



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 24 Number 10

October 2013

Welcome Hoosier Herpetological Society members!

RENEWALS
Pat Hammond

October HHS meeting

October 23rd 7:00 p.m.

Holliday Park, Auditorium

Speaker: Jim Horton

Topic: "Snake Road Herping Adventures"

Snake Road is located in the Southern tip of Illinois and is one of the most famous areas for "herpers" to explore. It is located between a large swamp and a bluff where the snakes hibernate during the winter. To visit there is like going back in time. Everyone that explores this area is impressed by its unspoiled pristine rugged beauty. Jim Horton, besides being our society's president and newsletter editor, is an experienced field "herper" and excellent wildlife photographer. He, along with other HHS members, have taken several trips to snake road. I have only been able to go to Snake Road once but it is a trip I will never forget because of the vast variety of "herps" that can be found in the fall or spring as they journey into or out of the swamp. My favorite memory from Snake Road is my first sighting of water moccasins or cottonmouths on a field trip! Very rare in Indiana (if they do still exist in Indiana) these cottonmouths are the most common snake seen along this site! What a treat!

Let Jim and our other members share their experiences in this amazing place. Be sure to attend this program!

****Remember we are meeting on Oct. 23rd (the fourth Wednesday in the month) instead of the third because of a conflict with Holliday Park's schedule**

President's message

Jim Horton

Don't forget our next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday, **October 23**. Due to schedule conflicts, we had to change our normal meeting date to a week later.

I'd like to thank our members who helped with our interactive exhibit at Bradford Woods. Several of our members helped educate campers for the HandyCapableCamp. We took in a donation of \$300 for our efforts, not to mention knowing what we did for our visitors. Seeing the looks on their faces when they saw our animals was priceless.

Another HHS live herp exhibit is planned this month, October 19 at the Conservatory in Garfield Park. All HHS members are welcome to display animals. Contact me if you are interested in this event.

It's hard to believe but it is already time to start nominations for 2014 officers. We will start nominations at this next meeting. If you would like to nominate someone or even yourself, please do so. This is your organization.

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

Harding Poorman



www.hoosierherpsoc.org

Snake Road at Last!

By Mary Hylton

Photos by Erin Wagner

Bright and early on Saturday morning, September 28th, I had the pleasure of joining Roger Carter and Erin Wagner as the three of us headed down to that great herping mecca in southern Illinois known as Snake Road. Personally speaking, I was very excited because this was my very first visit to this hallowed spot. Ever since I first heard about it several years ago I knew I it must be a pretty special place. I wasn't disappointed.

The day was a beautiful one (sunny and 84 degrees) so it was no surprise that we encountered several people as we trekked along the road. Like most herpers we, too, were always eager to learn if the others had seen anything. A common greeting along the way was the question, "Have you seen anything?" Often we were given tips on where to look in order to find the critters that had just been spotted.

I learned something important on this trip (which I'll file away for future reference) about accepting people's word regarding the type of critter spotted. That is, don't be so quick to believe them literally. Of course, when someone tells you they've spotted a snake you're so excited to see it (especially when you're a newbie like me) that you can't

help but believe the "seasoned" folks. Naturally, when the idea was planted in our minds that a baby copperhead had been spotted up the road the power of suggestion took over. When we finally located the baby "copperhead" we believed that's what we were seeing. At first glance, it had coloring and markings similar to a copperhead as well as a bright yellow tail to attract prey (both cottonmouth and copperhead neonates have bright yellow tails as did others we saw) and so at first glance it was easy to believe that what we were seeing—and all subsequent babies that we encountered—were copperheads. After we arrived home from our journey some further research was done regarding these little guys and it appeared that what we were really seeing, in all likelihood, were baby cottonmouths--*not* copperheads.



Perhaps the one characteristic that persuaded me was our experience with one we saw the following day that not only would it stick out its tongue to show its displeasure at our presence but it would also open its mouth very wide to display its cottony interior. When I first saw that I remember thinking, "That's interesting. I didn't know copperheads did that, too." I must admit that when I saw that I was a little puzzled. Later research cleared the confusion—a tiny bit.

As we continued further down the road unfortunately we didn't encounter a large number of snakes unlike reports from previous groups' visits (40+ cottonmouths alone). On Snake Road itself we saw only a total of eleven snakes -- four adult cottonmouths (water moccasins—whichever name you prefer), 3 baby copperheads/cottonmouths, a ring-neck, two (DeKay's) brown snakes and finally, while not on Snake Road itself but on the levee road on our way out, two live water snakes. Overall, it wasn't too disappointing because even though we didn't see a large number of snakes we did manage to see a variety of other cool critters—some herps, some non-herps. For example, Erin spotted a walking stick on a nearby plant. We spent quite a bit of time snapping photos of it. Thank you, Roger, for so patiently holding the twig containing the walking stick so Erin and I could take as many pictures as needed!

