



# 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 4

April 2016

## H.H.S. Monthly Meeting

Wednesday April 20, 7:00 p.m.

Holliday Park Nature Center

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Steve Thompson, DVM, DABVP Purdue University**

**Topic: "Timber!! Radio transmitter monitoring of Timber Rattlesnakes"**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is pleased to announce that this month's guest speaker is Dr. Steven Thompson DVM, DABVP. He is a clinical Associate Professor at Purdue University's College of Veterinary Medicine. As a city kid, he still has a love of the outdoors and routinely kept native "herps" during the summers. He earned his BS in Biology at Xavier University in Cincinnati where he spent one summer on the design team for the Children's Zoo and another summer as a keeper in the Eastern Woodlands area. During his DVM at Ohio State University, he was a student leader in the Raptor program and was directly involved in the urban peregrine falcon reintroduction in downtown Columbus. He arrived at Purdue in 1997 to head up the Pet Wellness Clinic and expand exotic pet and zoo cooperatives. In the late 90's he was directly involved with the Indiana DNR reintroduction of river otters from Louisiana. He also has been leading a conservation medicine and exotic pet study abroad since 2010 taking 8 veterinary students for a three week course with colleagues at two universities in the Czech Republic and Austria.

His presentation will be a discussion of his six year project with the state herpetologists surgically implanting radio transmitters in timber rattlesnakes in Yellowwood State Forest. Be sure to attend this interesting and informative account of his field study of the rare and endangered timber rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*!



## HHS to participate in ZGreen Fest in Zionsville, April 24

The Greenfest is a nature-related event that runs from 2-5pm. HHS members will display herps during this time. This event is open to HHS members. We need your help. Please see Jim Horton for more information.

### March HHS meeting

Andrew Hoffman gave a great presentation titled – *Helping Hoosiers Care about Herps*.

Andrew is currently a naturalist at Turkey Run State Park and Dobbs Park. He frequently runs into a diverse variety of individuals with many misconceptions regarding snakes. He tallied up herpers into four groups: enthusiasts, educators, researchers, and interpreters.

He found that the general public's attitude towards snakes is: 36% neutral, 43% positive, and 21% to be negative.

His thoughts on handling negative reactions towards snakes? You can't force change.

Meet every negative comment about snakes with a smile. Meet every statement with a smile. Offer the opportunity to leave them feeling positive.

The remaining portion of his talk included a look at the current situations of some of the more imperiled species of herps in the Hoosier state. He also updated his version of the current ranges of our four venomous species.

### Special meeting/may 18

We welcome a very special guest at our May meeting. Mr. Ted Levin (journalist/author) will discuss his new book – *America's Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake*.

Mr. Levin happened to be coming through Indiana during the month of May and we were lucky enough to secure a spot for his presentation. The book will be available for purchase at the meeting. Mr. Levin will also personally sign your copy.

"I'm not sure I would have believed in advance that someone could write 500 fascinating pages about a single species of rattlesnake, but Ted Levin has done just that. *America's Snake* is so engaging the reading borders on effortless; the writing is masterful, inspiring non-stop interest and confidence in Levin's scholarship. The book will be of interest to herpetologists and conservationists, as well as to everyone concerned with how we can live with dangerous animals."—Harry Greene, author of *Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature*

## Welcome New Members!

### New Members

Kimberly Scott

Matt Rufnak

### Returning Members

Dennis Brown

Neill Jones

Bob and Ellie Hammond

## HHS at Master Naturalist Gathering

Jim Horton

McCormick's Creek State Park is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year and what a great way to celebrate.

The annual gathering of the Indiana Master Naturalist graduates.

I was joined by HHS members Dale Schoentrup, Angela Thomas, and Barbara Filtri (Park Naturalist) at the nature center. I gave two talks on Indiana amphibians/conservation and Barbara presented Indiana's venomous snakes. Attendees marveled at a display of live native Indiana amphibians, books, and brochures on hand after my presentation.

We thank the Friends of McCormick's Creek State Park for their generous donation to the HHS.

This event was well received by IMN graduates and we are pleased to have been a part of it.

# 16th Annual Hoosier Herpout

Saturday, May 7 - 9:00 A.M.

