



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 36 Number 1

January 2025

HHS Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, January 15th, 7:00PM

Holliday Park Nature Center

Annual Photo Contest

Featuring Wild and Captive Categories

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Thank you and welcome to the Hoosier Herpetological Society! Thank you to our returning members!
Without all of you, we wouldn't be the organization that we've grown to be today!

Renewals

David Miller
Brenten Reust
Ravi Sharpshanker
Jeff Wines
Pat Hammond
Brian Callahan
Sheryl Michell
Andrew Stoehr

Starting this month, The Red Newb Corner will be a monthly column designed specifically for the newbie or beginning field herper young and old. A place for persons or families new to the HHS or those wanting to get back into Indiana field herping and maybe not sure where to start. Stay tuned for each month's column that will feature either a review of helpful study references, online resources, or tips and tricks for successful field herping adventures as shared by another beginner. – Johnathan Renshaw

HERP QUIZ

Created by Kimberly Scott

1. Which of these snakes gives live birth after holding the developing eggs within their body, a characteristic called ovoviviparous?

Black racer

Timber Rattlesnake

Garter snake

Bull snake

2. Which of these salamanders breeds in the spring?

Long-tailed salamander

Marbled salamander

Two-lined salamander

Cave salamander

3. When you think of a frog or toad croaking, you probably think of the skin under its chin inflating like a balloon! However, not all frog species inflate the skin on their necks, you might be surprised to learn that the wood frog inflates vocal sacs located:

4. True or false? Eastern fence lizards have bright red coloration on their necks and bellies to attract a mate.

5. True or false? The heaviest common snapping turtle is 75 lbs.

President's message

Jim Horton

Happy New Year!.

Congratulations to our 2024 officers! Thanks so much to all HHS board members and to those who supported this organization in the past year! We couldn't do it without you.

I'm thrilled to be leading this organization once again! Please let us know if there are any topics or events you might enjoy and we'll certainly look into it.

Our website is looking good and we have a plethora of herp related information to offer. Thanks to Ethan Estabrook for monitoring the site and his efforts to keep our online orders running smoothly.

Another big appreciation goes to Roger and Holly Carter, Kimberly Scott, Katie Kolcun for your ongoing commitment to the hhs!

This year we hope to have even more events for our members to enjoy. We will be present at several events. Marsh Madness, The Indiana Wildlife Federation conference, Garfield Park, Indiana Academy of Science annual meeting, and Metazoa brewing.

We have a new column starting in this issue! Johathan Renshaw will host the Red-spotted Newb. I welcome Jonathan's monthly articles and can't wait to read them!



The Red Newb Corner

Johnathan Renshaw

It can be difficult to imagine field herping while surrounded by such cold and blustery conditions that the winter often brings us. But that is what makes January the perfect month to prepare for warmer and hopefully rainier days ahead.

Here is a list, though not comprehensive, of a few things that new and aspiring field herper can do indoors as we await late February for the uptick in herp activity outside.

