



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 5

May 2008

President's Message

Jim Horton

Hi folks! welcome to the month of May!

Let's get this month started by involving yourself in one of our many H.H.S. activities. Volunteers are needed at the Indiana State Museum. Interested individuals would be working the amphibian/reptile (replica) carts. Your expertise would be of great help to the museum. The ISM has been very kind to the HHS and I think that we need to return favor. I'll be the first to volunteer and I hope that others will follow. More information is inside this issue.

If you haven't already seen it on the website, we have changed the date on the **Herpout** to the 17th. We felt that the holiday weekend would be too busy for this event. For all of you nature lovers, the International Migratory Bird Day will be happening at the amphitheater parking lot at Hardin Ridge. Also, we would like to ask that our members don't disturb the tin sites in the area before the Herpout. This event is for everyone but it gives our members who don't get a chance field herp a chance to see some of Indiana's wild reptiles and amphibians. Unfortunately, I have other obligations that morning and won't be down until later in the day.

A quick reminder to those who have framed prints on display in the Zion Nature Center. You may them pick up anytime. Remember, they are only open on weekends.

The folks at Cool Ponds wanted me to pass along a request. They are having a Water Garden Festival, Saturday, June 14. They would like some of our members to answer questions about amphibians and reptiles to the patrons in their vendor area. If you can make it please email me at Stardali84@hotmail.com or call (317) 865-0464

Also, Laurie Mitchell may be organizing an event at Coburn Place if there is enough interest. It involves 2 hours of your time answering questions about herps, their care and responsibilities with keeping them. It would be on a weekday evening. Please contact myself or Dave Mitchell if you are interested.

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS!

Renewals

Rupert Boneham

Sheryl Mitchell

Mike Wood

John and Linda Jett

Dave, Elliot, & Tristan Stahl

New Member

Sig Rippe

SPECIAL NOTICE

We are scheduled for Room 105 at Butler for the May General Meeting

Hoosier Herpout!

Alternative date - Saturday, May 17th

This year the Memorial Day weekend falls on the 24th instead of the last month in May. We had decided that Hardin Ridge would be extremely busy and we wouldn't be able to guarantee a shelter-house or campsites. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused!

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.

May General Meeting: Wednesday May 21st 7:30 P.M.
Guest Speaker: David McGowan, Ravenswood Media, Inc. Chicago
Topic: *Midwest Frogs*
Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#105

May's guest speaker is David McGowan. David is the president of Ravenswood Media, Inc. in Chicago. He has produced documentaries since 1985 and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Short Documentary in 1991. Ravenswood Media Inc. produces natural history documentaries and recently completed a program for Envirovet, an organization that brings veterinary medicine to wildlife health issues. They are currently editing a 30 minute documentary about frogs titled "Why Frogs Call and Why We Should Listen" dealing with frog malformations and decline.

His presentation will be showing video clips of "Midwest Frogs". I have heard rave reviews of this program so be sure to plan to attend!

Herping Indiana from the Southeast to the Northwest

By, Elliot Stahl

On Saturday April 26th Dave Stahl and I met up with HHS members David and Rick Marrs for a day of herping in southern Indiana. The day started with spotting an eastern box turtle on the side of the road, alive and well and making its way away from the road. Our first stop was near Madison Indiana where we observed numerous cave salamander larvae in an underground stream. Then we ventured north to Muscatatuck. There we walked the edges of a pond and spotted two ribbon snakes, a northern water snake, and an eastern garter snake along with numerous painted turtles. At the next pond area we stopped at we were lucky to observe two Kirtland's snakes. Also very near were we found the Kirtland's snakes, Rick found another eastern ribbon snake.



Kirtland's snake (*Clonophis kirtlandii*)

Then as we were getting ready to leave I was lucky enough to spot a large and very well colored Copperbelly watersnake sitting very close to the road where we parked. We took numerous photos of the snakes before leaving. Next we drove further north into some areas of the Hoosier National Forest and visited several tin sites. The first place we stopped we found a nice big northern copperhead underneath the tin. Then as we were leaving Dave found a very large garter snake out in the open. At the next tin site we found several ringneck snakes. The other tin sites we visited that day did not yield

any more herps except for a large black racer that posed for some photos. We then returned back to Indy.

