

Hoosier Herpetological Society

MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member Renewal

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

- Corresponding Membership \$12.00
 Individual/Family Membership \$15.00
 Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more

Herpetological Interest(s)

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

Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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



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 8

August 2011

President's Message

Jim Horton

Our canoe/kayak trip is Sunday, August 21. I hope to see many of you at this outing. If you like turtles, this is the event for you. We also may be able to see northern water snakes and queen snakes.

I'd like to thank Todd Pierson and Barbara Filtri for their contributions to this issue of the newsletter. Articles from our membership give originality to the Monitor.

Our new HHS shirts are being printed and will soon be ready for purchase. Hopefully we'll have them available at the next meeting. If not, they should be at our booth during the Midwest Reptile Show August 28.

When you get a chance, check out the HHS webpage (hoosierherpsoc.org) for some interesting features such as herp videos and herp art. The herp art section has jewelry, household items, knives, original artwork, and collectibles. This is a collaborative effort from our members. You are welcome to send your unique herp-related items to our Webmaster, Barbara Filtri.

We have another great Guest Speaker this month. Mr. Matt Most will discuss his recent research with garter snakes. This will be an interesting presentation featuring a snake that often is overlooked in the herpetological community.

Welcome New Members!

Renewals:

Will Brown (Sustaining membership)

New Members:

Robert Bever

Caleb Custer

Don't forget our web address!

www.hoosierherpsoc.org

The Monitor is printed courtesy

The Harding Poorman Group



HHS Meeting: Wednesday, August 17th, 7:30 p.m.
Guest Speaker: Matt Most, Loyola University of Chicago
Topic: "Garter Snakes: What You Didn't Know"
Butler University, Pharmacy Building, Room #150

Many times when I am giving a snake program someone tells me about an experience with a "garden snake" or "gardener snake". What they are naturally describing is the garter snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*. This snake is common but not much is known about its habits. Our guest speaker is Matt Most from Loyola University of Chicago and he will discuss his two year research work with the Eastern garter snake in the Lake Forest Open Lands at Elawa Farm outside of Chicago. He will share his findings of this common but often over looked and misunderstood serpent.

HHS General Meeting 7/20/11

Jim Horton



Our Guest Speaker for the evening was Mr. Terry Dunham. Terry is a veteran breeder of king and milk snakes. His wealth of information was a great contribution to the audience.

Terry has bred rare forms of Australian finches before getting into herps. He gave us a brief travel log into Costa Rica, Tanzania, and Thailand to name a few. He gained a huge interest in Honduran milk snakes and he bred several morphs for the first time in captive history.

Mr. Dunham discussed the taxonomy of the large milk snakes of Central America before explaining how to breed and care for these beautiful snakes.

He went into detail on the systematics of breeding albino and other types of color morphs.

There were many familiar names mentioned along the way such as... Robert Applegate, Louis Porras, and Bill Love.

Arizona Mountain King snakes are another of his favorites and he had bred these as well. He also created several new color morphs to add to the captive buying community. He warned us that these higher elevation dwellers need to brumate at cooler temps if they are to thrive and breed properly.

Look for an article on Honduran milk snakes by Terry Dunham in the current *Reptiles USA* Annual 2011 magazine.

Correction: The Monitor, Vol.22 No.7 *Keeping Crested Geckos*. Sentence should have read: A good rule for this is, if you wouldn't drink it, they shouldn't drink it.

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!

SPEAKERS TO INCLUDE:
Jeff Ettling, PhD
Tony Gamble, PhD
Jeff LeClere
Paul Moler
Barney Oldfield, DVM
Salvatore Santelli
Chris Tabaka, DVM

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



Our new T-shirt design by Barbara Filtri
The design features herps of Indiana.

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

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 865-0464	stardali84@hotmail.com
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The boy seemed contrite, tried to justify his action with the usual “it might have been poisonous” excuse. Bad English: it would have been *venomous*, not poisonous, if anything; I told him he could safely eat it, since he killed it. Then I said I will show him a live water snake, which we happened to have at the Nature Center, so he could take a good look and shoot the next one only if he meant to, not by mistake. I’m quite sure those were not my exact words – even as volunteer, I was polite with the public regardless if in my personal opinion they deserved it or not.

As I said at the beginning, I was feeding the Nature Center’s animals. To be precise, I was counting and transferring minnows from my bucket to the water snake’s feeding bowl... I should have known better. I did, I was too upset to remember

one never touches food and then the animal which eats that food without washing hands. As I reached for the snake, it did the only logical thing, which was to bite my fish-flavored hand. *That* was surely not what I intended to show my young apprentice.