- 1) Learn to ID a single group of herps. When I first started birding, I was easily overwhelmed by the myriads of species that I could not identify beyond the backyard feeder. Someone suggested that I focus on a particular family of birds that interested me. I started with hawks because I was interested in their predatory nature. There were only a handful to identify, and most were common. From there it was owls, then woodpeckers, then sparrows, you get the point. If I could make a suggestion in this case... to me, Frogs and Toads are the ideal family of herps to begin honing your focus on identification. They are early breeders, locally common and literally announce their presence audibly during breeding season. You can't find all of Indiana's 17 individual species in one county, but that makes it a little easier to just try to learn the species in your county. The HHS website is an outstanding free resource to see multiple photos and hear their calls. While you can try to memorize the calls yourself, don't hesitate to include a family member to quiz you as they play the calls at random. It can be a fun and engaging way to involve others.
- 2) If you find yourself really enjoying learning to ID herps and are quickly consuming information, consider purchasing some books. *Amphibians & Reptiles of Indiana* by Dr. Sherman Minton is the quintessential single volume on the subject. It is easy to read and delightful to look at. Purdue Extension has also published 4 individual books that make it very easy to stay focused on just one group of herps. They are *Turtles of Indiana*, *Salamanders of Indiana*, *Snakes and Lizards of Indiana*, and *Frogs and Toads of Indiana*. These books also include photos and range maps and make for an excellent alternative to being online. They can be purchased at Purdue Extension's education store online or, for an even greater adventure, treat yourself to visiting the bookstore at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge in Jackson County. You can also find a treasure trove of information in Mike Pingleton and Joshua Holbrook's *The Field Herping Guide*. To my knowledge, this is the most current and readily-available "how-to" guide. While not focused specifically on Indiana, the tips, knowledge, and wisdom in this book is immediately applicable and is an excellent companion to a beginner.
- 3) Start researching public land locations in your area that may have a pond or wetland. No matter how small it may be, it will likely hold herps. Keep a list of those places that you want to visit and continue to add to it as you learn more.
- 4) Lastly, you can discover the huge resource of YouTube videos and Podcasts. Some good podcasts are The Orianna Society's Snake Talk, and Colubird and Colubroid Radio. But my personal favorite has been So Much Pingle by the aforementioned Mike Pingleton. The list of a Mike's guests and subject matter is cornucopia of content that is sure to keep one entertained for countless hours. My two favorite herping channels on YouTube are NKFHerping (featuring Georgia-based Noah Fields who takes you on first-person adventures all over the southeast and beyond) and Life Underfoot (which feature shorter but intensely rich and rare footage expertly captured and shot of native herps by some HHS alumni!) These two YouTube channels alone would keep even the most-seasoned herper enthused and inspired and honestly deserve their own features in future newsletters.

This list should serve only as a mere springboard to launch a new and aspiring field herper in to learning and planning one's own individual adventures in 2025!

November Monthly Meeting 2024

By Holly Carter

Guest speaker Jackson Schoettle:

Topic: Seasonal Vulnerability of Snakes to Road Traffic in Northern Alabama.

Jackson is a wildlife biologist for the Indiana DNR and an adjunct lecturer at Franklin College. His research would be overlooked and non-priority studies of roads within the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge near Huntsville Alabama. This area has 35,000 acres with a diversity of habitat that was originally intended for waterfowl, but also useful for other taxa. Few studies have been aimed at finding risks on gravel roads to lead to management recommendations.



There are seasonal road closures on this property regarding waterfowl. Jackson set up 4 separate stations for doing his research.

Station 1; Arrowhead Landing= agricultural and hardwood forest has bottom section permanently closed to vehicles. 17 miles of gravel roads

Station 2: Beaver dam Peninsula= agricultural and hardwood bluffs 4 miles.

Station 3: Blackwell Swamp/Rockhouse road = Heavily vegetated swamp with arm of Tennessee River. Rockhouse Road is closed October-February. 22 miles

Station 4: Penny Bottoms Wetlands= wetlands, forest and ag fields closed to vehicles October to February and June to September 8 Miles

157 surveys following seasonal patterns, road surveys mostly on gravel roads and margins alongside.

Noted behavior, temperature, soil PH, humidity, wind. Took pictures of captives using a 6-inch pencil that could be for RTL and SVL put in a software program called Image J. All snakes were identified, sized and noted.

No venomous snakes were in this survey, although some were present. Being usually only 1 person doing this study, he had decided not to attempt. One person would do a 150-meter radius while out surveying.

Study findings were 121 snakes representing 12 species with 10% DOR. Many were live encounters but a large bird and mammal presence were there and may have scavenged snakes before they were found.

Management recommendations = roads already closed for most part with a little more closing a little longer for peak activity of snakes, and more surveying needed with more researchers.

HHS Christmas Party

Jim Horton

Our annual Christmas party was held on December 21st at the Eagle Creek Park Earth Discovery Center. Members in attendance gathered for a tour of the of the behind the scenes. ECP Naturalist and HHS member, Katie Kolcun treated members to some of the animals off display to the public. Afterwards, we watched a short movie of the HHS in the past year. Then, the cookie decoration contest began. Party goers decorated an assortment of sugar cookies and Ethan James took the prize for best decoration. The gift exchange was last on the agenda and proved a popular activity.

