



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 23 Number 1

January 2012

Welcome Back Members!

NEW MEMBERS

J. Chris Liebenthal
Josh & Kascy May
Izzy Menchaca

RENEWALS

Brittany Davis
Sarah McQueen
Kyle Davison
Courtney Schuct
Jordon Sikosky

Election Results

Congratulations to the new HHS Officers for 2010

President – Jim Horton
Vice - President – Ed Ferrer
Secretary – Holly Carter (unopposed)
Treasurer – Dave Mitchell (unopposed)
Sergeant At Arms – Will Brown

Happy New Year!

In this being our first issue of the year for the Monitor, I thought we could start something new. A new feature is *The First Time I...* It might involve just about anything that you may have encountered in your lifetime while herping or keeping herps.

I'm hoping that this will be an interactive feature for our members to enjoy. I'll start the first one and we can see what your first time of *anything* in herping might be.

January HHS Meeting
Wednesday January 18th 7:30 p.m.
Guest Speaker, Tim Cole, Austin, Texas
Topic: "Snake Wrangling in Texas"
Butler University, room #150 new wing of the Pharmacy Building

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to welcome Tim Cole as January's guest speaker. Tim is the owner of the Austin Reptile Service and has been keeping reptiles for over four decades and has professional experience working with zoos and scientific field studies. He also removes and relocates wild reptiles from private and business properties. He is the founding member of the Austin Herpetological Society and has sat on boards of other herp' societies. He teaches snake identification and awareness programs for Animal Control Officers, City Utility Departments, State agencies, as well as scout and school groups. He has achieved the level of State Advanced Certified Animal Control Officer and has held a Texas Parks and Wildlife rehabilitation permit. He has also provided reptiles and serves as a technical adviser for various movies and television programs featuring exotic animals.

Tim will discuss his various experiences and how he maintains his buildings that house snakes and turtles. Features such as photo cell lighting, automatic misting systems, and safety and security procedures for keeping venomous snakes and large constrictors will be discussed. See you there for this interesting and informative meeting.

Lizard conservation groups in partnership with Partners in Amphibians and Reptile Conservation (PARC) have designated 2012 as the Year of the Lizard!

In the Chinese calendar, 2012 is the Year of the Dragon. For some people, when thinking of a dragon this conjures an image of a fictional, scaly, lizard-like creature. Some true lizards have "dragon" in their names. These include the water dragons and Central Bearded Dragon of Australia, and the Komodo Dragons of Indonesia. So in one sense, some dragons are lizards. However, these mythological dragons also often are depicted to breathe fire and have bat-like wings. A common theme among both dragons and lizards is that they are revered in many cultures, and are symbolic of power and wisdom. It is this reverence that we aim to promote during 2012, along with raising awareness of the conservation challenges that these unique animals are facing.

A little Indiana lizard trivia

How many lizards are found in Indiana? Answers can be found in this newsletter.



For more information go to: www.yearofthelizard.org

The first time I ... (had baby snakes)

By Jim Horton

Had baby snakes was when I was about 13 years old. Living home with mom and dad wasn't the best situation for keeping herps. They hadn't warmed up to the idea of their kid keeping creepy critters in the house. But they were pretty considerate to my wants and needs when it came to my interests. They agreed to let me keep them in the garage.

I had kept an adult garter snake in the garage for the summer. I had found out the hard way that it was a female and she had been gravid. One day I was peering into the ten-gallon tank and everything was fine. The next day I looked in to see dozens of tiny wriggling snake-like creatures. I had never seen anything like this in person before. Upon closer examination, they were tiny newborn garter snakes - 36 of them.

I had a tough time trying to feed the youngsters. Finding small earthworms was easily enough but when I put several inside the tank, I found that there was a lot of tug-o-war going on with the neonates. I had to try and separate them while feeding.

I soon realized that it was time to let nature take its course and I released them where I found the mother. This was definitely an interesting learning experience for me as an adolescent.

