



# 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 25 Number 6

June 20

## June HHS Meeting

**June 18th 7:00 p.m.**

**Holliday Park Auditorium**

**Topic: Annual "Show and Tell" meeting**

**Speakers: HHS members**

With the school year finally ending, it is a good time to host a family event. Our annual "Show and Tell" meeting is always popular and generates a lot of participants. It is a great way to see what other members are keeping and you might get information that will help you add to your herp collection. HHS members are requested to bring one (or possibly two) of your favorite animal, books, artwork, or anything herp-related. Briefly describe your herp and discuss the proper care required. See you at this fun meeting!

## *Welcome new and returning members!*

### **New Members**

Josh Harrison  
Giankarlo K. Macapagal  
Laura Halsey  
William Phillipy  
Giankarlo Macapagal

### **Renewals**

Connor Davis  
James Gregory  
Jennifer Laughlin  
Courtney & Jeremy McIntire (Sustaining membership)  
Hoosier Mouse Supply (Sustaining membership)  
John Olson  
Andrea Quigley  
Eugene Holmes  
Zach Truelock (Sustaining membership)  
Chris Walker  
Jeff Wines  
James Kiser



**For Adoption:** 0.1 Central American Wood turtle. 12 years old and beautiful. Eats low protein dog food and night crawlers. Needs sufficient room to live that I can't provide. It's sad I have to give her up but it's the best for her. Contact Dave Mitchell at [turtlelovin@att.net](mailto:turtlelovin@att.net) or 317-570-9643

### **HHS members participate in Ecoblitz at MMSF**

HHS members helped to survey sections of Morgan Monroe State Forest on June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. An EcoBlitz was assembled to record species in specified sections of the forest. All wildlife and plants were surveyed over the course of the weekend.

Dr. Bob Brodman (St. Joseph College) had lead the Herp team both days. A total of 16 species and 200 individual animals found for the weekend! The HHS is proud to be a part of another conservation effort!

### **Snake Bite!**

by Ed Ferrer

When ever I am out doing snake shows for schools, libraries, etc. I am always asked if I have ever been bitten by any of my snakes. I always answer that question by asking how many people have dogs and cats to raise their hand. Then I ask them how many have been nipped or scratched by their pet? Most in attendance again raise their hands. But for some reason when someone gets bit by a pet snake there is a much more negative reaction.

I caution everyone that the word "tame" and "snake" should not be used in the same sentence. Even though through generations of captive breeding many species have become safely handled, there needs to be some caution when handling snakes. Let's remember that all snakes are equipped with a mouth full of needle sharp teeth, curved backward like fish hooks designed to hold prey items. So avoiding snake bites is important. Here are a few ground rules to follow when handling snakes.

(1.) Snakes don't see very well so fast movement often scares them sometimes causing a defensive strike. So move slowly when attempting to pick up a snake.

(2.) Since snakes do not have arms or legs, they are "head shy". Any movement toward their head threatens them and may result in a defensive strike. This is particularly important to stress to young children who always want to pat animals on the head! What if you want to handle a snake and it is coiled up in a corner so the head is close to where you want to pick up the snake? In that case I always use a pillow case (snake bag) to slowly cover the head and then pick it up by the middle of its body. I have never been bitten using this method.

(3.) Before picking up a snake, be sure to wash your hands and arms to remove any unwanted scents. This is particularly important if you have dogs, cats or other furry critters in the house. If a snake smells the scent of another animal it may trigger a feeding strike. It is not being aggressive but just acting upon a natural response. Some snakes in nature prey on other snakes. Many ophiophagous (snake eating species) are found in the exotic trade such as the common king snakes like the California king snake. If you handle one snake and then handle this specie you may get struck. So it is good to do a little research before buying your snake.

When I am asked what snakes would I recommend as a pet for a child, I always mention ball pythons and corn snakes as good starter species. They only get about four feet long and are generally very docile. However during a program I was doing for the Indiana State Museum summer camp, I made a gesture with my hands and was nipped by my corn snake. I went right along with my program and none of the children noticed. I made the mistake of moving my hand too fast around the snake. One of my friends was working in my booth at a teacher's convention and as we were setting up my ball

python suddenly struck my assistant's arm. We still don't know what caused that reaction. I think it might have been her perfume, just a guess.

Generally sand boas, rosy boas, most king snakes are also good candidates for being kept as pets. If one prefers larger species boa constrictors and Burmese pythons are generally considered to be very mellow if the above rules are followed. Burmese pythons have always been my personal favorite, but my most serious bites have been from my "Burms". Several years ago I was feeding Melvin, my largest Burm, by holding a warmed up jumbo size rat by the tail. Melvin lunged for the rat and hit my hand by mistake in a feeding response, rapping his coils around my arm. Fortunately I had one hand free so I grabbed his tail and unwound the coils off my arm and then worked his head off my hand. It took quite some time because all those teeth were curved backward. I ended up with four rows of teeth marks on the top of my hand and two rows of teeth marks on the bottom of my hand. Now I always use hemostats to hold the prey items so I am safely away from the strike zone. On another occasion Melanie, my other huge Burm, had just shed her skin. So I was going to remove the shed (and the feces that generally comes along with the shed). The sliding glass door was stuck so when i finally opened the cage she struck my hand! I realized that sudden movement must have startled her causing the strike. Again I made the mistake!