The next day (Sunday), Dave Stahl and I met up with Jim Horton, and drove up to Northwestern Indiana to an area very near the Illinois border. The day started out warm and sunny, but the further north the temperature dropped and the clouds moved in. Despite less than favorable herping conditions we did manage to see a few animals, several of them were new to me. The first herp of the day was an adult six-lined racerunner lizard. I flipped over a piece of tin and somehow spotted the tail of the lizard sticking out of a hole under the tin. I carefully extracted him and we took some photos of him on the sand, which would have been just about impossible to do with such a lizard except for it was very slow because of the cool conditions. The next herp we found was a large blue racer that was curled up under a large board the Jim and I flipped over.



Blue racer (*Coluber constrictor foxii*)

We photographed the racer before returning him to his home under the board. We then made our way a little further north where we stopped near a lake and Jim found a small midland brown snake (decay snake) under a piece of bark. After photographing the snake, we looked around a little more and then drove east to another swampy area where I flipped over a small piece of wood and was lucky to find a Blue Spotted Salamander. Jim and I took numerous photos of the small salamander before deciding to call it a day and head home. In all it was a very fun weekend of early Herping in Indiana across the state.

HERP OF THE MONTH

Gray Treefrogs

Hyla versicolor LeConte 1825

Hyla chrysoscelis Cope 1880

By Wendell Zetterberg

“Cope’s gray treefrogs (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) and eastern gray treefrogs (*Hyla versicolor*) are members of a cryptic, diploid–tetraploid species complex. This has resulted in considerable taxonomic confusion, especially in early reports. As a result of this confusion, many authors have chosen to combine the accounts and distributions of these species”
~George R. Cline–Amphibian Declines: The Conservation Status of United States Species.

In Indiana, we have both gray treefrogs that look identical. Because of this, this article will briefly discuss both, but not in great detail. I will discuss these species and how they relate to FrogWatch, but encourage you to look farther for more about them. There are two ways to tell the difference between these treefrogs. One of these methods is by a chromosome count. The Eastern Gray (*H. versicolor*) has four sets of chromosomes [tetraploid], where the Cope's (*H. chrysoscelis*) only has two [diploid]. Since a chromosome test is not practical for a call survey, luckily the other difference is the male's mating call.

The Eastern Gray has a much more melodic and slower trill compared to the high pitched, harsher and faster trill of the Copes. I have heard it said that the Cope's sounds like an Eastern hyped up on caffeine. But in certain temperatures the two can sound very much the same. In areas such as Central Indiana where the ranges of the two overlap, identification can be a bit tricky. FrogWatch has incorporated this into the data sheets by having a special line just for times when you are not sure. NAAMP and the USGS Frog Quiz also have a line to allow for this. I have personally heard both species in Clinton and Cass counties on surveys, however the *H. versicolor* is by far the most encountered.

The Gray treefrogs are about 1¼”-2”. They have slightly warty skin that can vary from gray-green-brown-to almost black. They have a light spot beneath the eye and the inner thigh is bright orangish-yellow. They have large toe pads for climbing. The Cope's is said to be slightly smaller

and to have somewhat smoother skin, though this cannot be seen from the field.

In Indiana, the Cope's is found in the Southern part of the state north to Muncie, though some range maps show it to be found statewide. The Eastern is found in the northern part of the state as far south as Indianapolis.

Tadpoles are about a ¼” long, it takes from 45-65 days to transform from egg to metamorph, depending on temperatures. Juveniles take 1-2 years to mature, they have a bright green coloration in this stage. They are thought to stay close to the ground until they mature.

Mature Gray treefrogs are found in trees and shrubs. During the mating season (mid April through July), males will start at dusk calling from the treetops and as the night goes on, work down to the pond (temporary or permanent) and call from emergent vegetation. In some mad made structures, they will call from whatever is available. I have seen them on concrete walls and guard rails calling.

I have already heard a few *H.versicolors* on overcast days, but not yet at my FrogWatch USA sites. A neighbor brought over one for me to identify that jumped on her shoulder as she walked beside her house, so they are out, keep your ears open!

