



# 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 24 Number 1

January 2013

## New meeting time and venue for 2013

Starting in January of 2013, the HHS meetings will be held at the *Holliday park nature center* at a new time – 7:00-9:00 PM

*Welcome back members!*

### *RENEWALS*

Jeremy and Courtney (Schuck) McIntire  
Dale Schaentrup (Sustaining membership)  
John Olson (Sustaining membership)  
Anita Carter (Sustaining membership)

### *NEW MEMBERS*

Nick Lomardo  
Anndrea Hatcher, DVM  
Connor Davis

[www.hoosierherpsoc.org](http://www.hoosierherpsoc.org)

# Herp of the Month

## Common Snapping Turtle

*Chelydra serpentina*

by Ed Ferrer

The common snapping turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*, is a large aquatic species that can be found throughout Indiana. This turtle can be found in virtually any type of standing or flowing water. It prefers water bodies that offers a muddy or sandy bottom and plenty of vegetation in which it can hide. Key identifiable features are a large, powerful head, jaw with a hooked beak, and eyes located near the snout and a long tail almost as long as its carapace. It is a large turtle with a carapace of an adult reaching up to 24 inches in length and weighing normally between 10-35 pounds. The largest wild caught specimen was reported to weigh 75 pounds and a fattened captive individual reached 86 pounds. As its name implies, it is a voracious predator with powerful jaws that can inflict a painful bite. Young hatchlings eat insects, snails, earthworms and other annelids, small fish, tadpoles and frogs, crayfish and a variety of aquatic plants. As they mature their diet will include more mammals and birds and they will take carrion. Muskrats and ducks are often seized and held under water until they drown before they are eaten. However young snapper hatchlings often fall prey to large fish and wading birds such as herons.



Photo – Jim Horton

There are many stories of snapping turtles breaking fingers with their bites but they are normally inoffensive when under water, pulling their heads in even when stepped on. However, on land they react aggressively when confronted. A common defense maneuver is to stand with its hindquarters elevated and jaws open wide and lunge forward toward their adversary. Therefore handling snappers is often a difficult situation. While most turtles can be handled safely by holding them by the sides of their carapace, the snapper can reach around with its long neck and bite that area. If one needs to pick up a snapper, the safest way is to grab it from the upper and lower ends of the carapace while

being careful to hold it away from the body. Even though snappers are known to inhabit any body of water throughout Indiana, estimating numbers of these turtles is difficult because they are not inclined to enter baited traps like other turtles. Also, snappers hardly ever bask on land, instead float just below the surface with only their eyes above the surface of the water. Since it is relatively shy, spending long periods of time concealed in mud or vegetation, it is difficult to obtain accurate numbers.

The mating period of snapping turtles varies depending on temperatures within their range. Scientists believe that females emit a pheromone from a gland in their cloaca that has a distinct musk-like odor. Courtship is aggressive as males pursue females, snapping at their heads and legs to slow her down. If she accepts his advances, the male will move around to the back of her body and mount her, holding on with its feet. The actual mating act lasts about ten minutes. Nesting begins in late May and June. These nests are usually dug in open areas often far from the water. Therefore the nests are often vulnerable to predators such as skunks and raccoons.

Often what happens is that the eggs at the top of the nests are destroyed and the eggs at the bottom of the nest survive and hatch.



Photo – Jim Horton

Snapping turtle meat is often eaten in soup or as fried turtle and the eggs are sometimes eaten as well. A hunting or fishing license is required to take turtles in Indiana and there is no closed season or bag limit. I have only observed snapping turtles on four occasions. Once while traveling early to school I saw a snapper traveling north across Edgewood Avenue. I stopped, put on my flasher lights and picked it up and put it on the other side of the road where it was headed. (Too many turtles are

killed on the roads by cars.) One Easter morning as I was ready to leave for church I saw a medium size snapper approaching my front porch. It was all caked in mud and I figured that it must have been disturbed from its hibernation by some excavation that was occurring in the field across from my house. I carefully put it in a sturdy box and took it to one of the two connected retention ponds in our addition. When I was on a field trip during the herpetology weekend in Kentucky my group found a

huge snapper while seining a small pond and then later on the same day we found a hatchling along a trail. This legendary turtle is a great find in any hike or field trip.

