



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 21 Number 9

September 2010

President's Message

Jim Horton

The hhs website has been down for a while due to technical difficulties. Please bare with us while we work to get back up online as soon as possible.

Dave Mitchell has informed me that we will be meeting in the Pharmacy building (room #150) through November.

Don't forget that the Midwest Herp Symposium is next month in St. Louis. This is an annual event that is a must for herpetological enthusiasts of all walks. I've added a quick review in this newsletter of what you might expect at a typical symposium. Hope to see some of you there in October!

Another event coming up is the North American Reptile Breeders Conference and Trade show. It isn't really a conference, but more of a trade show – but a huge one. You'll find some of the largest breeder's in the country here. It is a captive-bred show featuring some real gems! This event will take place October 9 and 10 at Tinley Park, near Chicago. For more information visit their website at www.narbc.com

An opportunity for exhibiting your herps is coming up. October 9th is the JDRF at Military Park in Indianapolis. See more details inside this issue.

Welcome New Members!

Renewals

Martha Horton

Gerald Zimmerman

Will Brown (Sustaining membership)

New Members

Cindie Vanderbar

HHS Canoe/kayak trip – (review)

By Jim Horton (photos – Amy Baird)

Our second HHS canoe/kayak trip down the Driftwood River ended in a huge count of turtles. We counted a grand total of **137** turtles! Most were map turtles followed closely by softshells. A few were Midland painted turtles and red-eared sliders. Only one snapper was spotted.

We stopped at a large downed tree and found several Midland water snakes – all adults. It had appeared to be three males and a lone female. More water snakes were found as we paddled down the river. A total of about 14 were spotted.



Midland water snake (*Nerodia sipedon pleuralis*)



Common map turtle (*Graptemys geographica*)

Our group stopped a few times along the shoreline for breaks and herping. Recently morphed Fowler's toads and unidentified tadpoles were found at these stops.

While on one of our stops along the bank, three low-flying Blackhawk helicopters flew overhead.



The nine-mile trek was chosen by HHS'ers. The water level was a bit low but still fun for aqua-travel! Shallow water levels allowed for a nicer view beneath the water. Fish of all sizes could easily be spotted zooming along beside our vessels. Fishermen and party-goers crossed paths several times. Turtles were everywhere! Young specimens were easily caught and released in the shallows.

Thanks to our members who went along that day. Another *thank you* to the Hoosier Herp members who helped with the turtle count. Hope to see you there next year!

Giant Snake Exhibit

An exhibit at Indiana University has opened featuring a very large ancient snake. The replica (bones) of a huge boa measuring 43 feet in length is on display at the Geology Building. The girth of the 2500-pound snake would have come up to the hips of the average human. It is based on a cast of a 60-million-year-old, foot-wide vertebrae that was found in Columbia.

"The Most Dangerous Snake"

by Ed Ferrer

During a break from giving snake programs to the Allen County libraries, I planned a visit to the Ft. Wayne "Children's Zoo". Being a herp hobbyist, I naturally looked for any reptiles and amphibians. I found a reticulated python, a thorny devil, blue tree monitor, a Komodo dragon, and a few frogs. There was also an American alligator and two giant tortoises. As I went to the Australian exhibit, I saw a jungle carpet python and an Australian water dragon. In this exhibit I found a display that interested me. It was a list of the ten most dangerous snakes of the world, eight of the species were found in or around Australia. The list was as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1.) Inland Taipan | (6.) Coastal Taipan |
| (2.) Eastern Brown Snake | (7.) Many Banded Sea Snake |
| (3.) Dubois Sea Snake | (8.) Black Banded Sea Snake |
| (4.) Yebey Sea Snake | (9.) Beaked Sea Snake |
| (5.) Horned Sea Snake | (10.) Congo Water Cobra |

As I looked at this list, it was obvious what criteria was used in making this list. The method used was to compare the potency of each specie's venom. The most common way for scientists to determine the potency of a snake's venom is by comparing the number of mice or rats a certain amount of venom will kill. The most obvious problem of this method is that the effect on rodents might not be the same as the effect on humans. Another factor to consider regarding relative danger to humans is venom yield. For example, the average venom yield of an Eastern brown snake, number two on the list, is 2-6 mg. while the yield of an Eastern diamondback rattlesnake may be as high as 848 mg. Although the venom may be much less toxic, the bite is certainly worse to humans.