Hardin Ridge Recreation Area (Hoosier National Forest),  
Monroe Reservoir, Bloomington, IN

Meet at the shelter house #2 near the boat launch ramp parking lot.  
Rain or shine (herping is always good, even in rain)

## Schedule:

We will leave to herp the area shortly after 9:00 a.m. and return before 12:00 p.m. for the cookout. We will herp again after lunch. Saturday evening the HHS will present a PowerPoint presentation of The Herps of the Hardin Ridge Area.

Several members will be camping at Southern Point campground. This is really nice non-electric site with showers. Some members will also herp on Sunday.

The herpout is a chance for our members to get out and field herp the hills of beautiful Southern Indiana. We should see a variety of herps with the possibility of venomous species. We will also be taking counts on our finds in the wild.

Wear the proper gear and herp at your own risk. The H.H.S. assumes no responsibility for accidents or injuries. Please be careful and have fun!!

## The Barbeque

The H.H.S. will provide the burgers and dogs. Please bring a covered dish and your own beverages. Hardin Ridge offers class "A" camping (showers, electrical hookup) and class "B" (showers) camping. For more information, call or email Jim Horton (317) 443.4845 email - [stardali84@hotmail.com](mailto:stardali84@hotmail.com)

## President's message

Jim Horton

Saturday, May 7 is our field herping extravaganza. The Hoosier Herpout features, herp identification, photography, cookout, camping, and more. Make plans now for this herp-filled weekend.

We got off to a great start with Eagle Creek Park on our latest conservation project!

Look for the story and photos inside this issue. There will be more volunteer opportunities coming up. Anyone who is interested in participating in this project should contact me at: [stardali84@hotmail.com](mailto:stardali84@hotmail.com)

Last Saturday I was invited to attend a summit with the Indiana Forest Alliance at the Donner Center in Columbus, Indiana. A room full of advocates gathered to strategize on advancing the cause of forest protection in Indiana. The event was formed to find ways to battle the elevated logging in our state forests by more than 1000%

Would you like to make a difference with herps in the wild? Herpmapper is conservation-related citizen science.

This is an online cooperative project, designed to gather and share information about reptile and amphibian observations across the planet. Your observations can make valuable contributions on the behalf of amphibians and reptiles. Herpmapper partners include: biologists working for state or regional agencies, university researchers, or conservation organizations such as the HHS. Get started now and help make a difference:

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

# The Pros and Cons of Reticulated Pythons

by Ed Ferrer



Reticulated Python – Python Reticulatus Photo – snaketype.com

When I first started my snake collection with a neonate boa constrictor some 30 years ago,

I was always intrigued by the larger pythons because of their beauty and size. After a lot of research I bought a Burmese python, *Python molurus bivittatus*. After my experience with this large serpent, I then started thinking about adding a reticulated python, *Python reticulatus*, But all my readings gave me cause to hesitate. After all its potential size was one factor to consider. According to most recognized statistics the reticulated python holds the record for the world's longest snake, 32 feet 9 inches. Back then "retics" reputation was universally described as very dangerous and aggressive, only for the most experienced "herper". Also, there have been documented records of people being attacked and eaten by huge "retics".

BUT there was a lot that still interested me about this reptile. Its pattern is one of the most beautiful combinations of greens, black, white, grey or silver markings that serves as great camouflage in its jungle habitat in Asia but also make it absolutely stunning in a cage setting. Its name comes from the Latin word that means "net" referring to the net-like pattern of black stripes on the snake's scales. Also its smooth scales when viewed in sun light give off an iridescence that adds to its allure.

