



# 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 2

February 2016

## **H.H.S. MONTHLY MEETING** **Wednesday February 17th 7:00 p.m.** **Holliday Park Nature Center**

**Guest Speaker: Matt Most: U Mass & Loyola U. Chicago**  
**Topic: "Come On and Slither with Me,**  
**The Mechanics of Serpentine Locomotion"**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society welcomes Matt Most as this month's guest speaker. Matt has completed two separate Masters of Science degrees in the fields of Biomedical Engineering and Biology at the University of Massachusetts and Loyola University Chicago. During this course of study, Matt published several articles in the area of natural history and biomechanics of locomotion in reptiles. Matt has been able to expand his interests by collaborating with multiple colleagues and pharmaceutical companies to do work on both venom and the vertebrae column of cobras.

His talk will show how snakes are able to overcome the everyday obstacles of motion without limbs, and how some very special species of snakes have taken this feat one "step" further! If you ever wonder how and why snakes are able to move even on the most difficult surfaces, then this is the talk for you!

## **Welcome New Members!**

### **New Members**

Mike Wood  
Paul Gessner

### **Returning Members**

Dale L. Bolejack  
Nick Holtzclaw

# President's message

Jim Horton

I would like to thank Neill Jones for presenting *Herp of the Month* at the January meeting. Neil brought two of his favorites, the Mata Mata turtles (*Chelus fimbriatus*).

There are some good opportunities coming up for our members to get involved. Two field herping activities are the Salamander Outing at McCormick's Creek State Park (March 26) and Herpetology Weekend in Slade KY, (April 15/16). These are just a few of the club related functions coming up this spring. More to come in the coming months.

I've been in contact with some local organizations for our possible involvement in conservation issues. I hope to have a function coming up for our members to be a part of helping our native herps. I'll keep you posted on this possibility.

Another conservation-related Citizen Science opportunity is Frog Watch U.S.A. Frog Watch is a nationwide effort by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to monitor frogs and toads each year. Citizen Scientists can make a difference in amphibian conservation.

Find more information about your being a volunteer here in Indiana at: <https://www.aza.org/frogwatch/>

Our herp of the month presenter will be **Sammy Stark**. Sammy will bring his bearded dragon. Please have some great questions ready for him to answer.

## 2016 Photography Contest Results

This year we had over 50 entries!

Thanks to everyone who brought prints to showcase for the evening.

### Wild Category

**1<sup>st</sup> Place - Zane Libke**  
*Blue Rhino Iguana*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Jim Horton**  
*Rough Green Snake*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Jim Horton**  
*Chorus Frog*

### Captive Category

**1<sup>st</sup> Place – Zane Libke**  
*Green Trinket Snake*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Angela Thomas**  
*Timor Monitor*

**3<sup>rd</sup> place – Heather White**  
*Blue Tongue Skink*

### Kids Category

**1st Place**  
**Tyler Kenhead**  
*Bearded Dragon (close up)*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place**  
**Jackson Rhoad**  
*Bearded Dragon (on piano)*



## HHS members testify at State Capital

by Ed Ferrer

Last March a court ruling stripped the DNR of its permit system to regulate the ownership of any dangerous animals. That meant that anyone could legally purchase a tiger, lion, bear, primate among other possibly dangerous animals. It also meant that any venomous reptile or crocodilian could also be bought without restrictions. Our members overwhelmingly were concerned about the possible troubles that could arise without some oversight. This topic was discussed in several board meetings over the last few months. We became aware of an emergency committee meeting scheduled for Monday January 11th offering the public a chance to voice their opinion regarding Senate Bill 195 which would reinstate the former restrictions regarding venomous reptiles and crocodilians over five feet in length.

Jim organized a meeting at his house on January 9th to craft a statement of support for this bill as the HHS 'official stance on the topic. Mary Hylton, Roger Carter and I met with Jim and after three hours of discussion came up with an official statement. Jim then typed a copy complete with our club logo and mission statement to present to the meeting on Monday.

Our statement offered two additions to the bill.

(1.) We thought that crocodilians should require a permit at the time of purchase instead of waiting until they grow to five feet.

(2.) We also thought that neighbors did not need to be notified when someone decides to purchase a venomous reptile or crocodilian. (It only takes one bad neighbor to cause a problem. I have seen firsthand of at least two instances where this has happened.)

Roger and Holly Carter, Jim Horton and I traveled downtown to participate in the meeting. We found that finding a parking place to be very difficult. Jim and I ended up in the Indiana State Museum garage while the Carters found parking at the Marriott. At first we had to wait through a lengthy discussion of another bill Senate bill 109 concerning fenced hunting of deer and a couple of other game animals. It passed with a 8 to 1 vote.