President's Message

Jim Horton

Welcome to the New Year and another great year to come for the Hoosier Herpetological Society. I'd like to thank all of our members for their continued support over the last year. We hope you will be on-board with us in the years to come!

Congratulations to the newly elected HHS Board! I hope to work with you in growing this organization and to help with conservation and educational issues. I'm very proud to be President of this fine organization and I'll do my best in the coming months to tackle any issues and concerns that we may face.

I would like to give thanks everyone who attends the monthly Board meetings. Without your continued commitment in decision making, newsletter prep/finishing, the HHS would not be what it is today!

While I'm mentioning Board Meetings, I would like to encourage any HHS member who might want to attend our monthly Board Meetings to do so. Any and all current members are welcome and your contributions or suggestions will be welcome! If you are interested in how the club runs, thinking about a position within the Board, or just want to attend, you are welcome anytime. We meet at Butler University's Gallahue Hall downstairs in the break room every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

Thank you to all of our members who attend the monthly meetings and other events throughout the year!

A few others deserve a big THANK YOU. Ed Ferrer for his fantastic work with our monthly guest speakers and recruiting members, Holly Carter for all of her work with the newsletter mailing, Angela Thomas for acquiring merchandise and holding the monthly raffle, Dave Mitchell for his great work with our funds, membership and other club functions, Barbara Filtri for the beautiful HHS website! There are many others who have gone the extra mile to help at club functions, outings, the website message board, the HHS table at the Midwest Reptile Show, library exhibits, articles for the newsletter, and the anything else that I may have failed to mention.

A new feature for this year in the Monitor is "*The First Time I...*" It is a place for members to become active in the newsletter by writing a few words about your first time with any herp-related subject. Also, a *Rescue of the Month* will be added as well. I'm working on a "*kids corner*" section that would keep our younger audience interested as well.

Alligator Snapping Turtles in Indiana?

by Ed Ferrer

The alligator snapping turtle, *Macrolemys temminckii*, has been a part of Indiana lore for many years. Back in ancient geologic history they were much more widespread (including Europe) than today. In fact, another species of alligator snapping turtle (*Macrolemys scmidti*) lived as far north as South Dakota about 26 million years ago.

The alligator snapping turtle is the largest fresh water turtle in the world. Different books list the record weight of captive specimens from 219 to over 300 pounds. They get their common name from heavily keeled ridges on their carapace (shell) that resembles the large scutes on the back of an alligator. They have a long tail and a massive head featuring a strongly hooked beak that packs a very powerful bite. Except for females making their nests and laying eggs, these turtles rarely leave the water. For being such an aquatic turtle, they are not very good swimmers. Instead they are most often found slowly walking along the bottom of slow moving rivers and streams throughout the Mississippi River drainage range. These sedentary turtles have developed a unique way of luring fish. The alligator snapping turtle pumps blood into its tongue giving it a pinkish color and then wiggles it imitating a worm as a lure as it opens its mouth wide while waiting motionless looking very much like a rock or submerged log as its camouflage. When fish approach to investigate this possible meal the powerful jaws slam shut and the fish becomes the turtle's dinner. When not used as a lure, the tongue is relatively inconspicuous and whitish in color as the blood is drained from it and it lies on the floor of the mouth. Their powerful jaws allow it to prey on anything that it can catch. This includes mussels, other smaller turtles, and even birds such as ducks and raccoons and other mammals that wander into or near the water. They have a keen sense of smell that probably makes it an effective scavenger. One turtle was even trained to find human corpses in the waterways of Indiana. It was released with a wire leash into the water close to where the person disappeared and it was followed by observers as it picks up the scent of the victim. It also feeds on vegetable matter, particularly fruits and acorns that fall into the water from over hanging trees at the waters edge. There is some evidence that these turtles are territorial as established turtles may actively resent the presence of smaller turtles into their territory. Since they have potentially a long life span they may need to move occasionally to get a better food supply. Captive zoo specimens have lived as long as 60 years and their life expectancy could be as long as 100 years.