As I continued reading about retics there was more captive breeding done and new color morphs such as albinos and "tiger" morphs that increased the public's interest in these snakes. Reports indicated a much improved captive behavior in these later generations. It seemed like the original notorious reputation was mostly from wild caught specimens that were naturally defensive. So I took a leap of faith and added a retic to my collection. One thing that I found out about them is that they seemed to be always hungry. A 2-foot neonate may grow to an impressive 10 feet or more in about a year! Kevin McCurley, a noted breeder of retics, claimed that he considered them as being probably the most intelligent of all the constrictors. He stated that they recognize their keepers and keenly remember negative experiences. So it is important that when attempting to handle or move a retic to make sure it doesn't think it is dinner time. Since all snakes do not have eye lids they don't sleep like we think of as sleep. But they do rest and go into sort of a trance like state. If you touch them during that mode it might scare them and they might strike defensively. When I take my retic out I usually just slowly open the sliding glass door and let him start coming out so he knows it is not feeding time. Sometimes if he doesn't come out, I will slowly put a pillow case over his head and then pull him out of his cage. Also when dealing with large constrictors, I always use the eight foot rule. "For every 8 feet add another person" when handling a large snake. Over the years I have had four retics in my collection. Now there are many morphs such as called "dwarf" available in the pet trade that will normally not grow huge but instead should reach the size of a boa constrictor. I currently have a Jampea specimen that is one of the dwarf forms. I always make sure my hands and arms are washed and avoid any sudden movements when handling my retic. There are currently about a dozen new color patterns offer different (often more expensive) options. People often ask me if I am scared of my large constrictors. I always say that I RESPECT them and take reasonable precautions and never be in a hurry when I work with them and give them my undivided attention. Have I made mistakes? Sure. But I can always trace the situation back to where I made a mistake, maybe being too tired or distracted. When I see T.V. programs entitled "When Pets Go Bad!" I think they should be more accurately titled "When Pet Owners Do Something Stupid!" Remember retics are not corn snakes or ball pythons but with education and experience they might make a good addition in your collection. Just do a lot of research and hopefully talk with other herpers who have kept retics.

**References:** "Regal Retics", by Kevin McCurley, Reptile Magazine, December 2008.

Boas and Pythons of the World by Mark O'Shea, Princeton University Press, 2011  
personal experience by myself

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## SWORDS AND HERP ART (Part 4)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This may be a bit of a stretch as far as being a herp, but I like it. This is a sword cane that shows a cobra-like creature hooded up with I-don't-know-what extending from behind the creature. The images are a dull silver color, the creature's eyes and tongue are red and the skulls on the other thing are gold. The sword part unscrews from the cane body and the sword is twenty-two and one-eighth inches long from the tip to the top of the cobra and isn't sharp. This was made in China. There are no etchings to identify the material.



## HHS - EAGLE CREEK PARK PROJECT

Jim Horton

HHS members gathered at the Earth Discovery Center on March 18 to help with a project. This project was funded by the HHS. It involved laying out cover boards for salamander surveys. Pat Hammond, Neill Jones, Mary Hylton, and Jim Horton joined park naturalist, Dawn VanDeman for the project.

130, 12x12 untreated pine cover boards were placed every 5 meters in a row. This was repeated several times in three separate areas. This is a mathematic formula to lay them out precisely and its an easy way to locate them as the ground vegetation greens up for the season. As the boards become weathered by the elements, they will quickly blend in with the forest floor.

The park has a good population of red back salamanders (*Plethodon cinerea*) and these boards should be enough cover to attract them. Dawn plans to survey later this spring and throughout the year.

HHS volunteers will also help dig a vernal pond in the park woodlands. This should attract a variety of amphibians and other aquatic life.

If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact me.



## Shirts for Salamanders 2016



Funds raised through the National Amphibian Expo "Shirts for Salamanders" campaign will go towards helping with the costs of the *ex situ* component of the salamander studies at the C.R.A.R.C. and Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Please visit the following links for more information on the two projects benefiting from this campaign: [cramphibian.com](http://cramphibian.com) and [blog.frogsneedourhelp.org](http://blog.frogsneedourhelp.org)

## 2016 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**April 20, 2016** – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker – Dr. Steve Thompson (Purdue University), Topic – *Tracking Timber Rattlesnakes*.

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

**May 7, 2016** – 16<sup>th</sup> annual “Hoosier Herpout,” our largest outdoor field herping event. Hiking/herping, a cookout, herp identification, photography, and camping.

**May 18, 2016** – HHS Meeting. Guest Speaker: Mr. Ted Levin (author/journalist), presentation, book sales, book signing. *America’s Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake*”.

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

**June 26, 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: August 28, Oct. 30

**July 20, 2016** - HHS meeting, Guest Speaker – Todd Pierson will discuss the evolution and distribution of lungless salamanders in Appalachia.

## Your HHS Board of Directors for 2016

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# 16th Annual Hoosier Herpout – May 7

Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Bloomington

## HHS at Master Naturalist Gathering - McCormick's Creek State Park

Thanks to Dale Schoentrup for all photos.



Announcements



Jim Horton's Indiana Amphibians talk



Barbara Filtri's venomous talk

*The Monitor* is printed courtesy of: **Harding Poorman**



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.**

**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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Address Correction Requested

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