



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 22 Number 9

September 2011

President's Message

Jim Horton

Our HHS canoe/kayak trip last month was a big hit . We had a great time and found some really interesting things. Read about it inside!

An extra special **THANK YOU** goes to **Phil Goss of Zoo Med Labs!** Phil donated a great number of herp-related Zoo Med products to the HHS. We now have some wonderful fundraising items!

I'd like to thank Todd Pierson for another great original article for this issue of the Monitor. There is something about reading about a *new find* in the field that is exciting!

This month we have a presentation about salamander care and Axolotl research. Next month you'll see a talk on herping the southwest by *Yours Truly*.

The HHS is getting involved with Marion County libraries. On select months at different branches, the HHS will have an exhibit in the lobby display cases. This is a great way to showcase the HHS, educate the library patrons, and hopefully bring in new membership as well. We hope this may also help to get a few live animal exhibits. Keep your fingers crossed.

Our new HHS shirts are ready for purchase. You can get yours at the next meeting or at our booth during the Midwest Reptile Show October 16. Prices are 15.00 and up for larger sizes. Support your HHS by wearing a new shirt!

Welcome Back Members!

Wanda Horner

Juan Horner

Lia and Damon Hicks

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

The Great Plethodontid Gap

Text and photos - Todd Pierson

Sandwiched between the coasts, stuck between the Appalachians and the Rockies, are America's Great Plains. Our "amber waves of grain". While this region of the world is interesting for some fauna, it is barren of my favorite—the Plethodontids. The East has *Plethodon*, *Desmognathus*, *Eurycea* and more, and the West has *Aneides*, *Batrachoseps*, *Ensatina*, etc. But in the flat center of our country (broken, really, only by the Ozark and Ouachita interior highlands) lies a wasteland for lungless salamanders.

With two key exceptions.

As I planned my first trip to the American Southwest, images of rattlesnakes filled my mind. Klaubs, tigers, and twin-spots dominated my mind. However, I couldn't totally betray my roots, and I felt the necessity to search for New Mexico's two Plethodontids. Ancient relicts of more temperate times, one *Aneides* and one *Plethodon* sit at the top of high-elevation mountains in New Mexico, separated from their relatives hundreds and hundreds of miles of desert, grassland, and prairie.

Having arrived in the Sacramento Mountains, located in southcentral New Mexico, after a long two days of driving from Indianapolis, my buddies and I had a few honey-holes to search for the endemic *Aneides*. Before we got to them, we stopped for a break at a nice, north-facing forested hillside. I walked up out of a small meadow,

flipped a log, and saw my first *Aneides hardii* sitting below. We continued searching and found about a dozen more in as many minutes. One down, one to go.

Unfortunately, on my way into the Southwest, the Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico—the only home to *Plethodon neomexicanus*—were closed due to fire damage. But fortunately, during my stay in Arizona, parts of them reopened. So in my last day of herping of a three week trip, with a memory card full of photographs of *willardi*, *lepidus*, *pricei*, and more, I sought my final target of the trip.

On the advice of a friend, I hiked up a grassy, cow-grazed meadow, looking for a particular side canyon. Much of the area was burnt, and even the intact areas were extremely dry. The undersides of logs held no moisture, and I began to lose hope. It didn't help that I missed the turn for the side canyon on my way in, hiking an extra two or three miles past it. Defeated, we began our hike back to the car. Less than a mile before we were back, I spotted the subcanyon we were directed to. I sprinted over and (having forgotten my potato rake in the car), dug into the biggest, juiciest decomposing log I could find. A wormy creature popped out from between the chunks of wood. There was my *Plethodon*!

For a Plethodontid-junkie, it doesn't get much better.



Aneides hardii



Plethodon neomexicanus

HHS Canoe/kayak trip 2011

Photos and text - Jim Horton



Hoosier Herpetological Society members enjoyed a float trip down the Driftwood River August 21! We had overcast weather for a short time in between sunlight so that made for a really pleasant day. We had 11 HHS members show up and everyone rented or brought their own kayaks (no canoes this time).



Just after launching, Pat found several Alligator Gar *Atractosteus spatula* across the river just about a foot under water. As the rest of us came up to him, we saw about 10 to 12 more of them. It was really interesting and many of us had not seen a gar in the wild.

Peter Baird spotted a bald eagle that flew in and perched just as we had passed a large dead tree. We all stopped in our tracks and took pics and gazed at the majestic beast!



Another discovery for many of us was a juvenile smooth soft shell turtle (*Apalone mutica*). Amy Baird caught it with a net and we were able to get some good shots of it.



Turtles were very common throughout our trip. We counted 6 species and about 75 total turtles. Water snakes (*Nerodia*) also could easily be spotted along the log jams and overhanging trees.