The mating period of these turtles begins in February and lasts until April. During this time several males will gather hoping to mate with a female. These males often act aggressively in an attempt to drive their rivals away. The winning male will sniff the female's body carefully and then move down the side of her body toward her cloaca and mounts her under water. He grips her with his claws, anchoring slightly to one side of her body then moves his tail underneath her tail that allows his sperm to be introduced into her body. The act of copulation can last between five to 25 minutes.

When the female is ready to lay her eggs, she hauls herself onto land and digs a nesting chamber with her hind feet. She digs a pit into which she can lower most of her body. She then creates a smaller hole beneath into which she deposits her eggs. The eggs are hard shelled and nearly spherical in shape. It takes about 100 days for the eggs to hatch if the nest is not raided by predators such as raccoons. The carapace of hatchlings are about 1.8 inches in length. Once hatchlings enter the water they could fall prey to other larger turtles, alligators and fish such as gars.

Even though these turtles do not bask in the sun as many other turtles do they regularly spend time in very shallow water. This is suggested by the heavy growth of green algae present on the backs of many larger individuals. Relatively intense sunlight on the backs of these large individuals apparently triggers the development of plant growth on their backs. This adds to their camouflage as they lay in wait for prey. Because

of this plant growth on the older individuals, they are often referred to as "mossbacks" by people in the Deep South.

So is it possible that these awesome Chelonian predators actually exists today in Indiana? Let's look at the records of documented sightings. Records of these turtles in Indiana go back more than 100 years. Large alligator snapping turtles were taken in the lower Wabash at Mount Carmel and Grayville in the late nineteenth century. There is also a record of a carapace of one that had been killed at Lake Hovey about 1935. Other large turtles matching the description of alligator snappers were said to have been taken at the lake.

Perhaps the most famous of all these giant turtles was the celebrated "Beast of Busco" or "Oscar" as it became known by the local residents of the town of Churubusco. It was originally spotted by a farmer in the summer of 1948 in Fulk's Lake. It reappeared in March of 1949 and some towns people tried to corral the "beast" in a small area of the lake. They constructed a stockade using stakes trying to contain the giant reptile but it unfortunately broke out of the enclosure. Those who observed the animal said it was the size of a dinner table and estimated the weight to be about 500 pounds. A heavy growth of algae was seen on its shell. A film of the event was taken at that time but has since been lost. More than 200 witnesses saw the turtle try to seize a duck that was used as a lure to try to catch the "beast". It was then decided to drain the lake to finally catch the "Beast of Busco" but the attempt was called off as two men were nearly trapped in the treacherous mud that coats the bottom of the lake. After that the turtle was left alone. However, the story has been immortalized as part of the town's history and an annual turtle festival is held in June in honor of this famous legend. However, I seriously doubt that the turtle in question was an alligator snapping turtle. I have seen large fish and snapping turtles emerge from the water and they always look much larger than they actually are. I consider the "Beast of Busco" to be a misidentified common snapping turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*. Also, the town of Churubusco is located northwest of Ft. Wayne which is way north of where the alligator snappers are supposed to inhabit and there doesn't appear to be any likely streams or waterways that lead from the Mississippi drainage system that could end at Fulk's Lake. However, it still remains a part of the lore from that area and it still allows for a celebration and a chance for a community to have a festival and share in some fun.

However the most recent documented sighting was in early March in 1991! An adult female alligator snapping turtle was taken on a mudflat near the White River west of Martinsville. The animal was examined by M. J. Lodato and showed no signs of having been kept in captivity. It died after a few weeks and its carapace was preserved at the Evansville Zoo. Most field guides that I have seen do not include Indiana to be within the range of the alligator snapping turtle. However, the part of the White River as it approaches the Ohio River in the extreme Southwestern corner of Indiana along the border of Kentucky does have suitable habitat for this awesome turtle. So maybe there is still a very small relic population in our state. But it will probably end up just as a legend like the Loch Ness monster or the "abominable snowman".