Quickly recovering I explained what just happened and why. I told the boy his poor snake was probably after the minnows he had with him, and not interested in anything else. He seemed convinced, told me he was sorry and left me with a sliced *Nerodia sipedon pluralis* to dispose of.

Many years have passed. Like every Naturalist and Herpetologist I know, I have collected enough horror stories with a dead snake at the end to fill a file cabinet, and a couple of stories of well-deserved snake bites. I will not write any book, but I thought I could share this one.

EVENTS

August 7, 2011 – Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm
www.indianareptileexpo.com

August 17, 2011 – HHS Meeting, 7:30 PM Butler University, Pharmacy Bldg. Room 150. Guest Speaker: Matt Most (Loyola University of Chicago), Topic – *Garter Snakes: What You Didn’t Know*

August 21, 2011 – HHS Canoe/kayak trip. Blues Canoes (Edinburg, IN) on the Driftwood River.
www.bluescanoelivery.com 812.526.9851

August 28, 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

August 2011 - 34th International Herpetological Symposium, Fort Worth, Texas

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. Contact Mike Wood 574-269-3441 twobears@embargmail.com

For Sale: C.B. crested gecko, feeding well on insects and gecko diet. \$25.00, C.B.09 Argentine Boa Constrictor, healthy, feeding frozen-thawed, \$130.00 Contact Jim Horton 317.443.4845

Got Rodents?

Hoosier Mouse Supply can take your orders for rodents and they will deliver to the monthly meetings. (317) 831-1219



HHS Canoe trip – Sunday, August 21 (9:00 A.M. at Blues Canoes in Edinburg)

Join fellow HHS members for a canoe/kayak trip down the beautiful Driftwood River. There are many turtles and water snakes along the Driftwood. Last year we counted 138 turtles. 7 and 9 mile trips are offered. We'll decide when we all get there.

What to bring – drinks, lunch, waterproof baggies, camera (not your best one), binoculars, sunscreen, bug spray, swimsuit, sunglasses, *old* shoes.

For more information - www.bluescanoelivery.com 812.526.9851

Look for any updates or cancellations on the HHS website message board

The Saw-Scaled Vipers (*Echis*)

By Todd Pierson



Photo – Google Images

Deadly. Whether noted for their small size, narrow heads, desert distribution or any of the other traits that make this genus interesting, conversation always returns to the toxicity of their venom. For a small snake, *Echis* pack a strong punch.

In June and July of this year, I joined Ted Papenfuss of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology on an expedition to Arabia. While I have some experience in the neotropics and have recently greatly expanded my international herping experience, Arabia was about as foreign a place as I could imagine. When Ted asked me to join the trip, images of camels, turbans, and—above all—sand shuffled through my mind. These images are not just mirages of the Middle East; they’re real, but what I couldn’t appreciate at the time was the diversity of herpetofauna of the region. Well, at least reptile diversity. Oman and the United Arab Emirates have only two species of amphibians—both *Bufo*, and perhaps a good topic for a future article.

However, the focus of our trip was reptiles. Specifically, Ted is interested in studying the phylogeographic patterns in herps in Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the rest of the Middle East across the Arabian Sea. Curiously, no single history explains the distribution of all of these herps; some are African in nature, others Asian. Some have made their home in Arabia for millions of years, some for thousands, and some for just decades. We sought to collect specimens of various reptiles, particularly geckos, to shed some light on the origin of these species.

While snakes weren't the focus of our travels, they persistently crept (or slithered?) into my mind. Everything here was new to me; many of the species have New World equivalents, but all are unique. Particularly, I had my sights set on the genus *Echis*. This group of snakes is adapted for life in arid environments and present throughout the peninsula. On a previous trip, Ted found only one *Echis*, but I was determined to see more. As fate would have it, it didn't take long.

After arriving in Dubai (the city of extravagance, even by American standards) and gathering supplies for the six-week trip, I was anxious to get in the field. So we headed just outside of town towards some promising sand dunes. Here, geckos of the genera *Stenodactylus*, *Pseudoceramodactylus*, and *Teratoscincus* are common, and we hoped to collect some. I stepped out of the car, walked twenty feet to the top of a small hill, and in front of me lay my first *Echis*. Literally thirty seconds into my herping in Arabia, and I had my main goal. This version, *Echis carinatus*, is widespread through Oman and UAE and prefers sandy habitats. We would see a few more on the trip, including two more individuals that night.

Next, we spent a few days near the coast in Fujairah, UAE. Here, in a "wadi"—the Arabic word for any body of freshwater, ranging from permanent ponds to seasonal creeks—I had my first experience with the *Bufo* of the region. While searching for these amphibians, I hoped to see my second species of *Echis* on the trip. *Echis omanensis* is a recent split from the *E. coloratus* group and is endemic to this region. As I walked through a small, dry streambed, I kept a close eye upon the wall, as the canyon acted as somewhat of a natural drift fence, and I expected some herps to be found along the wall. Not to be disappointed, I spotted a nice adult *E. omanensis* on the crawl just minutes later, and we found two more on the night—including one that I nearly stepped on.

