



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 19 Number 6

June 2008

President's Message

Jim Horton

Hello Hoosier Herpers!

It appears that the hot sticky weather of August has arrived a bit early in June! Wow, what horrible weather we have had here in the Hoosier state. I hope our members and friends in the southern half of our state are safe and dry.

From the sound of things, our Hoosier Herpout turned out pretty well. Some of us were unable to attend on Saturday due to other obligations but we'll be there next year. Thanks to everyone who stepped up and took charge on Saturday, especially, Roger and Holly Carter, Elliot, Dave, and Tristan Stahl, and Peter and Amy Baird for all of their help!

Thanks to Ed Ferrer, Roger Carter, and Dave Mitchell for donating their time at the Scales and Tails Fest last weekend at the Indiana State Museum. Their expertise on herps is always well appreciated by our guests and the show promoters.

If you are still interested in volunteering at the Indiana State Museum, I've included the letter from the last issue of the Monitor. Please represent the HHS with your very best!

The Reptile Invasion takes place this weekend and we can have a follow-up in the next newsletter as to how things turned out (and maybe some pics of the local herps if we get a chance to get out!

Our meeting this month features - you and your herps! Bring one or two of your favorites and share them with your peers.

NOTICE

Our meetings will be held in room# 108 for the months of June, July, and August

June General Meeting – Wednesday, June 18th, 7:30 P.M.

Topic: Annual "Show and Tell"

Butler University, Gallahue Center, Room#105

June is our popular annual "Show and Tell" program. It gives everyone a chance to see what fellow herp members are keeping and pick up helpful hints on their successful care and breeding techniques of many species. This is an excellent opportunity for newcomers to learn from our club's veterans about what animals might be a good fit for them or to learn about a new animal that you might want to include in your collection. So bring your favorite two or three "herps" and share your knowledge with other members! See you there!

Scales & Tails Fest, Indiana State Museum A Celebration of Pets

Ed Ferrer

On June 7th, for the third year in a row, the Indiana State Museum presented their **Scales & Tails Fest**. It is a celebration of all pets and is intended to educate the public on the care and issues regarding a large variety of pets. Among the numerous animals displayed were horses, dogs, exotic cats, birds, insects, and of course reptiles. The Hoosier Herpetological Society had five tables on exhibit featuring Roger Carter with his snakes and alligator, David and Laurie Mitchell with their tortoises and turtles, and me with my snakes. It was a pleasure to meet people from all walks of life and answer questions about the "herps" that we keep and discuss the care of our "pets".

There were entertaining programs featuring insects, tarantulas, frisbee-catching dogs, and some hilarious routines by Silly Safaris. The Indiana State Museum volunteers offered take-home crafts for the children and displayed baby chicks hatching from incubators. Even though the heavy rains and flood conditions in many areas of Indiana prevented some people from attending, the attendance was still good. It was a great opportunity for people who are considering owning a pet to talk to experts and find what type of pet would be the best fit for them. It was a great chance for us "herpers" to dispel the many myths about reptiles and inform the public of the care and responsibilities of owning reptiles and discuss the conservation issues of our state's reptiles and amphibians. **Be sure to mark your calendars for the upcoming "Reptile Days" at the Indiana State Museum on the weekend of July 26-27!** This is historically the biggest weekend event for The Indiana State Museum and we need to be out in force as our society has a large number of tables to display in the center of the lobby.

A LETTER FROM THE INDIANA STATE MUSEUM

Dear club members,

Please consider sharing your knowledge of reptiles and/or amphibians with visitors of the Indiana State Museum by signing up to volunteer as a Discovery Cart presenter. The specialized carts Reptiles and Amazing Amphibians are now available to complement the exhibit: Footprints - Balancing Nature's Diversity and enhance the museum experience.

Each cart contains models of native species and background information about where they are located throughout the state. By coupling the cart's background information and museum quality replicas with your first-hand experience and knowledge of the animals, the museum guests will get to receive first-rate information from local experts. Presentations are informal and consist of explaining where the animals live, what they eat, how they hide or hunt, and answering all sorts of questions about reptile and amphibian life. Visitors love opportunities to meet experts, find out about animal temperament and learn the truth behind popular myths.