Aggression is another factor that must be considered when evaluating a snake's danger to humans. For example sea snakes equipped with very toxic venom (designed to incapacitate fish before they can swim away) are very unaggressive toward humans. I have seen divers swim along with them and even handle them under water without any danger of being bitten. The inland taipan's venom has the highest rating, hence its number one ranking on the list. Experiments with mice have shown that an average bite from this snake is potent enough to kill 50,000 mice or an estimated 50 people. However, this snake is shy, rare and exists far from human habitation. In fact, no human fatality has ever been recorded from its bite! Raymond Hoser, who breeds inland taipans, in an article for Reptiles magazine emphasized that taipans would much rather slither away rather than fight or strike. Taking care not to startle the snake, he handles them with snake hooks much like any other snake in his collection. They also can move backwards quickly, a skill that most snakes do not have.

In order to truly asses a snake's danger to humans we must take into account several factors instead of just relying on the chemical potency of its venom. The snake's aggression, venom yield and the frequency of its contact with humans must be considered. A large majority of fatal snake bites occur in tropical rural areas where people often wear sandals or walk bare footed in localities far from hospitals. Taking all these factors into consideration, I would nominate either the saw-scaled viper or the Russell's viper as the two most dangerous snakes to humans. The saw-scaled viper, even though it often gives a warning by rubbing its keeled scales together producing a sound similar to a rattlesnake's buzz, must be considered. Its wide distribution throughout Africa and Asia around populated areas, camouflaged coloring making it easy to step on and its aggressive nature make it a top candidate for any list. The Russell's viper of Asia, since it lives in close proximity to humans and strikes

aggressively may account for as many as 20,000 human fatalities a year. I think these two species would top my list as the most dangerous snakes toward humans.

Even though we are flooded with sensationalized television programs and news accounts of the dangers of snake bites it must be emphasized that even the most aggressive venomous snakes only strike when people either step on them or try to kill or collect them. They do not want to waste their venom on us because we are too large to eat. Hopefully through education people will learn to respect these highly evolved serpents and allow them to continue to coexist with us in today's world.

References: The Encyclopedia of Snakes, Chris Mattison ; Venom, Poisonous Creatures of the World, Steve Backshall ; Reptile Magazine, August 2008, "Taipans Number One", Raymond Hoser, p.36-41

H.H.S. General Meeting: September 15th, 7:30 p.m.
Featured Speakers: Jim Horton, President H.H.S. and Roger Carter
Topic: "Snake Road"

Butler University, Room#150, Pharmacy Building

The Hoosier Herpetological Society welcomes Jim Horton and Roger Carter as this month's featured speakers. Jim is the president of H.H.S. and the editor of our monthly newsletter, the Monitor. Roger is a long-time HHS member and past-president. They are very experienced field "herpers" and excellent nature photographers. For several years H.H.S. members have taken trips to the famous "Snake Road" in the swamps of Southern Illinois. This site has been featured in Reptiles magazine and is a field herper's paradise. Snake Road is located between a large swamp and the cliff that serves as the winter den for most reptiles that inhabit this unspoiled wilderness area. Every fall, in late September or early October, many species can be found crossing this road to their dens. To protect the animals, vehicles are not allowed on the road and snake hooks and similar items are not permitted. Be sure to attend this meeting to learn about this amazing page in field herpetology!

**26th Annual Midwest Herpetological
Symposium**

St. Louis, MO. October 22-24

Presentation titles include: *Pit Viper Research Project, Herping Costa Rica, "Turtles, turtles, turtles", Hellbenders at the St. Louis Zoo, Husbandry of the mountain chicken frog, Hellbender Status in Missouri*

Key-note address: *Conservation Efforts at the St. Louis Zoo, Locally and Internationally.*

For more information, visit: www.stlherpsociety.org

HHS Members needed for live animal display

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, www.jdrf.org/indiana. **JDRF Walk, October 9th Walk at Military Park downtown.** Over 4,000 friends and families of Juvenile Diabetics participate in the October walk as their largest fundraiser! Last year they raised over \$875,000 to help find a cure for diabetes. The HHS is proud to be a part in this awareness campaign.