☺

Not long after that Erin spotted a green tree frog firmly fixed to a shrub branch. That was my (and I believe Erin's) first time seeing one in the wild. So cool! Again, many pictures were taken of this very cool find.



© Erin Wagner

Perhaps Erin's most famous (or "infamous") sighting was that of the phantom ring-neck. I say "phantom" because it slithered away so quickly that neither Roger nor I had a chance to see it and confirm its presence. Although we believed her it became a source of fun as we referred to it as the "ring-neck". Even though only one of us saw it we're counting it anyway! ☺

I had the privilege of spotting my first adult cottonmouth (separate from the first one we saw) as it moved in the direction of the base of the bluff. Fortunately, I just happened to look down before taking a step. (That very important rule of watching where you step rang true on more than one occasion!) The snake was making its way to one of the cavities at the base of the bluff. Thankfully, its pace was slow enough that it enabled us to get some decent pictures. Roger also spotted one in another similar location near the bluff.

On our way back to the parking area we spotted two DeKay's brown snakes as they tried to scurry across the road in front of us. Both Erin and I each spotted one.

At one point, Roger lifted a log and spotted a very small (approximately 2 inches long) newt whose species remains to be determined or perhaps as you read this it will already have been identified. Its color and size just didn't seem to match any descriptions found in online identification guides.

We also spotted several tree frogs, green frogs and leopard frogs along the way.

Although Saturday was sunny and beautiful Sunday turned out to be quite the opposite. Rain and cooler temperatures moved in overnight and greeted us Sunday morning as we peered outside our hotel window. Fortunately by the time we finished breakfast the rain had stopped and it was merely misting and overcast. We simply would not allow the conditions to daunt our herping spirits and traveled to another area near some railroad tracks where we continued our treasure hunt and spent the remainder of our time. We also thought that perhaps the damp conditions might invite amphibians to emerge in greater numbers. We were not disappointed!

As we walked along the railroad tracks we spotted several interesting things including some really neat varieties of fungi inhabiting logs along the banks.

Our first critter encounter was with a cooperative little sport in the form of a five-lined skink. He patiently retained a photogenic pose with his long tail curved around just so for an extended period of time that just begged for a photo shoot. We certainly didn't want to disappoint! To look at him you'd think he was expecting us! We also spotted a slimy salamander and several eastern newts (10 or more) whose color matched the color of the rust-colored rails. They were so well camouflaged that they could easily be missed but then that is the purpose of camouflage, right?

One unexpected find was that of a female crawdad who appeared to be carrying a cluster of eggs. (I affectionately dubbed her "craw-mom"---it's ok, you can groan now). She had positioned herself beside one of the railroad ties and anytime a potential predator approached she would wave her forearms wildly in an attempt to fend off the intruder. She was quite large (an educated guess would place her at approximately 4-5 inches long) and similar in coloration to that of a lobster (red/orange/white).

As we trekked over the tracks perhaps the most curious sighting was neither an animal or a vegetable but rather a mineral. For a stretch of about 10 or so feet there appeared to have been placed --very deliberately in the center of each railroad tie-- a small pile of rocks in a variety of sizes (ranging from 1/4 inch to 2 inches in

diameter). This went on for quite a distance and we wondered who the "gatherers" might have been. Bored children of adult herpers/hikers? An industrious and fastidious critter of some sort? Certainly did leave one to wonder. Although the identity of the "rock gatherers" may never be known the presence of these precisely placed little rock clusters definitely lent an air of mystery to the day and blended in well with the feel of the cool, gray mistiness that enveloped us and our surroundings

Finally, it was time to call it a day and around 3:30 the tired but content herpers began their journey home. I never did spot that rough green I was looking for but hey, what better reason to plan a return visit?

September meeting – Review

Guest Speaker – Dr. Richard S. Funk MA, DVM

Title: *Treating Parasites in Captive Reptiles*

By Jim Horton

Dr. Funks' talk instilled thoughts in my head of taking even better care of my herp collection than I currently do.

His talk covered common veterinarian procedures and listed common problems and occurrences with captive reptilians and amphibians.

He lamented the fact that when getting a fecal sample, the fresher the better. A quick reminder with visuals of what healthy and unhealthy feces was given along with the content of it.

Another form of retrieving a fecal sample is to enter the cloaca and sample from the lower intestines. An endoscope is used to check stomach content.

