the strike. One time my young boa constrictor was bitten by a mouse during a feeding event. I found out that rodents have chisel shaped front teeth that can inflict relatively deep wounds. I had to treat the snake's wound with neosporin ointment until the wound healed completely. From then on I have always fed my snakes dead prey items. I did not want to risk an infection. I have had people tell me that their snake won't eat dead items. I always tell them to be patient. When the snake is hungry enough it will take dead prey. Most snakes are attracted to movement so I always suggest to move the prey item get the snake's attention. I also strongly encourage the use of tongs or a hemostat to hold the prey item.



Photo from Google Images

Again I learned this by experience. I used to hold the prey by the tail and then just drop it as the snakes struck. That changed when one of my large Burmese pythons missed the rat and struck my hand in a feeding response. There is nothing quite like the feeling of six rows of some 90 needle sharp teeth that curve backward in your hand to make an impression!

Some people seem to brag about how large of a meal their snake can eat. As a rule, I don't feed my snakes any prey item larger than the largest section of my snakes. Could they consume larger prey? Sure, but that might be like me eating a whole pizza by myself.

Also some people seem to over feed their snakes. (That happens to a lot of people who keep fish. They often over feed them because I am sure it is fun to watch them feed but often it leads to more cleaning of the tanks.) When I get neonates I normally feed them once a week because they are growing faster when they are young. About the time they approach one year I stretch it to about every ten days. My adults two years and older I feed once every two weeks. Some times because of my schedule I will wait three weeks. One technique I have used recently is that I will buy my prey items one day and then feed my snakes the very next day. Over night I leave the live mice (the ones I feed my medium size snakes like corn snakes etc. in the snake room. My large and jumbo size rats I purchase frozen and let them out over night wrapped in newspaper. On feeding day, I thump the mice in a cut off pillow case that either kills them or stuns them instantly and then feed. The frozen items I make sure they are pliable and then I drip them in warm water and feed my large boa constrictors and pythons. After they smell the rodents over night they are very ready to eat the next day.

I hope that some of these ideas will help hobbyists, especially children and other new to the hobby, in feeding their snakes.

"Searching For Hidden Herps"?

Article and photos By Roger Carter

Several years ago I decided I wanted a better way to find animals that were hiding in hollow logs or holes in the ground. Usually we looked at hollow logs hoping to see something close. At first I looked at some wireless "baby" cameras and receivers but the camera lenses were about an inch in diameter or more and I wanted something smaller to fit into holes, although I liked the wireless feature. Used medical endoscopes cost several hundred dollars to a couple of thousand dollars so the cost alone put those out of reach. Eventually I Googled "spy cameras", followed many links, and found the camera shown in figure 1.

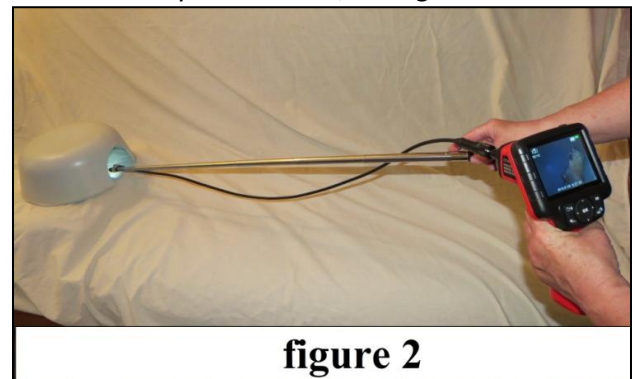


The camera was about the size of a small smart phone today with a small diameter camera lens, a little smaller than the diameter of a cigarette, with three led lights on a wire that was five feet long which I attached to a heavy gage wire with rubber bands so I could insert the lens into hollow logs to see if any animals were in there. I could roll up the wire into a smaller size for convenient carrying. Initially I just wanted to see if any animals were in hiding but this camera had the capability of recording video which I like a lot. I found out by accident that the lens has a right side up so I placed a narrow strip of duct tape down the length of the lens to designate right side up. For my first successful field test with this in the summer of 2013 in southern Indiana I saw a northern copperhead, *Agkistrodon contortix*, at the entrance of a hollow log, I took a flash picture with my 35mm camera and the snake ducked back into the log. I assembled my spy camera, started the recording, and inserted the lens into the log until I found the copperhead. I was a little uncoordinated trying to get the lens into the log but I found the body of the snake and followed that farther back until I saw its head. The resolution of the image isn't great but I could see the

snake and I could tell from his eyes that it was going to shed its skin someday soon. I moved the lens right up to its face, I think I poked its nose and I could see the snake strike at the lens. I was very pleased with the performance of this camera system.

One day late Spring I inserted the lens into some holes in the ground to see if any animals were down there. Unfortunately the water table was a little high, the lens got wet and eventually failed. Through an internet search I couldn't find any replacement lens and I couldn't even find that camera anywhere again.

My current inspection camera we got at Harbor Freight Tools in Indianapolis and it has the capability to take video and still pictures and the resolution is much better than my first camera, see figure 2.