If you would like to visit the museum for a tour of the facility and an introduction to the Reptiles / Amazing Amphibians Discovery Carts, please contact Kerry Baugh at 498-4132 or kbaugh@dnr.in.gov.

HHS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT PROFILE

Pat Hammond

Name - Town or city - Indianapolis

Age you found interest in herpetology? I have loved herps as long as I can remember.

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you like? - I like all herps but snakes are my favorite

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you keep? – I have two box turtles, one eastern and one three toed. I have several Tangerine Honduran milks. Four Hog Island boas. Three jungle carpet pythons. Two albino northern pine snakes. Two California kingsnakes. One black rat and one eastern milk.

Do you exhibit your animals at HHS shows? - Yes

What do you like most about the HHS? - I enjoy meeting people who share my interest in herps. I also enjoy the meetings and club outings. I really enjoy attending the annual midwest herpetological symposium with other HHS members.

When did you join the HHS? - I think I went to my first meeting around 1994 and joined shortly afterwards.

Other hobbies? I like fast cars and old bicycles.

Do you field herp? – Whenever I get the time.

Where do you get your herps? – I get most of my herps at the reptile show and from other HHS members.

Have you ever bred any herp species? (if so, what kind?) I have had fair success with Honduran milks. I have also bred California kings, and rosy boas. I have been trying to produce jungle carpet pythons for several years now, but I keep getting infertile eggs.

Anything else you would like to add? I really enjoy field herping and traveling around to different parts of the country photographing new species of herps. I also have a nice herp library, which is constantly growing.

HERPETOLOGY GREATS

Edward Drinker Cope – 1840-1897

An American herpetologist and author of over 1260 publications including: *The Batrachia of North America* (1889), *Classification of the Ophidia* (1895), and *The Crocodylians, Lizards, and Snakes of North America* (1900). *Copeia*, the journal of the American Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, was named after Cope in his honor.

Helpful Herp Hints

If you lose a snake in your house, there is a way to tell if it is still in a room. Pour a thin line of sand out one foot from the baseboards. The snake will probably travel along the walls and baseboards, breaking the “sand line”. This way you will know that it is or has recently been in a particular room.

HERP OF THE MONTH

Western Earth Snake (*Virginia valeriae elegans*)

By Jim Horton



This is one of the smaller snakes that occurs in the south central portion of Indiana and its range continues to the north towards Tippecanoe County. The coloration is nothing striking to say the least. But when you are small and live on the forest floor, you don't want to stand out with bright colors. It is a rather drab, grayish-brown to rust toned and no strong pattern. A small light-colored dorsal stripe may be evident along with tiny black specks. The belly is usually cream.

This ground dweller rarely exceeds lengths of twelve inches. This snake is viviparous and from August to September, 3-14 young are only 3 ¼ - 4 ½ inches in length.

Earth snakes in Indiana prefer rocky areas, often on steep slopes in sparse deciduous forest edges. Rocks, logs and other debris are hide spots for this secretive snake. These snakes are considered somewhat uncommon in Indiana. Therefore, they aren't often encountered in the wild. They are often found with other small snakes such as wormsnakes and ringnecks. On one occasion, I found one in leaf litter in southern Indiana and another, out on a trail. Earthworms and soft-bodied insects make up the bulk of the diet. There isn't a plethora of information on these little fellows but they definitely has their place in our Indiana woodlands.

INDIANATURTLECARE.COM

Indiana Turtle Care, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to the conservation, rehabilitation, education and rescue of turtles and tortoises.

Central Indiana Frog Watchers

(the local chapter of the National Wildlife Federation's Frogwatch). Monthly meetings are held at the Camp Cullom Nature Center in Frankfort, IN. For more info. Contact Wendell Zetterberg at wzetterberg@hotmail.com or (765) 249-2298

HERP HAPPENINGS

June 14 & 15, 2008 – Reptile Invasion, Large public exhibit of amphibians/reptiles and programs. Wesselman Woods Nature Center, Evansville, IN 10-4

June 18, 2008 – HHS General Meeting. Topic – The Annual Show and Tell. Members bring in their favorite, or unusual herps and tell the audience about biology, captive care, and how the animal was acquired.

June 29, 2008 – 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. For info: (317) 861-5550, www.midwestreptile.com (Other dates, August 24.)