HHS members will display live herps. Please limit your animals to North American species or any other cold-tolerant herps. This will be an outdoor exhibit.

Contact Roger Carter for more information (317) 873.6561

Midwest Herpetological Symposium

Jim Horton

The Midwest Herpetological Symposium is fast approaching! The date is October 22-24, 2010. The location is St. Louis, Missouri. This will be the 26th year for this event!

This event is held each year in a different city and is hosted by the local herp society.

Registration is open to anyone interested in herpetology. It features 3 days of herp – related fun and education.

Friday evening usually opens with an ice-breaker, a guest speaker, and refreshments. Displays of the local herp fauna are also sometimes on exhibit. This display will offer opportunities for photographs complete with a ‘staged’ *natural setting*. A sale of herp books and other dry goods may also be available. The hospitality room will then be open for refreshments and conversations. This room usually remains open late into the night.

Saturday is the main part of the weekend. Presentations are ongoing throughout the day. Among the speakers are researchers, breeders, biologists, zoo employees, and amateur herpetologists. For those folks with children, there may be kids projects during the day to keep them occupied.

After the talks is a break followed by the banquet. An auction featuring *everything you could imagine* relating to herpetology is followed by the banquet. The auction is a lot of fun and I usually come home with all kinds of cool herp things! (All proceeds from the auction go directly to the hosting herp society.) Afterwards, the hospitality room opens up again for more drinks, food and conversation.

Sunday may feature a reptile expo or sale. A *behind the scenes* zoo trip is sometimes offered to attendees as well.

This weekend is definitely for herpers from all walks of life. Hope to see you there!

Meeting review

By Jim Horton

Mr. Mike Lannoo of Indiana University presented a talk to the HHS for the August meeting. His presentation – “Ecology of Crawfish Frogs” was very interesting – even for those who only have an interest in reptiles.



Dr. Lannoo

He started with a brief synopsis of the early years of Indiana coal mining in the southwest area of the state. After mining, the large coal companies would reclaim the land. His photographs of the land before, during and after a mining operation left us with a better understanding of this huge process.

The northern Crawfish frog (*Rana areolata*) is listed as an Endangered Species in Indiana. Few populations remain in Indiana and current studies of this robust frog will aid in its survival.

His studies started in January of 2009 in a wildlife area of southwest Indiana. This ongoing project is part of a 3-year study. 34 species of herps were found on the study area. Eleven new county records have been documented in this time.

Methods in the research included drift fences with buckets at the end. The buckets contained a sponge and a stick for other animals to escape. The sponge acts as a source of humidity if dry conditions occur. It also will float if the bucket fills with water and the frog can escape.

Captured specimens are weighed, measured and pit-tagged. A toe clip is collected and sent to a lab for DNA testing. A total of 38 males and 31 females (all adults) were studied.

Radio transmitters were inserted into 18 frogs. Rice-size pit tags are inserted beneath the skin on the ventral area. They tracked on frogs movement more than 1.2 kilometers. Another frog moved 400 meters from its burrow and returned back to the exact hole afterwards.

Predators feeding on crawfish frogs included coyotes, owls, garter snakes, hognose snakes, and black racers. One racer was picking up 3 different signals from transponders from 3 separate frogs.

More than 6,000 photos were taken from motion sensor cameras.

A few facts from the study:

The frogs moved from the burrows during rain. They are active in early spring and return to the burrows in May. Male crawfish frog calls may carry more than a mile. Adults are active day and night. 10% of the frogs studied had contracted the chytrid fungus. Burrows are dug down to the water table. Males respond to these noises with calls: coyotes, owls, and cars with loud mufflers!

Common Indiana Herps

Common Map Turtle *Graptemys geographica*

Jim Horton (photos-Jim Horton)

One of our herps that seems to have an extra-long activity is the map turtle. They may be one of our most overlooked species of turtles. Most folks see them basking on logs while canoeing or glancing over a bridge. In Indiana, this turtle is found state-wide, mostly along rivers or lakes. It prefers the larger bodies of water.