References:

Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana, Sherman A. Minton, Jr.

Encyclopedia of North American Reptiles and Amphibians, Chris Mattison

Peterson Field Guide, Reptiles and Amphibians Eastern/Central North America, Roger Conant & Joseph T. Collins

National Audubon Society Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians North America

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

The Harding Poorman Group



TREASURER'S REPORT

Income:

Dues:	1031.00
Shows:	365.00
Misc. donations	277.00
Sales	1842.00
Misc.	27.00
Total	3542.00

Expenses:

Newsletter	429.50
Stationary:	157.36
Mail:	451.70
Food:	322.80
Speakers	250.00
mdse.	1098.68
donations	140.00
Insurance	820.00
Website	107.40
Misc.	136.00
Total:	3913.44

Checking balance: 1174.15

Savings balance: 4709.57

I want to thank all the members for their hard work raising funds for our club. All those who paid their dues, worked the reptile shows, helped out at the fairgrounds, and so much more.

I also want to send a huge thank you to Jim Horton for all his valuable time spent composing and printing the newsletter! I don't know what we'd do without his extraordinary efforts. Thank you, Thank you Jim!

I want to give Ed Ferrer many thanks as well, for arranging speakers throughout the year. His efforts are greatly appreciated.

Some speakers did not accept a fee, which helped. I want to thank Angela Thomas for her taking care of the monthly "small donations" fund raiser.

Our income was down quite a bit because of state cut backs but we had increased membership and sales so it almost evened out. Kudos to Barbara Filtri for her setting up and managing the website. She did an excellent artistic job on our latest T-shirts.

Respectfully submitted by Dave Mitchell 1/5/12

www.hoosierherpsoc.org



Western Legless "glass" lizard

Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus

Photo – Google Images

Herpetology Match Game

1. Riparian
 2. Lentic
 3. Glottis
 4. Ichthyophiidae
 5. Thanatosis
 6. Dermochelyidae
 7. Teiidae
 8. Chromatophore
 9. Ophiophagy
 10. Amplecant
- A. Whiptails, tegus and allies.
 - B. The act of playing dead.
 - C. Leatherback turtle family.
 - D. The eating of snakes.
 - E. Inhabiting or relating to still waters.
 - F. Amphibians that are engaged in *amplexus*.
 - G. The opening of the *pharynx* to the *trachea*.
 - H. Pigment cell of the skin.
 - I. To inhabit the bank of a river or lake.
 - J. Legless amphibians, the *Caecilians*.

Answers on bottom of page.

EVENTS

January 18, 2012 – HHS General Meeting, Guest Speaker Tim Cole, (Austin Reptile Service), Austin, Texas
Topic: "Snake Wrangling in Texas"

February 6, 2012 – Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm, \$6.00 admission
Other shows – March 6, April 3 www.indianareptileexpo.com

February 15, 2012 – HHS General Meeting, Topic - TBA

January 8, 2012 - 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 shows, Feb. 26, April 15

Got Rodents?

Hoosier Mouse Supply can take your orders for rodents and they will deliver to the monthly meetings. (317) 831-1219

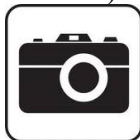
Match game answers 1.I, 2.E, 3.G, 4.J, 5.B, 6.C, 7.A, 8.H, 9.D, 10.F.

Lizard Trivia – How many lizards are found in Indiana? Answer – **seven**

- 1.Fence lizard
- 2.Six-lined-racerunner,
- 3.Five-lined skink,
- 4.Broadhead skink,
- 5.Ground skink,
- 6.Legless lizard
7. Italian wall lizard (Invasive species not native to Indiana – found near the Falls of the Ohio State Park.)

2012 HHS photo contest (Feb. 15)

Entry fee is one dollar per print. Enter as many times as you like. Entries must pertain to herpetology. Judging will be from your peers (the audience). Cash prizes to be announced!