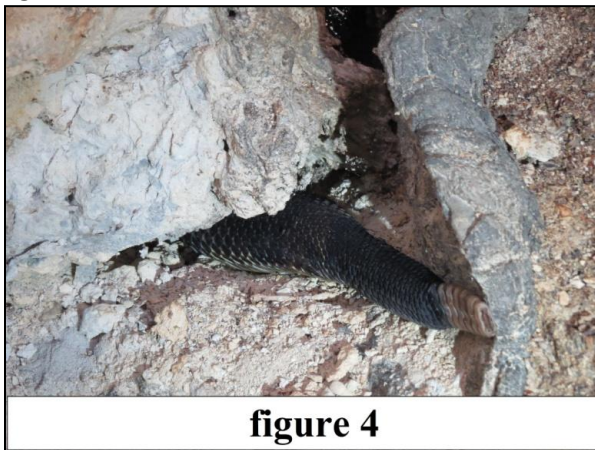
Out of the box this doesn't have any audio capability for the video although there is an optional audio device that can be ordered. This also has a small diameter lens but on a cable that is four feet long and has one led light. The owner's manual says that this unit is water resistant, not water proof. At any rate I am not going to risk ruining this lens. This cable is too heavy for the wire that I used before but I settled for a selfie stick that is four feet long when extended. I removed the part that holds the cell phone and I attach the lens to the end of the selfie stick with rubber bands. I chose the selfie stick because I wanted something that could collapse to a smaller size for carrying and the selfie stick collapses to about twelve inches long.

My first real field test with this camera came during the summer of 2015 in southern Indiana. There weren't any animals in the first logs that I examined but then I

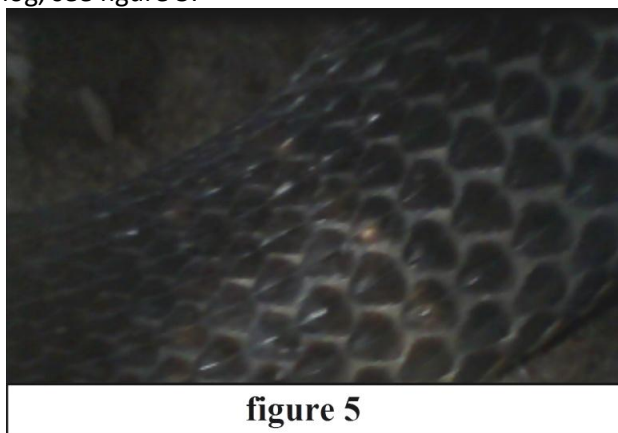
found a toad in a log, see figure 3.



The toad was a complete surprise because I didn't ever expect to see one hiding in a log. Later that afternoon I saw the last several inches of a timber rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, crawling into a hole in a large log, see figure 4.



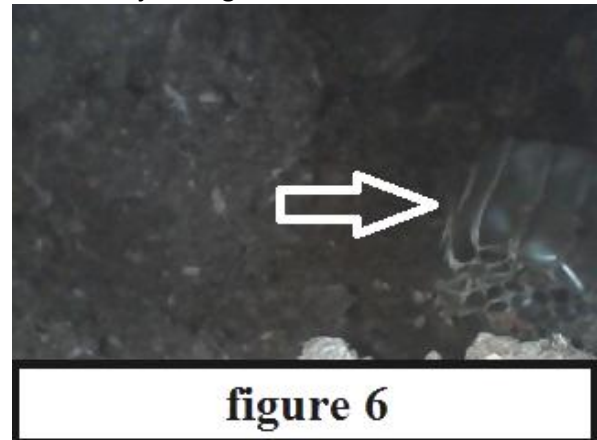
I quickly assembled my inspection camera and saw part of the snake crawling through a different corridor in the log, see figure 5.



In this same log weeks later I saw a copperhead crawling into the same hole. Once I got my camera ready and inserted it into the hole I couldn't find the snake but I did see part of a shed skin, see figure 6, the

arrow is pointing to the shed skin. I don't know what snake shed that skin. Several weeks after that I was examining a different hollow log and I found a timber rattlesnake in this one, see figure 7. I took several pictures of this snake in the log and about thirty seconds of video. This snake rattled a little bit but it stayed in the log, I stayed outside of the log and neither one of us were in any danger.

At the end of September, I went to southern Illinois and "snake road" and saw a timber rattlesnake in a narrow crevice in the bluffs. I moved the lens right up to that snake just to get some video of it.



This snake didn't move very much, it just flicked its tongue a few times and moved its head a little. There were mosquitoes flying around it.



All in all, I had some very good field tests with my new camera and I am looking forward to using it in the coming years. All of these videos can be seen on the Hoosier Herpetological Society web site video gallery.

2016 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

January 17, 2016 - 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 (HHS members only) www.midwestreptile.com Other dates: Feb. 28, April 10, June 26

January 20, 2016 – HHS meeting, photo contest

February 17, 2016 – HHS meeting, Topic – TBA

March 26, 2016 – Amphibian Outing at McCormick’s Creek State Park. Amphibian related activities, talks, field herping.

April 15-15, 2016 – Herpetology Weekend - Slade, Kentucky. A fun-filled weekend of Herpetological presentations, field hikes and free admission to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo.

June 22-25, 2016 - International Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO.



The Monitor is printed courtesy of: **Harding Poorman**



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