**References:** Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana, Sherman A. Minton; Encyclopedia of North American Reptiles and Amphibians, Chris Mattison; and Reptiles and Amphibians Eastern/Central North America, Roger Conant/Joseph Collins

## 2013 HHS Photography Contest

**Two adult categories: *Wild and Captive***  
***Kids Category: kids ages 5-16***



**All entries must be 8x10 formats. (Framed work is a nice touch but not necessary)**

**Entry fees are \$1.00 per entry.**

**Entries must pertain to herpetology.**

**Enter as many times as you wish.**

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

### **Prizes:**

Adult winners in each category

1<sup>st</sup> place \$30.00, 2<sup>nd</sup> place \$20.00, 3<sup>rd</sup> place free (1 year HHS membership).

*Kids category*

1<sup>st</sup> place \$15.00, 2<sup>nd</sup> place 10.00, 3<sup>rd</sup> place \$5.00

Judging will be from HHS members. We will utilize colored *chips* for the voting.

Afterwards members are welcome to show short video clips of herping in the field. No prizes for this presentation.

*President's message*

Jim Horton

Welcome to a new year HHS members!

**2013 - Year of the Snake**

I'd like to start off with some recognition of this fine group of folks.

I can't stress enough the fact that we have such an amazing group of people in our membership! I'm so glad to see each of you at our monthly meetings and other events. A successful organization wouldn't work without the kindness and loyalty that we have in the HHS. I'd like to thank all of our members and Board members who have gone that extra mile in the past year. It is **you** who are keeping us going strong year after year!

I'd like to welcome any new or recent members to the HHS. Feel free to mingle with others at the meetings. We won't bite – HA! Thanks to each one of you who continue to renew your membership. A big **thank you** to those who donate with a Sustaining membership!

We have many great guest speakers and activities lined up already. So get ready for some herp'n fun this season.

The HHS has an exciting new partnership with **Holiday Park**. We will now be meeting at the nature center in the park. Our new meeting time has changed as well. **7:00pm to 9:00pm** will be our new meeting time regulations.

This new partnership will offer many opportunities to us as an organization. Parking will be ample, we have a meeting room waiting for us, and the A/V will be set up and ready for our meetings. I feel we belong and will fit well in a nature center. There are also live herps in the nature center! That's a perk in itself.

**Just a reminder:**

Holiday Park entrance gates close automatically when it gets dark. It will be getting dark around 6:45 so we need to remind our members that if they drive their car up to the gates they **will** open. Also, we need to remind our members that we need to park behind the hill or knoll. Parking is allowed closer to the center on the other side of the knoll only if the vehicle has a handicap sticker. Park rangers do patrol the lot and will tow vehicles that are parked in the wrong lot.

Don't forget to be ready for the photo contest at the next meeting January 16. All members are welcome to enter this prize winning contest.

**KNIVES AND HERP ART (Part 24)**

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This knife is just identified as a hunting knife. It is stainless steel made in China. The word "DEFENDER" is etched into the blade near the handle. This knife is thirteen and one/quarter inches long with the blade seven and three/quarters inches long and is razor sharp. Most of the handle is a snake with the head lifted up. The snake image is a dark silver color with intermittent gold segments on the snake's ventral surface. This is a nice knife that is comfortable in my hand.



**2013 Treasurers Report**

**Expenses:**

Newsletter	300.00
Stationary:	295.77
Mail:	330.97
Food:	80.90
Speakers	550.00
mdse.	1307.48
donations	00.00
Website	107.40
Misc.	148.00
Insurance	855.88
Total	3976.40

**Income:**

Dues:	1275.00
Shows:	500.00
Misc. donations	489.00
Sales	1674.00
Misc.	44.00
Total	3982.00

Checking balance: 983.03  
Savings balance: 4711.99

I want to thank all the members for their hard work raising funds for our club including 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 1/5/13

### 2013 EVENTS

- Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm, \$6.00 admission  
[www.indianareptileexpo.com](http://www.indianareptileexpo.com)

**January 20, 2013** - 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: Feb. 24, April 7, June 2

**April 24, 2013** – Z Green Fest, Green festival in Zionsville, IN (HHS will have a live herp display).

**May 11-12, 2013** – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Resort Park, Slade, KY. A weekend filled with field trips, presentations, and free admission to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo.

