



# THE MONITOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the  
Conservation of all reptiles and amphibians

Volume 17 Number 6

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## President's Message

Ed Ferrer

June has been a very busy month for our society. Many of our members have been busy with exhibits that help inform the public about reptile and amphibian habits, offering advice on the captive care of these animals and discussing conservation issues regarding these species in Indiana and the world. Several of your herp members have participated in the annual Wesselman Woods "Reptile Invasion" in Evansville this past weekend of June 10-11. A special thank you to all the members that went out of town for that weekend to help support our society and educate the public about herp conservation and care. A few of us took part in the "Pets In America" event at the Indiana State Museum on the weekends of June 3-4, "Scales and Tails" and June 10-11, "Exotic Pets". It was a pleasure for me to meet other members of the pet industry and share ideas regarding our "pets" and talking with people from all walks of life that have interests and questions about herps. A special thank you to those members who participated in these exhibits. Your efforts in behalf of the herp society is greatly appreciated.

Our biggest exhibit yet will be at the Indiana State Museum on the weekend of July 14-16. That's correct, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Since our past "Reptile Days" have been so popular the museum has decided to expand the event from one day on Saturday to the whole weekend. We will need a maximum effort from our members to make sure we have enough coverage for this three-day event. I know our members will come through and make this the best event yet!

Our July meeting will be our traditional "Show and Tell" meeting. Be ready to show off your favorite two or three herps and discuss their habits and care tips. This is always a good time as we learn about the care and habits of our member's herps and gain new information and perhaps make decisions on possible new additions to our own collections. A special "thank you" to Kristen Wiley from the Kentucky Reptile Zoo for last month's program on her and Jim Harrison's trip to Arizona and West Texas in search of the elusive Mohave rattlesnake. She gave us a great account of the herps that they encountered on the trip and importance of the Mohave rattlesnake in their research efforts. Hope to see you at our next meeting on June 21st.

# Hoosier Herpout '06

By Jim Horton

The Hoosier Herpout is still going strong six years in the run. We hope it will continue to do so in the years to come. It is one of our only official outdoor field herping activities as a collective group of herpers. This year was another good one (as far as weather goes). The temps were in the 70's and the sun was at full strength that day. The near perfect day had followed several unseasonably coolness and heavy rain.

HHS members met at the Hardin Ridge shelter house parking lot and dispersed to the tin fields. We had expected to find a multitude of herps that day. At most of our stops, the familiar Northern ringneck snakes were easily found. These little guys far outnumbered all other species found all day. Southern black racers were next on the list of abundant snakes found. A total of five Eastern box turtles were encountered early on. Four adults had easily been found by walking the sun breaks in the woods. One of our members uncovered a young box turtle by flipping tin.

Several Northern fence lizards had been temporarily captured for photography purposes and then released (as were a few five-lined skinks.) Disappointedly, only one Eastern milk snake was found under tin all day.

I headed back to set up camp and the others headed to the "Mill Creek" area. It was reported that one of our younger members, Dillon McBee, dashed for a rather large Midland water snake. His dad Ralph said he fell into the chilly water and was covered from head to toe. He did catch the snake though (that's a real herper for ya). Other herps found near the creek were green frogs and longtail salamanders.

Not a lot of herps were encountered that day but the real reason for the herpout is to get our members together and have a good time in the great outdoors. Thanks to everyone who attended and made another successful herpout. Maybe we'll see even more next year....



Plastron of eastern box turtle.



A handsome male eastern box.



Hoosier herpers identifying their find.



Black racer

**INDIANA STATE MUSEUM**  
"Pets in America" Featuring Reptiles - July 14-16

## Editor's Corner

Jim Horton

I am grateful to have writers contributing to the monitor on a monthly basis. The past few months have been good field herping articles and we aren't stopping there. This issue features herping articles by Elliot Stahl and Barry Hammer. I hope you'll enjoy them as much as I did!

Also, we are communicating with the staff at Butler University regarding our meeting room. We may soon be out of luck for future meetings there. We are looking into a possible alternative facility for our future meetings. We will keep you posted as to any changes.