Snakes do not have eyelids so technically they never sleep as we think of sleep. But they do seem to rest in a somewhat sleepy state often. So be careful not to startle your snake. Let it know your intentions by first touching it with an object or your hand first before attempting to pick it up. Remember that you are hundreds of times larger than most of your snakes. You may think that handling it as a positive gesture but your snake may not share the same feeling. Remember in nature if a large being picks up a snake it usually means trouble. Often when a snake is picked up, its first instinct is to escape. Sometimes it takes a little time before it settles down. So be patient with your snake.

Remember snakes are actually wild animals that are at best habituated to being handled. Remember cats if allowed to roam outside quickly revert to their wild instinct and start stalking birds or mice. My snakes are beautiful examples of successful evolution as they found their place in nature. Most snakes prey on mice and rats so they are very beneficial to us humans. Keeping snakes safely as pets should increase our respect and understanding of these unique creatures. Hopefully by sharing some of my past mistakes will help others to avoid problems and get a better enjoyment of their pet snake.

## Herpetology Weekend 2014

By Laura Broadwater Kafka

"So, this weekend Rick Marrs and I took a mini vaca to Slade, Kentucky to take part in Herpetology Weekend, hosted by the Kentucky Reptile Zoo, owned by Kristen Wiley & Jim Harrison. On Friday morning we drove the back roads, taking in all the scenery. Kentucky is further along in their Spring, so green is the predominant color of nature now. Cruised in to

Slade and checked in just in time to be at the Hemlock Lodge to meet up with everyone for the first speaker, Bruce Kingsbury research findings on turtle behavior. Of special interest were the Blandings turtles, as one of their habitats happens to be near Pigeon Fork River in Spencer County, Northern Indiana. Then back to the Black Bear lodge to settle in and visit with our fellow Hoosier Society herpers. Saturday began with a hearty breakfast at Froggy Bottom Diner.

Marlene & Jen made the delicious homemade fair and interested chatter a warm welcome. Our stomachs satisfied, we first headed to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo property. Here there are barns designated for select groups of species determined by habitat. We browsed thru each, me picking the ones I thought most interesting and taking pictures. We all watched as Jim practiced his art in venom extraction. Quickly taking one snake after another, subduing them to his will, then collecting their venom in a cup for future goodwill. Next we joined a field trip, guided by Steve Bonney, to find salamanders and hike up into the hills. The natural bridges, rock formations and herps were so surprising, and the kids enthusiasm kept the energy high. The finds of the day were a rarely seen Green frog and small ephemeral pool brimming with Red-spotted Newts, and Marbled Salamander larvae, all in various stages of growth. The rain held off until we began to hike down.

The torrential downpour until we got in our cars! Then to the famous Miguel's Pizza to devour some slices. This place abuttes a rock climbers mecca, so is world-renowned! And very busy. You wait for your pizza, but you don't mind. The scenery of people and sights keeps it interesting. We returned to Hemlock in the evening to listen to Don Dourson speak about his animal experiences in Belize. Next Jim and Kristen's intern, Rachel, gave us a LIVE rundown on some of the venomous species they have gathered at the zoo over the years by taking them out of their prospective enclosures and setting them on a table. I had a very strong urge to lift my feet up on the chair, but didn't for fear of being called a wimp!

With nightfall brought strains of guitars, mandolins and singing by our own troubadours, Rick, Neill Jones & Jackie Fallowfield. Then the true nerds of the bunch traded stories and memories for an early morning bedtime. Sunday was easy. After packing & cleaning up our room, then breakfasting, all we had left scheduled was to get home. With 6 hours to

kill we hiked to the Natural Bridge. The climb, thru what seems to be an ancient forest, takes you to an arch of stone, naturally formed over millions of years worth of erosion. At the top you are standing above the tree canopy, so the view is simply breathtaking! This was one of the most fantastic trips I've ever been on! Have driven thru Kentucky, but never stopped to wander. The diversion was well worth it. The landscape is so different from our own in Indiana. In the deep foothills of the Appalachians it is a world unto its own. Like you've journeyed back to the Land Before Time!"

## Last month's speaker

By Jim Horton

Our guest speaker for the month of May was friend of the HHS, Mr. Mike Pingleton. Mike is an avid field herper and keeps notes on his website – sort of a blog-type site but much better.

Mike had given us a fine talk on the famous *Snake Road* in southern Illinois. The first portion of the talk covered the history of the area and how it was naturally formed by Mother Nature so many years ago. Then he had stated the real name of the road – Forest Road 345. I don't think anyone knows this "official" name. I sure didn't. But it was interesting to find out.

This area is around 2,500 acres and his home to 50 species of amphibians and reptiles. Many at their northern most range. Species commonly occurring along coastal regions such as the green treefrog, and the cottonmouth are common in this area. The mud snake is not commonly seen along snake road but does occur there.