When our bill 195 came up for comments only twelve people testified. Most were talking about larger animals like tigers and bears. Only four people talked about venomous reptiles and crocs. One rambling talk seemed to be against the permit system as it stands and one concerned that the wording didn't talk about breeding of venomous snakes only ownership.

Two our our members testified and fortunately we found that our first concern about neighbors blocking a purchase was already covered in an amendment that removed that requirement. We identified the HHS as concerned with the education about reptiles and amphibians and supported the conservation of all reptiles and amphibians. We suggested that crocodilians be permitted at purchase instead of waiting until they reach a length of five feet. The bill 195 passed the committee by a vote 9-0. After the meeting was ended, I gave a newsletter to each member and reminded them that our club would be glad to offer any input regarding further concerns about reptiles and amphibians. It is important that we keep a look out of any impending legislation concerning "herps".

### Neill Jones displays his Mata Mata Turtles at the January meeting



# HOLIDAY HERPING

Article and photos by Roger Carter

Christmas Eve, 2015, the weather was fairly nice. The sun was shining most of the day and the temperature got up to 45 degrees so Holly and I decided to go for a hike in the woods in southern Indiana. Hunting season was still on but we picked a spot where no one else was parked so we felt that it was safe. We still wore hunter orange just in case.

We came to a place where there was some old plywood on the ground. We turned over the plywood thinking that there might be a small chance that we could find something like an eastern garter snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*, but no one was home. Farther down the trail we heard one lonely frog calling. Probably hoping for one last “romantic encounter” before hibernation or maybe he was just practicing. We did see a hunter’s platform attached to a tree. There wasn’t any hunter waiting up there.



From the hunter’s platform we backtracked to another trail and examined some hollow logs without finding any animals. Eventually we did find some small boards and under those we found some redback salamanders, *Plethodon cinereus*.

At three different locations just off of the trail we found small boards and redback salamanders under some of them. We also found several of these wire mesh boxes that we heard researchers are somehow using to study the forest floor.



For the whole afternoon we found several of these little salamanders. Half of them had the red stripe and the other half were the darker ones with a stripe barely visible. Our last herps of 2015 and we called it a day late in the afternoon. We only saw two other hikers the whole day.





# "Snake Invasion" in Wells County

by Ed Ferrer

David Fox of the Gene Stratton Historical Site invited members of the Hoosier Herpetological Society to participate in a week end festival. The festival was named "Owl Oween" and focused on nocturnal animals and upcoming Halloween. Most members had already had plans for that week end but I served as the HHS representative for Friday evening Oct. 15th. The site is located about half way between Ft. Wayne and South Bend in Rome City, about three hours away from Indianapolis. When I arrived I found a beautiful area surrounding a huge lake. Since many snakes are either nocturnal or crepuscular(active during early morning or dusk) my snakes were a natural fit for the theme. I set up my eight snakes on a display table in one room and families would travel through my room into other rooms featuring other animals, skins and activities. During the evening I saw many people talking about a recent snake invasion in their area. There were a lot of varied accounts of this topic. (I remember when we used to play "telephone" we would have one person say something and then have it repeated to several others and then compare the original statement to the final sentence.) We always were amazed at how different the two statements were. You can imagine the different accounts that were shared with me during that evening with most of them mentioning large Burmese or reticulated pythons as the invaders and most were very frightened. I met Kathy Magana from the Soaring Hawk Raptor Rehab center who exhibited some of their owls and hawks in the evenings activities. I asked her to send me an accurate account of the "invasion". During the next week she sent me an article from the News-Sentinel that covered the story.

According to the article two neighbors found six adult ball pythons between September 25th to October 5th. The first was found on a culvert while one of the men were cutting grass. He quickly rushed back to the house and got a 22 rifle and shot it but the snake entered the culvert so the man set a fire inside and then got the dead snake out with a rake. Over the next few days he and his neighbor hunted for others and found one that had been killed by a vehicle on a road and four others that they promptly killed with some kind of gun. Because of the cold weather during that time period the cold-blooded snakes were very slow and were easily killed by the two "hunters".

Apparently some irresponsible person didn't want these snakes anymore and decided to dump them into the cold weather. Even if these two men had not found them these snakes would have died a cruel death pretty quickly due to the cold temperatures. Anyone who knows anything about snakes knows that ball pythons are probably one of the most docile and unaggressive of any species. If someone didn't want them they should have found a local organization to adopt them or find new homes for them. It is these short sighted, unthinking people who give "herpers" a bad rap and make it harder for the rest of us to enjoy our hobby.