EctoParasites included mites and ticks. He noted that every collection in the world has the same snake mites. It is a single species. I learned that adult female mites lay only a single egg. In fact, a slide showed a female with an egg growing inside the body. One of the best methods for ridding a collection of mites is to use Provent a mite. Bedding spray from your local Meijer, Target, or Walmart stores is available and works well too. No pest strip should be avoided because of its toxicity. It has been known to cause brain and liver damage in reptiles.

Some of the parasites that occur in amphibians and reptiles:

Cryptosporidium is an infection that causes diarrhea and ultimately, death and is common in leopard geckos. To date, there is no cure.

Cestodes are tapeworms that grow in many animals including humans and reptiles alike.

Trematodes or flukes are found in the digestive tracts of reptiles. Some species inhabit the lungs and urinary systems.

Nemodotodes are worms such as tape, whip, hook, and roundworms. These worms can live anywhere in the body of a host such as in organs or even in the skin.

Some worms occur only in herps such as the thornyheaded worms (acanthocephalans). These inhabit the stomach or intestines of turtles, frogs, and toads.

Dr. Funk noted that there are no de-wormers that kill all worms. Some work for one species and another might treat a different one. But most are treatable. Some are even beneficial.

One statement given by Dr. Funk was profound - There are no drugs approved for reptiles. There is no market for them. Most used by veterinarians are drugs used for treatment in mammals. Some of these drugs work for reptiles and some do not. There are drugs that may be used to treat a lizard but may kill a turtle. It has appeared to be trial and error with herp veterinary medicine.

That last statement I'll mention is one that may affect the audience the most. 99% of Dr. Funks' client problems are due to poor or misinformed husbandry.

HHS members at the 2013 Midwest Herpetological Symposium



Photo – Angela Thomas



The HHS thanks **Zoo Med** for our raffle donations.

KNIVES AND HERP ART (part 30)

Photos and text by Roger Carter

This we found at a flea market in Indianapolis, Indiana. It shows two snakes whose rear portions are wrapped around each other, almost a mating position(?), resting in the horns of a goat-like skull. The snakes are a dark brown but there is a little pattern that is visible. The front part of the snakes separate from the body and have knife blades. The entire unit is twenty-five inches long. When separated the body is ten and one quarter inches long and each of the head portions are fourteen and one/quarter inches long with the stainless steel blades six and three/quarter inches long. The edges are not sharp. This was made in China.



IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT CYRIL STEBBINS (1915-2013)

Robert C. Stebbins, Professor Emeritus of Zoology and Curator Emeritus in Herpetology, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California at Berkeley, died peacefully at his home in Eugene, OR, on September 23, 2013, at the age of 98 years and 6 months.

Stebbins was the preeminent scholar studying amphibians and reptiles in North America, and was active professionally until his last year of life. From his first amphibian book in 1951 to his last book on Amphibians and Reptiles of California (2012, Univ. California Press) he was a productive and influential force.

He was also a superb artist, both of scientific illustrations and of portraits and landscapes. Throughout his career Bob Stebbins was a strong force in conservation biology and was very influential in the establishment of parks and reserves, particularly in the Mojave Desert.

He was an educator who contributed importantly to elementary and middle school science instruction, stressing involvement, and was an effective and influential university professor. It was his strong belief that the principal problem facing humans on this planet was over-population and all that flows from it.

Above all, Bob Stebbins was a wonderful human being, a true naturalist, and a compassionate and involved citizen. We celebrate the life of a very special friend and colleague.

Kindly provided by Dr. David B. Wake.
Source: The Center for North American Herpetology

Two Herpetologists Discover Four Legless Lizard Species in California

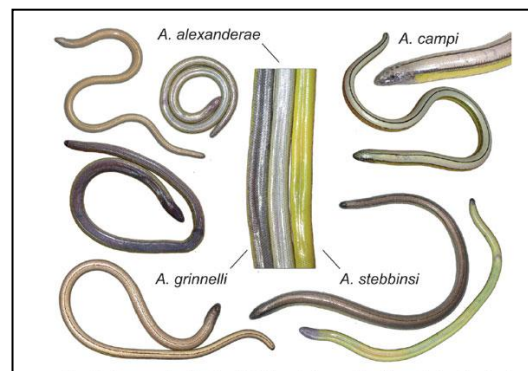
*It was previously thought that just a single species of legless lizard, *Anniella pulchra* existed in the California.*

September 18, 2013

Herpetologists Theodore J. Papenfuss of UC Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and James F. Parham of California State University, Fullerton have discovered four new species of legless lizard in California and have published their findings in the *Journal Breviora*, which is published by the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. It was previously thought that just a single species of legless lizard existed in the state, but the discovery of four new species brings to five the number of known legless lizards that call California home.