Adult Categories: *Captive Herps* and *Herps in the Field*

Kid's category: Kids ages 5-17 are encouraged to participate in this special category.

We will also feature video clips of herps and herping after the contest.

KNIVES AND HERP ART (Part 13)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This folding knife is seven inches long fully extended and three and seven-eighths inches closed. On the handle is the image of an alligator etched into the plastic and the handle is a ivory-like color. This was manufactured by Schrade Cutlery of Ellenville, New York. On the blade you can see engraved "SCHRADE SCRIMSHAW" and "SCHRADE U.S.A. SC503". The SC503 is the model number with the alligator on it. The following excerpt was in the literature that was in the box with the knife: "Our knife handles are made of Schrade Staglon®. This special material is chip-proof, flame-retardant and virtually indestructible, giving you a comfortable sure grip for the life of the knife. Schrade knives are made with one of two different types of blade steel: HIGH CARBON TOOL STEEL. Chosen for its strength and ability to take and hold an edge." "SCHRADE+ STEEL. A specially developed, super-hard blade steel with unsurpassed, edge holding ability. Blades are resistant to rust, stain and corrosion." This blade is razor sharp.



HHS Selling Books

The Hoosier Herpetological Society has a wide variety of brand new herp-related books for sale to our membership. Sales from these items will fund the HHS.

See the selection at the Midwest Reptile Shows and (or) General Meetings at Butler University. Books are sold below retail pricing.

Classifieds

For Adoption: 1.0 African side neck turtle 1.0 Eastern painted turtle 1.0 Red eared slider All were surrenders from other people and seem to be healthy. Each come with ten-gallon aquariums. Contact Dave Mitchell at 317-570-9643 or turtlelovin@Att.net

For Sale: c.b. October 2011 Kenyan sand boas - \$25.00 (\$20.00 HHS members). C.b. 2.0 2010 Indian sand boas \$70.00 each. C.b. 1.0 Argentine Boa, approx. 2-foot, \$140.00 Contact Jim Horton (317) 865-0464 or stardali84@hotmail.com

For sale: Tarantulas. 2- female Indian ornamentals (P. Regalis) 4- inches 40.00 each, 2- female fringed ornamentals (P. Ornata) 5- inches 50.00 each, 3- female Brazilian white knees (A. Genicliata) 4- inch 50.00 each.

Snakes : Baby Biak Green tree pythons 350.00 each born 08/08/11, 1 pair of checker board black and white cal kings 100.00 for the pair born 08/20/2010

All animals are captive born by me, snakes feeding on frozen thawed, tarantulas feeding on live crickets. All are healthy, correctly sexed, come with a guarantee and all records. Will deliver to the Midwest Reptile show.

Mike Wood - 574-269-3441 twobears@embarqmail.com



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, Pharmacy Building, Room #150. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**

*******Note: Meetings are currently held at the Pharmacy building, room # 150*******

Your HHS Board of Directors for 2012

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	Cell 443-4845 stardali84@hotmail.com
VICE-PRESIDENT	Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	Cell - 727-7553 pythonpals1@msn.com
SECRETARY	Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP	Dave Mitchell	(317) 570-9643	turtlelovin@att.net
SERGEANT AT ARMS	Will Brown		wrbrown15@aol.com

Appointees for 2012

EDITOR	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	Stardali84@hotmail.com
PROGRAM DIRECTOR	Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	pythonpals1@msn.com
WAYS AND MEANS	Angela Thomas	(317) 882-5266	necali@comcast.net
WEBSITE COORDINATOR	Barbara Filtri		barbara.filtri@hughes.net

Hoosier Herpetological Society

MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member

Renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

Corresponding Membership \$12.00

Individual/Family Membership \$15.00

Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

Herpetological Interest(s)

Hoosier Herpetological Society
P.O. Box 40544
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240-0544

Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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