July 12, 2008 – Evansville Reptile Show, National Guard Armory, doors open at 10 a.m., contacts - snakefreak@insightbb.com or call (812) 629-0827

July 26 & 27, 2008 – Reptile Days at the Indiana State Museum. One of the largest displays of herps in central Indiana. 11-4 (Sat.) & 12-4 (Sun.)

November 7-9, 2008 – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Hosted by the Michigan Society of Herpetologists. Radisson Hotel Detroit-Livonia, MI More info.

DESERT TORTOISES UNDER ATTACK

Paraphrased from The Indianapolis Star (5-18-08)

California desert tortoises are being relocated due to the U.S. Army expansion on the tortoise's habitat. The Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin was slated for expansion and 760 tortoises have been captured and relocated to unoccupied public lands that began in March 2008.

The problem, attacks by coyotes. At least 14 relocated and 14 resident tortoises have been killed by coyotes. Scientists believe a severe drought has killed off plants and triggered a decline in rodent populations that coyotes normally feed upon. Therefore, the coyotes are turning to the tortoises for food. The Army has requested that sharpshooters be dispersed to cut down on the coyote population but it is still under scrutiny.

The Center for Biological Diversity has plans to file suit against the Army, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management for violating the federal Endangered Species Act in their effort and management of the desert tortoises.

HERPETOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS

Acrodont – having teeth fused to the top of the upper jaw margin.

Gastrolith – any of the stones occurring in the stomachs of crocodilians, deliberately swallowed to grind up food in the absence of the ability to chew.

Scute – any one of the enlarged scales on a reptile and alternatively termed a *shield* or *plate*.

Sincipital – The collective name for any frontal or parietal scale on the heads of reptiles.

Viviparity – A kind of reproduction in animals in which the embryo develops within the body of the mother and receives its nourishment directly via some form of placenta, resulting in the eventual birth of live young.

Brille – The transparent scale that covers the eye in all snakes and some burrowing lizards.

Oviparity – Reproduction involving the production of undeveloped eggs, within membranes or shells that are laid or spawned by the female. The entire development of the embryos occurs outside of the mother's body utilizing egg yolk.

Ophiology – The branch of zoology dealing with the study of snakes.

Melanin – Pigment granules of the skin responsible for dark brown to black coloration in animals.

Lentic – Inhabiting, or relating to, still waters.

Subcaudal – Any one of the scales situated on the underside, or ventral surface, of the tail from the vent to the tail tip.

Pheromone – A substance that is produced and secreted by an animal which stimulates a response in others of the same species. Many animals use pheromones to mark territories or attract mates.

New Book

THE NATURAL HISTORY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GOPHER TORTOISE (*GOPHERUS POLYPHEMUS* DAUDIN)

Ray E. Ashton & Patrica Ashton

Published 2008

Hardback

This handbook is the first book on tortoise management and research techniques that can be applied to any species. It is designed to be the manual that can serve for certification for various institutions and State and Federal agencies. Many tricks of the trade on how to count burrows, excavate, and trap tortoises are given based on the 20 years of experience of the Ashtons. No other publication currently exists that brings together all the methods and techniques for tortoise management which can be used with other tortoises and turtles. Students and environmental consultants working with gopher tortoises and other upland species will find this handbook indispensable.

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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.**

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Suggestions and articles for *The Monitor* are welcome. Submit your typed or legibly hand written articles by the first Wednesday of each month to: PO. Box 40544, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0544 or 7712 Miracle road, Indianapolis, IN, 46237. Articles on PC or compatible, formatted, 3½ disks are accepted. To have your disk returned, you must provide a self addressed, stamped envelope within your mailing to us. Back issues of *The Monitor* are available. Send requests to our PO. Box, or contact Holly Carter. Quarterly Advertisement Rates for publishing your ad in *The Monitor* are: ¼ Page - \$10.00; ½ Page - \$15.00; and Full Page - \$25.00. Classified Ads are free to all paid H.H.S. members and will be printed for two months. All ads must be submitted in writing to the Editor by the first Wednesday of each month. All artwork is copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without written permission from the artist.

**Hoosier Herpetological Society
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

New Member

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Herpetological Interest(s)

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If this area is checked, your membership will expire this month!