The weeks wore on, and we found a few more *Echis* of the aforementioned species, but I started to yearn for more. Two more species call Oman home, and finding them both began to obsess me. After wandering the barren dunes of central Oman for a week, we headed to Salalah, located not too far from Yemen. This region of the country is unique in that it resembles the tropics more than the desert. Seasonal monsoons drape the mountains in mist, and green vegetation blankets the hillsides. Here, an African assemblage of herps reside, including chameleons, cobras, and puff adders. But also, another species of *Echis*.

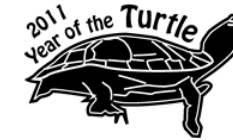
Echis khosatzkii is common in vegetated wadis in the Dhofar (this region of Oman), but despite a week of field work, we hadn't seen one. On one of our last nights, we decided to search for a species of gecko endemic to a single canyon. As we approached the site, I found some reason for optimism. I predicted that, not only would we find the *Hemidactylus*, but that we would get an *Echis*. As I climbed from giant white boulder to white bolder, I spotted and caught a few of the geckos—an incredibly cool species worthy of its own article. Then, I spotted an area with good potential and began to climb down to it when, beneath my feet, I heard a loud buzz.

Perhaps as infamous as their venom is the warning display of *Echis*. Their common name—the Saw-Scaled Vipers—comes from their defensive behavior. They zigzag their bodies and rub their heavily keeled scales back and forth, producing a sound similar to a small saw and equally startling as a rattlesnakes *bzzz*.

One step further, and I would have stepped on that *Echis khosatzkii*. I didn't trust the thickness of my boots **that** much...

Two days later, and we began our trek back to Dubai. It would be a two-week trip back, wandering through mountains and desert slowly while collecting more herps, but only the first night would have potential for the final species of *Echis*. *E. coloratus*, from which *E. omanensis* was split, is found only in a very disjunct population north of the moist mountains of the Dhofar. We had one chance to complete the *Echis* grand slam.

Ted and I arrived at the site at dusk. Usually, I wait for nightfall to hike around, but I was antsy and explored the rocky bluffs just near the car while waiting for the hot desert sun to finish its daily sojourn over the horizon. I peered under a rocky overhang, and below 4/4. Success.



Canes and Herp Art

By Roger Carter and Bryan Bernadine

This is an intermission in my regular series about "Knives and herp art" to co-author an article with HHS member Bryan Bernadine on his herp art cane. As you can see from the pictures this is a cane with a metal image of a cobra with its hood spread out. This is a fairly common item on some knives (as you have seen from some of my previous articles), swords and canes. The main part of the cane is black and is thirty-one and five-eighths of an inch long with the cobra image a silver



color and the entire cane is thirty-five and one-quarter inches long. But this is more than just a cane. You can un-screw the cobra handle to reveal a blade that is twelve inches long. There are lots of canes with hidden blades. I have one that has a dragon handle. The point is sharp but the blade's edge isn't very sharp but it can be sharpened. Bryan bought this at ABC Wholesale in Plainfield, Indiana.

My first Snake in a Bucket

By Barbara Filtri

Interpretive Naturalist, Shakamak & McCormick's Creek State Parks

It happened many years ago, when I was much younger and still deluding myself with the assumption that people who don't like snakes would pretty much scream and run away.

I was at McCormick's Creek S.P., cleaning cages and feeding animals as I have done once a week, back then as a volunteer, for a long time. Just another day at the Nature Center. Then a boy comes in, with a bucket, and asks the receptionist (yes, that was a long time ago ...) if somebody could identify a snake. Aware of my passion for the slithering creatures, which comes together with a reasonable amount of knowledge, she turned him over to me.

I approached the bucket carefully, released the lid and slid it a tiny bit to the side, to peek in. I opened it completely when I realized that there were

two clearly detached pieces of a snake, inside, not a live one as if, for example, I had been the one carrying a bucket to a Nature Center for identification. I looked carefully at a gorgeous, fully grown, Midwest Banded Water Snake (*Nerodia sipedon pluralis*) and asked the boy, perhaps not with my best of smiles, what happened to it. As I said before, I was young and naïve – not yet a trained and certified Interpretive Naturalist.

"I was fishing, saw the snake and shot him. I chopped his head to be sure he was dead," the kid replied. Well, that figures.

After slowly counting to ten I told him that where I come from (Italy) people go fishing with *fishing poles*, not shotguns, so the likelihood of shooting anything, in or out of the water, is zero.