Sources: Blackburn, Laura M., Priya Nanjappa, and Michael J. Lannoo. 2002. US Amphibians Distribution Maps. Ball State University and Muncie Center for Medical Education, Indiana University School of Medicine, Muncie, Indiana

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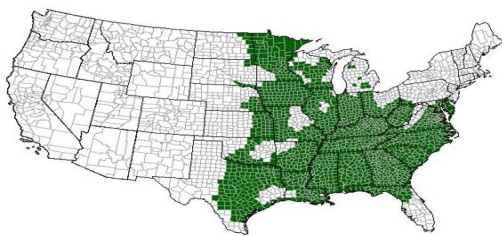
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(right) Calling *H.versicolor*
taken at the Old Walmart
Pond in Frankfort IN.
photo by Peggy Zetterberg 06



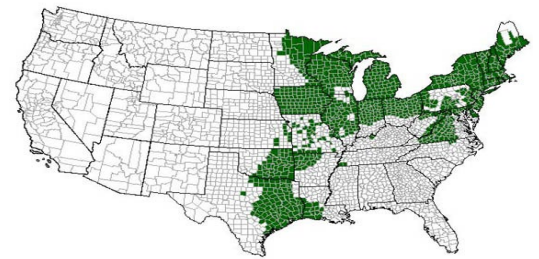
Copes Gray Range
Hyla chrysoscelis



(below) Juvenile Eastern
Gray Treefrog
by Wendell Zetterberg, Jr.
by Peggy Zetterberg



Eastern Gray Range
Hyla versicolor



HHS member spotlight profile

Name - Roger Carter

Town or city - Zionsville, Indiana

Age you found interest in herpetology? - 21 or 22 years

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you like? - Mostly I like boas and pythons especially Australian pythons.

What (amphibians/reptiles) do you keep? - I have several carpet pythons and ball pythons. My oldest snake is a ball python that will be 33 years old this summer. I know that for a fact because he was a baby when I bought him in a pet store near Chicago. My favorite snake is my amethystine python that is almost thirteen feet long.

Do you exhibit your animals at HHS shows? - When Holly and I moved here from Chicago we immediately became involved in the HHS and participating in educational shows, which we also did in Chicago with the Chicago Herpetological Society for many years.

What do you like most about the HHS? - I like the quality newsletter and hanging around with people **who** share an interest in this hobby.

When did you join the HHS? - Holly and I moved to Zionsville in 1989 and immediately joined the HHS.

Other hobbies? - I collect knives and swords.

Do you field herp? - If so where have you been? I enjoy field herping very much. I have herped in southern Illinois since about 1978, several areas in northern and southern Indiana, a little bit in Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas.

Where do you get your herps? - I have bought some from pet stores and private breeders and I have caught some.

Have you ever bred any herp species? (if so, what kind?) - I have bred bullsnakes, ball pythons, carpet pythons, rosy boas, Womas (an Australian python), just once I bred a red tail boa that had 40 babies.

Anything else you would like to ad? - More than once I have people say "Well, the herp society has nothing to offer me." I could not disagree more. You get to know people who share a common interest, you could learn new things, and the programs at the HHS regular meetings can be seen as educational and entertaining.

EMBARRASSING MOMENTS IN HERPING

By Garry Bryan

The fear of snakes is Ophidiophobia or how my mother felt **normal** people should feel about snakes; even a picture of a snake would “give her the willies” and “make her skin crawl” she used to say. Unfortunately, for her, I was not **normal**; I developed a weird fondness for these scaly legless reptiles at a very young age, bringing home, in my butterfly net, a baby water snake when I was six. In my mothers eyes things went down hill from there.

By eleven, I had a few “pet” snakes that my mother grudgingly allowed me to keep caged on the back porch. There was but one condition included in this arrangement: all snakes had to be released before cold weather arrived, no snakes allowed in the house yet.

I had one favorite snake then, a rather large, docile water snake that tolerated handling well which might explain, but not adequately, why I decided to tote this robust three and a half foot water snake onto the roof one pleasant Sunday morning.

As fate would have it, my mother was doing laundry that morning as well. “Natrix”, the water snake, crawled about on the warming tarpaper while my pre-adolescent mind wandered afar. My unsuspecting mother labored below, from the laundry room to the clothesline, a route that took her directly beneath both son and serpent.

Unbeknownst to me there was a hole in the porch roof that by coincidence lay just above the back door. Natrix, more sharp-eyed than his captor, spotted this escape route and made a beeline towards it, evidently not appreciating our morning convenes. Startled back to life when I realized that only part of the snake was now visible on the roof, I made an awkward yet successful grab at the tail just as it was about to disappear and drop to the porch below. I thought I had headed off a real disaster. I was sorely mistaken.