HHS Meeting: Wednesday Sept. 21st 7:30 p.m.
Guest Speaker: Dr. Ellen Chernoff, Prof. Biology at IUPUI
Topic: Salamander Husbandry/Axolotl Regeneration Research
Butler University, Pharmacy Building Room #150

Our guest speaker for our September HHS meeting will be Dr. Ellen Chernoff, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Biology at I.U.P.U.I. Dr. Chernoff received her BA and Ph.D. degrees at The University of Chicago. After several post doctoral positions, she has been a professor of biology at IUPUI since 1986. For the last 20 years she has concentrated on amphibian spinal cord and limb regeneration. She will discuss basic salamander husbandry (Tiger salamanders are her favorite tetrapods.) and then she will describe her research of spinal cord and limb regeneration with axolotls. Axolotls are unique salamanders that originated in two lakes from central Mexico that remain in their larval form all their lives. Due to pollution and predatory fish they were on the brink of extinction in the wild. Fortunately due to their popularity as a pet and its scientific importance as a laboratory research animal they have been bred in captivity. Their importance as a lab animal is the fact that they can re-grow lost body parts and can recover from sever injuries. Dr. Chernoff will share her findings of her lab research with this remarkable amphibian and the possible medical implications for the future. **Be sure to attend this interesting presentation!**



KNIVES AND HERP ART (Part 10)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This knife I bought in August at a flea market on the east side of Indianapolis. The box called it "Venom Knife" and shows one rattlesnake holding up a knife with another rattlesnake coiled around the handle. The handle of the knife is part of the body of a snake with a small rattlesnake coiled around the handle and there is snake skin pattern etched into the blade. The knife is thirteen and three-sixteenths inches long to the nose of the snake with the blade eight and one-eighth inches long. The blade has a sharp point but has no cutting edge, the steel is three sixty-fourths of an inch thick all the way through. The base has a large rattlesnake partly coiled up on a bed of human skulls and is ten and one-half inches long and stands four and one-quarter inches tall.



I don't know what kind of steel the blade is made from but the snakes are some sort of resin and were made in China.



There is a separate label that says "Add charm and delight to your home with this timeless keepsake. This premium collectible reminds us that imagination is limitless and dreams are forever. Leaving a vibrant reminder that life is what you make of it with the rich imaginative palette of our creative spirits.



This certifies that this poly resin figurine was individually hand painted and crafted by professional artists to present life like character. Limited edition of 5000 pieces." This was manufactured by DWK Corporation Home Décor & Accessories.

HHS Guest Speaker – August 2011 – Matt Most (Loyola University)

(Meeting notes from Jim Horton)

Mr. Most has been researching garter snakes for two years. In that time, he has found some interesting information.

His talk started with the definition of Herpetology and a few lessons in how to become a herpetologist.

Among his lists was: being active in a herp society, photography, field herping, and captive propagation. Matt had also made mention that there are currently no formal degrees in herpetology.

He also gave a short bio of Mr. Rob Carmichael, his mentor. Rob is a well-seasoned herpetologist. He was one of the first to breed bearded dragons in the U.S. His past work has involved Indigo snakes and Massasauga rattlesnakes.

Matt continued to get the main portion of the talk - Garters. His study was on a tract of 120 acres. Here he looked at their home ranges, micro-movement, movement interactions, and movement patterns. His work would typically last from March to December.

Drift fences, cover boards and meandering surveys were used in the study. Each captured snake was fitted with a pit tag. Hobo data loggers record air temps and light. These were placed throughout the study area. Ninety-one snakes were tagged and 49 were re-captured.

He found virtually no young. In fact, females were not breeding at all due to possible weather related patterns.

His largest subject was a **five-foot** female Eastern Garter snake which gave birth to 120 young. He watched that same snake constrict a muskrat!

His subjects weren't found in rodent tunnels but crayfish burrows. In fact he said that 80% of native Illinois snakes utilize crayfish burrows.

He found this species out earlier in the season before most other snakes. Some would be found basking in 60 (F) degree temps. While coiling, their body temperatures were recorded at 82 degrees (F).

Other facts:

During courtship, the female finds the strongest male of a *ball* of garters.

Garter snakes may have mild venom glands.

The five-foot specimen appeared to be a record!

EVENTS

September 21, 2011 – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker: Dr. Ellen Chernoff, Professor of Biology (IUPUI)
Topic – *Salamander Husbandry/Axolotl Regeneration Research*.

October 2, 2011 – Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm
www.indianareptileexpo.com

October 8&9, 2011 – North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC), Tinley Park, Ill.
Billed as one of the top reptile expos in the country with guest speakers and an auction. Sat. 10-5, Sun 11-4
Admission \$15.00 (kids under 13 \$8.00, kids under 5-free)

October 16, 2011 - 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. (317) 899-1599, www.midwestreptile.com

October 21-23, 2011 – 27th Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Minnesota. Banquet, speakers, auction, photography, vendors, videos, more! www.mnherpsoc.org

Classifieds

For sale: 1.1 c.b.2008 red blood pythons male is striped female is het for albino.
1.0 c.b. 2010 Albino red blood python. Group price 750.00 These were produced by Matt Turner, are healthy, eating frozen thawed.
Used Hovabator incubator with window in excellent condition for 20.00, Contact Mike Wood 574-269-3441
twobears@embarqmail.com



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

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Mark Your Calendars...

THE MINNESOTA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
presents the
27th Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium
October 21-23 2011
speakers • videos • photography • auction • banquet • vendors • more!

The event will be held at:
Best Western Kelly Inn
2705 Annapolis Ln N.
Plymouth, Minnesota, 55441
Phone: 763.553.1600

(discounted room rates, pet-friendly, and just a hop, skip, and jump from downtown Minneapolis)

www.mnherpsoc.org

Hoosier Herpetological Society
www.hoosierherpsoc.org

For Sale: HHS shirts featuring herps of Indiana - \$15.00 (Larger sizes \$18.00)

www.hoosierherpsoc.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.**

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

Your HHS Board of Directors for 2011

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Hoosier Herpetological Society

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Corresponding Membership \$12.00

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

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