The Bakersfield legless lizard (*Anniella grinnelli*).
Photo by James Parham



The two scientists have been studying and collecting legless lizards for the last 15 years and noticed that the coloration of the lizards, the number and the arrangement of their scales, as well as the numbers of their vertebrae were different. A DNA analysis of the specimens as well as those in museums confirmed that they were indeed distinct species.

The lizards were discovered in unusual areas, including the sand dunes of Antioch, on the fringe of a runway at Los Angeles International Airport, the oil fields of the San Joaquin Valley, a remote canyon east of the Sierras and an empty lot in Bakersfield.

The lizards were named after four UC Berkeley naturalists who have contributed their knowledge to the university over the years. *Anniella stebbinsi* is named for Berkeley lizard specialist Robert C. Stebbins. *Anniella alexanderae* is named for Annie Alexander a Berkeley philanthropist and amateur naturalist who in 1908 donated \$7,000 to the university to build the Berkeley Zoology museum. *Anniella grinelli* is named after Joseph Grinell, the first director of the museum that Alexander donated money to found, and an expert wildlife of the Sierras. *Anniella campi* is named after Berkeley paleontologist Charles Lewis Camp, who was also an early director of the UC Museum of Paleontology.

HHS Brown County "Herping" Field Trip

By Jim Horton

Our trip to the hills of southern Indiana wasn't without one big problem – rain. The rain was falling the previous day but after morning showers, the sun did appear for a while. Our tour leader, Brittany Davis Swinford gave us a review of the animals in the nature center. Most of the native snakes had already been released for the season. They do keep a timber rattlesnake year-round and because its origin is unknown, it cannot be released. This specimen was taken in from an arrest involving a poacher.

Our trip outdoors involved a sweep of the back of the nature center. She mentioned that snakes are found around the building frequently in the summer months. Then we combed the botanical garden area but came up empty. A drive to some park destinations brought us to a clearing near a ravine. Just as soon as we all got out of the cars two of our young members shouted, 'copperhead!' As we approached the snake in question, they were correct in their identification. We were quite proud.



Copperhead sighting

More searching and hiking down the embankment led us to a rock formation known as Copperhead Cave. It is more of a rock washout which over time, created a large pocket with an overhang. Here, several members made their way inside and huddled for photos. Then the rain started. Another quick trip down the road brought us to a parking area near "Dead Man's Curve". We searched some rocks in the area but the rain was just too much. After gathering back at the nature center, we called it a day. The weather was a bit cool and cloudy. Not the best for herping in October. We'll start up with more trips next spring.

Thanks to Brittany for taking the time to chaper us around the park, Ed Ferrer for setting up the event, and Rick Marrs the initial idea for it.

HHS at Bradford Woods



HHS members showing animals.



Partial HHS display.



Our helpers for the day

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN By Jim Horton

The HHS was invited to an event called HandyCapableCamp (HCC) at Bradford Woods in Martinsville on Saturday, September 14.

HHS members happily showed up with their animals to help educate the campers and raise funds for the HHS. The event lasted all day from 9am to 4pm. Thanks to Roger Carter, Angela Thomas, Barbara Filtri and Jim Horton for utilizing their Saturday to help the HHS and HCC. A group of young girls who were working at the event were eager to help out with the HHS display. They had volunteered to hold and show snakes to the campers most of the day. I didn't get their names but would like to thank them for their help.

2013 EVENTS

October 12/13, 2013 - North American Reptile Breeders Conference - **Tinley Park** Oct. 12th & 13th, 2013 Sat 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Sun 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

October 19, 2013 – HHS live herp display at Garfield Park Conservatory. 10am – 1pm. Volunteers needed. All HHS members are welcome to participate with their animals at this event.

October 20, 2013 - 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 Next date: December 8

October 23, 2013 – HHS meeting, Speaker: Jim Horton (HHS), Topic: "Snake Road Herping Adventures"

November 3, 2013 - Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm, \$6.00 admission www.indianareptileexpo.com HHS has a booth at this event!

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Parking at Holliday Park

7:00pm to 9:00pm is our new meeting time at **Holliday Park**.

Holiday Park entrance gates close automatically when it gets dark. **After darkness hours, drive your car up to the gates and they will open.** Also, we need to park behind the hill or knoll. Parking is allowed closer to the center on the other side of the knoll only if the vehicle has a handicap sticker. Park rangers do patrol the lot and will tow vehicles that are parked in the wrong lot.

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 _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Email Address _____

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

Herpetological Interest(s)

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