Thanks to Katie Kolcun for securing the venue and Kimberly Scott for holding the contest and baking the cookies.



Annual Photo Contest



Two categories: *Wild and Captive*

All entries must be 8x10 formats. (Framed work is welcome but not necessary)

Entry fees are \$1.00 per entry.

Entries must pertain to herpetology.

Enter as many times as you wish.

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

Cash prizes for winners in each category

Afterwards members are welcome to show short video clips of herping in the field.

No prizes to be awarded for this presentation.

Quiz answers

1 (Both the Garter Snake and Timber Rattlesnake are ovoviviparous, meaning they give birth to live young from eggs that are retained within the female's body. It's intriguing that two snakes that are seemingly so different share such a unique characteristic!)

2 (The Two-lined Salamander lays it's eggs in the late spring or early summer. The other three species actually breed and lay eggs in the fall! Their eggs overwinter and hatch out into larval salamanders when the snow and ice begin to thaw. Brrr!)

3 •On their lower abdomen

• On either sides of its body, just behind their ears

• Through an air sac on their forehead

•Through special vocal sacs that stretch around to their backs

(A wood frogs vocal sacs are located just behind their ears on either side of their body, so when they call, it looks like there are two smaller balloons!)

4 (False, they have a bright blue coloration that is a spectacular sight!)

5 (False! The heaviest common snapping turtle ever documented is Big Snap Daddy, who weighs 98 pounds and is estimated to be over 90 years old. Big Snap Daddy is on display at the Schramm Education Center in Nebraska. The average weight of an adult common snapping turtle is about 23 lbs)



FrogWatchUSA is a citizen science program that allows individuals and families to help conserve frogs and toads by reporting on the calls of local species. The HHS hosts the Central Indiana FrogWatch Chapter.

Frogs and toads will be active and calling as soon as late February and early March. Join our local chapter and find out more. <https://akronzoo.org/frogwatch> or contact Jim at stardali84@hotmail.com

Help our rare and endangered wildlife

There are nearly 160 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Indiana that need your help. Habitat management and conservation programs for these species are supported through the generosity of Hoosiers who donate to the Indiana Nongame Wildlife Fund. No state tax dollars are used to manage these species.

Find more information here:

[DNR: Fish & Wildlife: Donate to the Indiana Nongame Wildlife Fund](#)



The Monitor is printed
courtesy of
HardingPoorman

Look for the HHS
on social media



HHS Board of Directors - 2025

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	president@hoosierherpsoc.org
VICE-PRESIDENT	Katie Kolcun		k.a.kolcun@gmail.com
SECRETARY	Holly Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP	Brenten Reust		treasurer@hoosierherpsoc.org
SERGEANT AT ARMS	Louis Studer		louis.studer86gmail.com

Appointed Board Members for 2025

EDITOR	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	stardali84@hotmail.com
WEBSITE COORDINATOR	Ethan Estabrook		
MEMBERS AT LARGE	Pat Hammond	(317) 656-9496	gnawbone92@yahoo.com
	Rick Marrs		rickmarrs@gmail.com
	Mary Hylton	(317) 966-4591	liblady81@hotmail.com
	Ethan Estabrook	(317) 650-7650	kestabrook@gmail.com
	Kimberly Scott	(317) 306-1597	silverskydragon@att.net
	Dale Schoentrup		eyelashviper@hotmail.com

2025 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

January 12, 2025 - - Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. 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

January 15, 2025 – HHS monthly meeting, Topic: Photo Contest, One dollar per entry. 8x10 format, captive and wild categories.

February 1, 2025 – Indianan Wildlife Conference, HHS will have a booth.

February 15, 2025 – Marsh Madness at Goose Pond, Linton IN. HHS will have a booth.

February 22, 2025 – HHS live herp exhibit at Garfield Park Conservancy

February 23, 2024 - Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. 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

Membership Form

new member

renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Email Address _____

Individual/Family Membership \$25.00

Herpetological Interests

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

Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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