My mother, with a basket load of wet laundry, had just stepped through the back door at the precise moment that Natrix exited the roof, he now dangled just inches from my ophidiophobic mother’s face. Evidently, some unpleasantness occurred betwixt my mother and the dangling serpent, as there was a raucous commotion from below, the result of the laundry basket, the back door and my shrieking mother colliding with large garden implements falling to the floor. Her shrill scream, colorful expletives and use of my full name, including middle, was not a good sign. Cold weather had not yet arrived but I knew it was time to “release the serpents”.

My poor mother was involved in various snake dilemmas through the years, one of which involved her bonnet style hair dryer and a chilled boa constrictor, but that story will have to wait for another time.

Hoosier Herpout '08 (see new date)

It's soon time for the 8th Annual Hoosier Herpout!

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

Saturday, May 17th - 9:00 A.M.

Meet at the shelter house near the boat ramp. Rain or shine

There is a \$4.00 entry fee at the gatehouse. Campers will waive the fee.

Schedule: we will leave to herp the area shortly after 9:00 a.m. and will return sometime before 12:00 p.m. for the cookout. Those members camping 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 including 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!!

Barbeque

The H.H.S. will provide the burgers and dogs. You bring a covered dish and your own beverages.

Hardin Ridge offers class “A” camping (showers, electrical hookup) and class “B” (showers) camping. We will most likely be camping in the “Southern Point” campgrounds (class B).

Look for a note at the gatehouse. For more info. Call Jim Horton (317) 865-0464

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

May 17, 2008 - Hoosier Herpout – Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Monroe Reservoir, Camping, field herping, identification, photography. Meet at shelter house near boat ramp.

May 21, 2008 - Guest Speaker: David McGowan, Ravenswood Media, Inc. Chicago
Topic: *Midwest Frogs* Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room#105, 7:30 P.M.

June 6-8, 2008 – North American Amphibian Conference, Erving, MA, www.tnaac.org

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

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, 11-4 (Sat.) & 12-4 (Sun.)

Reptile Invasion '08

**The Wesselman Woods Nature Center (WWNC) in Evansville
presents the Annual Reptile Invasion June 14 & 15**

The Invasion is a collaboration of WWNC staff, local herpers, and H.H.S. members. It is a two-day event featuring live herp exhibits and programs/presentations. The event is a huge fundraiser for WWNC and one of the largest donations of the year to the H.H.S. Participants will exhibit their reptiles and amphibians from 10:00am to 4:00pm both days. Exhibitor's are needed.

New Book
TIMBER RATTLESNAKES IN VERMONT AND NEW YORK
Biology, History, and the Fate of an Endangered Species

JON FURMAN

Paper, 12 color illus., 8 halftones

The fascinating, definitive chronicle of the Timber Rattlesnake and its fate in the northeastern U. S. Soundly anchored in the latest scientific data, Furman proffers an accessible and engaging account of contemporary fieldwork and first-person interviews with herpetologists and old-time bounty hunters. For expert and lay readers interested in snakes, northeastern fauna and natural history, conservation, and endangered species, this volume clearly explicates the Timber Rattlesnake's biology as well as what happens and what to do when one bites. It also explores the troubling decline of the northeastern population caused by bounty hunting between the 1890s and the early 1970s, other past and present threats to the species' survival, and what measures are being taken—and additional ones that must be taken—to ensure that Timber Rattlesnakes survive and thrive in the northeastern United States. Historical and contemporary illustrations bring these reptiles and their world to life. *Timber Rattlesnakes in Vermont & New York* shines a new light on a maligned and misunderstood species.

To order a copy of this excellent work, contact:

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sherri.l.strickland@dartmouth.edu
(800) 639.6102 ext. 238
(603) 448-9429 fax

<http://www.upne.com>

Furman, Jon. University Press of New England, Lebanon, New Hampshire. 248 pp.
ISBN 978-1-58465-656-2. \$24.95.

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Visit the H.H.S. website at:
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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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MEMBER AT LARGE	Rick Marrs	(317) 549-3673
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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

Renewal

Name _____ **Date** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Phone _____ **Email Address** _____

Corresponding Member \$12.00

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Sustaining Member \$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, your membership will expire this month!