## Herpetology Weekend 2006

By Elliot Stahl

On Friday April 21<sup>st</sup> Dave Stahl and I drove down to Slade Kentucky to go to herpetology weekend. We left early and when we first arrived we decided to take a hike in the gorge. We stopped and visited a few smaller waterfalls near the road on the way into the Red River Gorge, before we parked at Martins Fork. Here we took a hike up to the top of the hill and around some rock shelters. When we were finished with our hike we then went and visited the cave at natural bridge state park. We didn't see any herps in the cave. After going to photograph a few more waterfalls we went back to Natural Bridge State Park, and we took the short hike up to the large natural bridge. It was getting late and stormy so we did not stay long on top of the bridge. Dave and I then hiked back down to the room where the talks were held. The talks were very good as usual at herp weekend, but after the talks was when the real herping started. Dave and I drove back to our hotel and met up with Angela Thomas and Dale, to go road cruising. Before we left the parking lot of the red river inn we found two or three mountain chorus frogs calling in a small stream next to the hotel. Angela also found a very large toad hopping around the parking lot as well. Once we finished photographing the amphibians by our hotel we all piled into Angela's car and headed for the gorge for some night driving for herps. It was relatively warm and very wet, so we were not sure what to expect. Very early on we started spotting numerous toads in which we found ourselves weaving around the road

avoiding them the rest of the night. The first non toad in the road that we spotted was a wood frog. I tried to catch him but he darted for the hill too fast. Then some one spotted a snake. Dale jumped out and caught the small water snake crossing the road. We photographed him and sent him on his way. Next frog in the road was a medium sized pickerel frog which hung around long enough for us to take his picture. We drove a short distance more when Angela stopped for a larger frog that turned out to be a green frog sitting right on the yellow line in the road. He also allowed us to take his picture without him trying to escape. Then not too far up the road we spotted something that looked like a salamander on the road. I jumped and raced over to find a very beautiful red salamander sitting in the road. He was quite a find. Next stop was another pair of pickerel frogs in which we photographed. We drove for a little bit and didn't see much but smaller toads, until we spotted one massive toad in the road. I got out and couldn't resist taking a picture of the large brightly colored toad, before we moved him off the road. We also found a small grey tree frog in the road that posed for a few pictures as well. Before long we spotted something else along the road. When we got out we discovered a very vibrant colored orange salamander that we later found out was an adult stream salamander. We photographed him for a while before moving him off the road. We had driven a long way out and decided it was time to turn around. After we turned around we did not find much for a while. Then all of the

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sudden Angela and Dale spotted a large

snake in the road. Dale jumped out and confirmed that it was a big northern copperhead. We all photographed the pretty snake and he cooperated well and posed quite nicely on the road. Once we were done admiring the snake we made sure he crawled off the road back to safety. We all thought that the copperhead, which was the highlight of the trip so far, would probably be the last nice find. Everyone was surprised when we spotted yet another red salamander laying on the wet road. This one was much larger and prettier; it was quite a find. The four of us all returned (very happy and tired) to our hotel rooms well past midnight after a great night of herping. Dave and I awoke the next morning and drove over to the Inn and had breakfast. After that we met everyone in the hallway of the Inn at Natural Bridge to get ready for the day trips that were held at herp weekend. We decided to go with John Megregor the Kentucky State Herpetologist. He took us to Edwards Branch in the red river gorge. After a short hike we flipped some tin and discovered a few ring neck snakes and some a very small Dekay's snake. Some other people went and flipped rocks in the stream and came up with many different kinds of salamanders and newts, including a seal salamander and a tiny red eft. A five-lined skink was also found under the tin. The group traveled a little farther on into the woods and somebody found a four-toed salamander. I set the four-toed on a rock and took a few pictures of him. When every one finished looking around by the stream we headed back to the cars where another ring neck snake was found that was much larger than the one before, I took a quick picture of him before he was put back.



The field trip was very successful and after we got back to the Inn we went down to the Kentucky reptile zoo where we watched Jim Harrison milk a few cobras. Dale, Dave and I took a hike near Jims place after we were done watching the extraction. We fought through a bunch of sticker bushes to get to the top of a hillside that was lined with cliffs. Here Dave found a large cave salamander tucked inside a crevice in the sand stone cliff. After more searching the hillside and with no other herps found the three of us decided to go back to the park and hike up to the Natural Bridge again in the nicer weather. The hike was a lot more crowded this time but the view was nicer instead of the storm clouds my dad and I saw Friday night now the view on top of the bridge was sunny. On the way down from the Natural Bridge we decided to take a different trail down to the Inn. We were glad we did too, after we spotted a five-lined skink on a tree next to the trail who posed for pictures. Farther on down the trail I spotted a very pretty black rat snake sunning himself next to the trail. I took a lot of pictures of him before we continued down to the parking lot of the hotel. We watched yet again more great talks that night; the most memorable was one on herping in Cost Rica. That night we did a little more road cruising but we did not have as much luck. Unfortunately, all we found were some small dead snakes. Sunday morning we returned to the Kentucky Reptile Zoo and looked at all the displays of venomous snakes. Then we headed home after yet another great herp weekend.