**July 31-August 3** - International Herpetological Symposium will be held in New Orleans, LA

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 7:00 p.m. at Holliday Park Nature Center. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**

## Reptile Invasion at Eagle Branch Library



Pat Hammond and Jim Horton have been setting up herp related displays at some Indianapolis libraries during the past year. These displays have improved interest in reptiles and amphibians and probably led to more books being checked out to learn more about these animals.

salamanders and answered questions of the visitors during the three hour display.



Mary Hylton, head librarian at the Eagle branch library, (also a H.H.S. member) invited fellow H.H.S. members to set up an exhibit open to the public on Saturday November 10th from 1:00-4:00 p.m. H.H.S. members Roger Carter, David and Lori Mitchell, Angela Thomas, Ed Ferrer, Meygan Ruffrage, Cassie Shuler and Michell Wehrle exhibited snakes, turtles, lizards, frogs, toads and

Many visitors were able to touch or handle some of the animals. Mary Hylton said the library was very pleased with the turnout and counted 133 visitors during the afternoon. This is a good example of how H.H.S. members will offer their time and experience to assist the public to gain a better understanding of reptiles and amphibians.

*The Monitor* is printed courtesy of:

**The Harding Poorman Group**

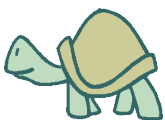


### *A few Year of the Snake Facts:*

Snake venom is used in modern medicine on a regular basis. Research with venomous snakes will benefit humans in many ways. Here are a couple of examples:

- Malayan Pit Viper (*Calloselasma rhodostoma*)** venom is being used in a drug called Ancrod to break down blood clots. This drug may reduce or eliminate surgical procedures for stroke or possible stroke victims.
- Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*)** venom is being researched as a possible breast cancer drug that would inhibit the development of blood vessels that supply tumor cells, slowing their growth and ability to spread.

Source: [www.yearofthesnake.org](http://www.yearofthesnake.org)



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



**Classifieds**

### Cage units for sale:

2- 28 quart 5 rack units built by Jason's Jungle 100.00 each, 1- 28 quart 5 rack unit built by Greg Maxwell caging 100.00, 1-30 sweater box unit with clear plastic sweater boxes, storage space, on wheels. Amish built. 300.00, Add a helix control to any units for 50.00. All units and equipment in excellent condition, clean, ready to plug in and use. Mike Wood - 574 269 3441 [twobears@embarqmail.com](mailto:twobears@embarqmail.com)



#### Mostly Reptiles

Von cowper Ruth Cowper  
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#### Hoosier Mouse Supply

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Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	Cell 443-4845 <a href="mailto:stardali84@hotmail.com">stardali84@hotmail.com</a>
Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	Cell - 727-7553 <a href="mailto:pythonpals1@msn.com">pythonpals1@msn.com</a>
Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561	<a href="mailto:drymarchonzz@hotmail.com">drymarchonzz@hotmail.com</a>
Dave Mitchell	(317) 570-9643	<a href="mailto:turtlelovin@att.net">turtlelovin@att.net</a>
Will Brown	(765) 278-1480	<a href="mailto:wrbrown15@aol.com">wrbrown15@aol.com</a>

EDITOR  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR  
WEBSITE COORDINATOR

Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	<a href="mailto:Stardali84@hotmail.com">Stardali84@hotmail.com</a>
Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	<a href="mailto:pythonpals1@msn.com">pythonpals1@msn.com</a>
Angela Thomas	(317) 882-5266	<a href="mailto:necali@comcast.net">necali@comcast.net</a>
Barbara Filtri		<a href="mailto:webmaster@hoosierherpsoc.org">webmaster@hoosierherpsoc.org</a>

MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member

Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Individual/Family Membership \$15.00

Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

**Herpetological Interest(s)**

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



Dated Material Enclosed

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