Common map turtles can be identified by their olive green or olive brown carapace. The young are well marked on the carapace with a map-like pattern. This “map” pattern may fade in adults due to stained water, mud, and other elements. The *belly* or *plastron* is marked in black around the seams as youngsters and will become pattern-less with age. The *plastron* is yellow to cream as adults and is flat in both sexes.



(young common map turtle showing *plastron*)

The head, legs and tail are handsomely marked with a dark background and light-yellow or pale-green stripes. A distinct oval or triangular yellow spot is evident behind the eye.



(young map turtle)

Adult females will grow larger than males (7"-10³/₄"). They also have a considerably larger head compared to males. Males differ from females in smaller appearance (3 1/2"- 6 1/4"), longer front claws and tail.

Snails and crayfish are the bulk of prey items. Fish, carrion, and aquatic plants may make up the remainder of their diet.

Map turtles may become active as early as February and may stay semi-active all winter. There have been reports of these turtles roaming under ice

In June or early July, females will travel to high-ground to begin excavating a nest. They travel at night or early after sunrise seeking soft-sandy soil to deposit eggs. 8-16 eggs will incubate for about 2 months before hatching.

Map turtles may be seen basking through most months of the year. Keep an eye out for the common map turtle, one of Indiana's most common herps!

Classifieds/adoptions

Wanted: Veterinary Technology student looking for internship, volunteer, or part-time employment opportunity that will provide additional hands-on experience with pets (reptiles, exotic pets, large and/or small animals) while earning my degree. Please contact Amanda Weigand at 317-250-8532 or by email at: riflegiraffe3@yahoo.com if interested or to recommend possible leads. Thank you!

For Sale: Red blood pythons 125.00 each, Full striped Red blood pythons 200.00 each, Savu pythons 85.00 each, Biak green tree pythons 350.00 each, Grayband kingsnakes high red

100.00 each, Jungle carpet pythons high yellow 150.00, All babies are captive born, feeding and properly sexed, except baby green trees sold unsexed. contact Mike Wood - 574 269 3441 twobears@embarqmail.com

For Sale: c.b. Brazilian rainbow boas, parents are beautiful! \$100.00, c.b. Western hognose snakes, feeding well on frozen/thawed pinks. \$60.00 each (HHS members \$50.00), c.b. Argentine Boa Constrictors, 100.00 (HHS members 90.00)
Jim Horton (317)865-0464 email - stardali84@hotmail.com

EVENTS

September 15, 2010 – HHS Meeting, Guest Speakers, Jim Horton, Roger Carter, and Pat Hammond. Topic – Snake Road (Shawnee National Forest).

September 25, 2010 – 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. Other dates: 10/23, 11/13. For info: (317) 861-550, www.midwestreptile.com

October 20, 2010 – HHS Meeting, Guest Speaker – Daryl Karns, Hanover College

October 3, 2010 – Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm, Admission \$6.00 www.indianareptileexpo.com

October 9, 2010 – JDRF Walk, Military Park, downtown Indianapolis. To benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, www.jdrf.org/indiana. HHS will display herps.

October 9&10, 2010 – North American Reptile Breeders Conference and Trade Show. Tinley Park, Illinois. Saturday 10am – 5pm, Sunday 11am – 4pm, Adults \$15, kids under 13, \$8.00

October 22-24, 2010 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO. Hosted by the St. Louis herp society. Location: Drury Inn & Suites, near Forest Park (2111 Sulphur Ave, St. Louis, MO. 63139 Website - www.stlherpsociety.org

November 17, 2010 – HHS Meeting, Guest Speaker – Robert Brodman, St. Joseph College.



Alligator snapping turtle
Macrolemys temminckii



Common snapping turtle
Chelydra serpentina

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 Board of Directors for 2010

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www.hoosierherpsociety.org

United States Association of Reptile Keepers - www.usark.org

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The Monitor is printed courtesy
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Got Rodents?

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deliver to the monthly meetings. (317) 831-1219

Hoosier Herpetological Society

MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member

Renewal

Name _____ Date _____

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Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

Herpetological Interest(s)

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If this area is checked, it's time to renew your membership!