**Northern Red Salamander** – Elliot Stahl

# Iroquois Sand and The Black Soil Prairie

By Barry Hammer

In Indianapolis during the second half of May, when auto racing begins to occupy the thoughts of many, my thoughts often turn to the Grand Prairie and its reptiles. For many years it was an annual pilgrimage to "Bullsnake Country" that was among my most anticipated field trips. Now, after several years of abstinence, I was going to return to "Bullsnake Country".

The morning of May 20<sup>th</sup>, Dale Schoentrup, Rick Marrs and I set out for a day of herping the Grand Prairie region of Illinois and adjacent Indiana. Between Beaverville, Illinois and Willow Slough Fish and Wildlife Area in Newton County Indiana, is something of a Midwest Mecca for snake hunters. This area of relict sand prairie would be where we would spend the majority of our day. We would then work our way south, into black soil prairie and the farm roads of Benton and Warren Counties in Indiana.

The Island of sand, surrounded by farm fields, in Iroquois County Illinois is an impoverished area. Most of the resident people live in ramshackle homes or trailers. There are many vacant lots strewn with corrugated metal, plywood, car hoods, and the remains of collapsed buildings. Truly a paradise for the region's snakes and snake hunters from many miles away. Not only are herptiles plentiful here but several kinds are largely confined to this sandy environment.

It was about 65 degrees and warming quickly. We were finding Prairie Racerunner lizards almost immediately. As their name suggests, these streamlined ground dwellers are very fast. They dart away from under seemingly every other piece of cover flipped. These lizards seemed even more abundant than I remembered. Despite their speed, we managed to secure specimens for our ongoing video diary of herps we encounter.

Only a short time had passed before Rick captured the day's first snake. It was a blue racer in its pre-shed opaque stage but still an attractive blue-gray specimen. These snake

are not confined to sand areas but it is here where some of the prettiest ones are found. Occasionally, being almost completely sky blue in color, these snakes can put shame to the darker more southerly individuals.

We scoured twin junk fields on both sides of the road, seeing nothing but more racerunners and a single Fowler's toad found by Dale. As I returned to the car ahead of Rick and Dale, I spied a sheet of metal roofing in the bottom of a crater-like hole. Although only 30-40 feet from the car, all three of us had managed to miss it. Under this, coiled tightly in a cavity of a cinder block, was the day's second snake... a young adult bullsnake about four feet in length. This species is closely tied to sand prairie habitat in this part of its range. That bullsnake at hand performed admirably for Rick's video camera, coiling and hissing while rearing its forebody off the ground before finally giving me a nip on the hand. This characteristic behavior of bullsnakes is largely bluff and once grasped, bullsnakes tend to be quite docile.

It had now warmed into the low 70's. We moved down the sand road and pulled into the drive of a vacant corner lot surrounded by the dilapidated remains of a wooden picket fence. This lot had a concrete trailer pad ringed by sheets of corrugated tin and two large flat squares of metal, nearly the size of plywood panels. It was here we would encounter snakes three and four. At almost the same time, just fifteen or so minutes after the first, Rick and Dale both uncovered nice adult bullsnakes... a male and female, both in the six-foot range. The female was particularly fat as she was full with eggs.

As we were about to move on, we were approached by a woman from across the road. "You all can hunt snakes over here," she said. This is all we needed to hear, as the property was littered with debris and looked very interesting indeed. As Dale and I began to search the yard, Rick performed an impromptu snake presentation for several small children that had emerged from the house. Using one of the large bullsnakes from across the road, Rick soon had the children holding it and posing for his video camera. **(continued –next page)**

From under a sheet of plywood beside a shed, I caught the fourth bullsnake of the last forty-five minutes. The five-foot snake was removed from the property to satisfy the adult residents of the home, only to be released a few lots down the road.

We were not the only herpers in the sands this day; several remaining sites we visited had already been hit by others. Despite this, Rick and I had separate encounters with Western Slender Glass Lizards in an area of knee-high grass. These legless lizards are surprisingly quick as they swim through the grass. Although I pursued mine for thirty yards or so, I came up empty handed. The one Rick pursued, seemed to vanish as we converged in an effort to corner it.