## 2016 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**February 28 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](http://www.midwestreptile.com) Other dates: April 10, June 26

**February 17, 2016** – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker – Matt Most, U Mass & Loyola U. Chicago.  
Topic – “*Come On and Slither with Me, The Mechanics of Serpentine Locomotion*”.

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

**April 15-16, 2016** – Herpetology Weekend - Slade, Kentucky. A fun-filled weekend of Herpetological presentations, field hikes and free admission to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo.

**April 24, 2016** – ZgreenFest, Zionsville, IN 2-5pm, HHS will display live herps

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



## Your HHS Board of Directors for 2016

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*Machimosaurus* could have grown to more than 30 feet (almost ten meters) long.  
Illustration by Davide Bonadonna

### Monster-Size Marine Crocodile Discovered

[nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com)

The biggest sea-dwelling crocodile ever found has turned up in the Tunisian desert. The whopper of a prehistoric predator grew to over 30 feet long (nearly ten meters) and weighed three tons.

Paleontologists have dubbed the new species *Machimosaurus rex* and describe it Monday in the journal *Cretaceous Research*.

Although the recovered remains are fragmentary, enough remained in the 120-million-year-old rock to identify the reptile as the largest known member of a peculiar lineage of crocodiles that spent their lives almost entirely at sea.

“This is a neat new discovery from a part of the world that hasn’t been well-explored for fossils,” says University of Edinburgh paleontologist Stephen Brusatte, who was not involved with the new study.

Scientists are awaiting the discovery of a more complete skeleton to figure out exactly how large *Machimosaurus rex* was. But assuming that the new species had similar proportions as its close relatives, Fanti estimates that *Machimosaurus rex* stretched about 31 feet (9.6 meters) in length.

While not as large as some of its later, distant relatives that lived in freshwater, that makes *Machimosaurus rex* the biggest ocean-dwelling member of the crocodile family tree.

# Wildlife Conservation Society has announced that a team of scientists discovered a new species of chameleon in Tanzania.

sciencedaily.com January 27, 2016



The brown and green chameleon with scattered blue spots was found in four montane forest patches in the Udzungwa Mountains and Southern Highlands. The species, *Kinyongia msuyae*, is named for Charles A. Msuya, a pioneer of Tanzanian herpetology who collected the first known specimen attributable to this species and has spent most of his life studying Tanzania's reptiles and amphibians.

The chameleon is described in the journal *Acta Herpetologica* 10(2): 111-120, 2015. Authors of the study include: Michele Menegon of the Museo delle Scienze in Trento, Italy; Simon P. Loader of the University of Roehampton in London; Tim Davenport and Sophy Machaga of WCS; Kim M. Howell of the University of Dar es Salaam; Colin R. Tilbury of South African National Biodiversity Institute; and Krystal A. Tolley University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

The authors say the discovery sheds more light on a region called the Makambako Gap, a supposed zoological barrier between the distinct faunas of the Southern Highlands and Eastern Arc Mountains that Davenport and WCS have long argued doesn't exist. Evidence from this new species points to even closer biological affinities between the Udzungwa and the Livingstone Mountains of the Southern Highlands.

Tanzania's Southern Highlands has emerged as a hotbed of new discoveries in recent years. In 2003, WCS discovered the kipunji -- a species of primate that turned out to be an entirely new genus -- a first for Africa since 1923. And in 2012, WCS found Matilda's horned viper, a new variety of snake.

"Along with our discoveries of the Kipunji, Matilda's horned viper and other reptiles and frogs, this new chameleon really seals the deal as regards the boundary of the Eastern Arcs," said Tim Davenport, Director of WCS's Tanzania Program and co-discoverer of the new chameleon. "It is very clear now that the so-called Makambako Gap doesn't exist zoologically, and that the Southern Highlands is every bit as biodiverse and endemic-rich as all other Eastern Arc Mountains. With its own unique fauna and flora the region thus warrants as much protection as we can possibly afford it."

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

\_\_\_\_ **New Member**

\_\_\_\_ **Renewal**

\_\_\_\_ **Name**

\_\_\_\_ **Date**

\_\_\_\_ **Address**

\_\_\_\_ **City**

\_\_\_\_ **State**

\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code**

\_\_\_\_ **Phone**

\_\_\_\_ **Email Address**

\_\_\_\_ **Individual/Family Membership \$20.00**

\_\_\_\_ **Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more**

\_\_\_\_ **Herpetological Interest(s)**

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Dated Material Enclosed

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