He mentioned the changes in the law throughout the years such as the road closure. It is closed to vehicular traffic in the spring from March 15 to May 15 and again in the fall from October 1 to the 31<sup>st</sup>. The road closures give snakes and other species a fighting chance to cross the road from the swamps to the rock bluffs and vice-versa. The most known and respected law on the road is that all organisms are protected. You are prohibited from taking hooks, bags, containers, or any other collecting materials.

Mike had shown beautiful photos of his finds through the years and had given some tips for first-timers. Mike's first trip to the famed road was in 1977 when he was a young budding field herper. Since then he still enjoys his trips south; two, three, or sometimes four times a year. A few herps have managed to elude him and he hopes to chalk them off of his *life list* for this unique area some day.

I like to thank Mike for coming to my aid that evening shortly before his talk. I was giving the Herp of the month talk with an Eastern hognose when suddenly it spewed musk and liquid waste on to the floor. Mike quickly soaked it up with paper towel and all was well – Thanks Mike for the cleanup and a great talk!

## President's message

Jim Horton

The **Midwest Herpetological Symposium (MHS) October 17-19** is coming up quick! We are finalizing the event and registration should be online when you receive this issue.

Again, Items are needed for the fundraising auction. Help support the HHS by donating items such as artwork, books, supplies, etc. Your help is needed in order for us to host a successful conference. Please see me or any board member if you would like to help out.

The Hoosier Herpout was a blast and as always, we found some great herps! See the pics inside!

This month we feature our annual **Show and Tell meeting**. This is very popular with our membership. Don't forget to sign up early and please keep your presentation to a minimum so that everyone will have a chance.

## 2014 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**June 18, 2014** – HHS meeting, Topic – Show and Tell meeting. All current members are encouraged to participate with their animals. 7:00PM Holliday Park Nature Center, Auditorium.

**August 3, 2014** - 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) (next show - October 19)

**August 9, 2014** - National Amphibian Expo, Indianapolis, IN on Saturday, August 9th at Butler University - Atherton Student Union. Doors will at 9:00 a.m. EST and the event runs until 4:00 p.m. EST. \$8.00 adults, \$6.00 students/seniors, and children under 14 - \$5.00, kids under 3-free.

**October 17-19, 2014** – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Indianapolis, IN. Hosted by the HHS.



### Guest Speakers

Mike Pingleton - *"Isla Santa Catalina and the Quiet Cascabel: Adventure and Evolution in the Sea of Cortez"*

Carl Franklin - *"Custodian of Eden? Or a Preposterous Pipedream?"*

Jeff Holmes - *"Introducing (PARC) Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and (ARC) Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy."*

Christopher Jenkins (keynote speaker) - *"How a Young Girl's Love of North America's Largest Serpent Created a Global Institute of Herpetology"*

Lee Casebere - *"Hemi Quest -- A Search for New Populations of Four-toed Salamander (Hemidactylium scutatum) in Indiana from 2003 to*



2010"

Frank Paladino - *"Reflections on 30 years of Marine turtle research"*

Andrew Hoffman - *"Artificial Water Control and Amphibians: Do Moist Soil Units Provide Habitat for Salamanders?"*

Jim and Kristen Harrison - *"Our Venomous Relationship; a couples adventures with venom and venomous reptiles"*

P. David Polly, PhD. - *"Ectotherms in a changing world: reptiles and climate in the present, past, and future"*

Jarrett Maneck - *"Educational programming utilizing reptiles"*

- \* Friday night ice-breaker with a live animal presentation by Larry Battson.
- \* Saturday presentations from a host of fantastic guest speakers.
- \* Live snake exhibit of Indiana snakes (including venomous species).
- \* Saturday evening banquet with Keynote speaker.
- \* Hospitality room open to all registered attendees.
- \* Saturday night auction featuring many rare and hard to and items.
- \* Midwest Reptile Show - Sunday.
- \* Tours at the Indianapolis Zoo (behind the scenes).

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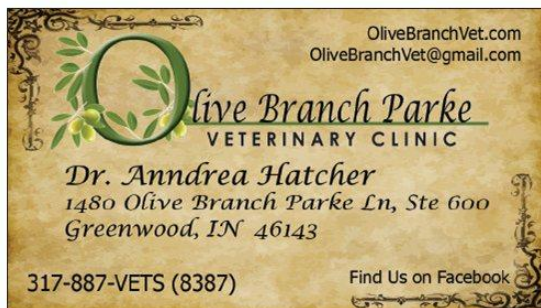
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# Hoosier Herpout 2014!



Hoosier Herpers



Eastern hognose (*Heterodon platirhinos*)



Holly Carter and midland water snake (*Nerodia sipedon pleuralis*)



Cookout!



In the field



Spring Peeper (*Pseudocris crucifer*)

## Your HHS Board of Directors for 2014

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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 7:00 p.m. at Holliday Park Nature Center. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meeting**

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**New Member**

**Renewal**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Individual/Family Membership \$15.00**

**Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more**

**Herpetological Interest(s)**

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**Hoosier Herpetological Society  
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Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

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