As we were nearly ready to leave the sand prairie, I saw a thin form just emerging from the grass onto the road. As it was moving quickly, I slammed on the breaks. Shouting, "Snake!" and jumping out, I was followed closely by Rick. We both grabbed the small thin snake, just before it left the road opposite from where it came. It was a beautiful Western Ribbon Snake. Charcoal black with pale yellow lateral stripes and a golden orange dorsal stripe, these gorgeous snakes are not abundant here. This sixth snake of the day was certainly a pleasing find.

South of the sands you will find yourself in an area filled with farm fields of rich, black earth. This is the muck prairie or black soil prairie portion of the Grand Prairie region. Herping spots and species are few here, due largely to intensive agricultural activities. One species that continues to do well here is my favorite non-venomous Indiana snake. The Western fox snake manages to exist comfortably here, along stream courses, fence rows and in the small wooded areas that remain. Finding this species would be our goal for the remainder of the day.

We would criss cross our way South, along the grid of unpaved farm roads near the state line, from Kentland Indiana to near Covington Indiana. There are a small number of abandon farm yards in this area where I have found fox snakes several times before. I recommend you concentrate on the small Islands of forest when herping this

area, as this is where you are most likely to find ruins of structures with flappable debris.

Sites with tin and other suitable cover are not abundant here. After checking a few without any finds, we were soon running out of territory. We saw many spots that looked promising but were posted or inaccessible for other reasons. There are many inhabited farmhouses with adjacent barns and other structures that would make for excellent herping if you could get permission from the property owners. I have occasionally knocked on doors and asked but more often I have asked people doing yard work or farmers in their fields. Many herpers are not comfortable with this approach. You get a variety of reactions from people but this method often pays off.

It was getting late and I don't think Dale or Rick would have minded if we called it a day. They weren't complaining and I'm persistent so we continued for a few more miles of bumpy gravel road. We soon found a recently burned down house with a large wooden barn and a slightly smaller, metal-sided storage barn. As I was flipping some debris inside the metal building, I heard sounds of success outside. Around the corner came Rick and Dale with smiles on their faces. Dale was holding a nice looking fox snake. There was another huge section of wall that we had no hope of moving but we were quite satisfied with our day.

We had set out to find bullsnakes and Western fox snakes. We succeeded on both of these goals and found several extras as well. This was, as far as I'm concerned, a truly outstanding field trip. I had forgotten how much I enjoy herping this region. I don't think I'll let so much time pass, before I again return to the Iroquois Sands and the black soil prairie.

**General Meeting: Wednesday June 21, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Guest Speaker: Dr. Robert Brodman**  
**Topic: *Herping Adventure in South Africa***  
**Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Lecture Room#108**

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to present Dr. Robert Brodman as our guest speaker. Dr. Brodman is a biology professor at St. Joseph's College and is one of our favorite guest speakers. He has done numerous field studies in Northwest Indiana on various amphibian and reptile species. "Dr. Bob", as his students affectionately call him, always gives an informative and educational presentation filled with humor. This month's topic is his herping adventure in South Africa! This promises to be a "can't miss program"! Come and join us for an informative and fun evening! See you there!

**22nd Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium**  
**Nov. 3-5, 2006**

We are finalizing our preparations for hosting the 22nd Annual Midwest Herpetological Symposium for the weekend of November 3-5, 2006. This symposium will be the same weekend as a huge Indy Reptile Expo at the Indiana Convention Center. All attendees will have access to the expo and its world famous breeders as well as a great schedule of both national and local guest speakers presenting topics for everyone, from rattlesnakes to turtles, and crocodilians to amphibians. Our meetings will be at the Westin of Indianapolis, a four star Hotel offering the finest in accommodations and a covered walkway across the street to the Convention Center and to Circle Center Mall. The Westin is offering the convention rate for three days before and after the symposium to all attendees. If you haven't been to Indianapolis recently, you will be amazed at all the restaurants, night clubs, museums, Indianapolis Zoo and many other attractions that are very close to downtown Indy. You may want to plan your next vacation around the symposium! To make your reservation at the Westin Hotel and take advantage of the special symposium room rates, call the Westin Hotel at (317) 262-8100 and mention the Midwest Herp Symposium. You may also check out our ad in the August issue of **Reptiles** magazine.

To get updated information and complete list of speakers on the symposium, check our website at [www.hoosierherpsociety.org](http://www.hoosierherpsociety.org). Be thinking of herp related items that you may want to donate for our auction following Saturday night's banquet. We are still accepting donations and sponsors for this event. The Hoosier Herpetological Society is a 501C non-profit organization so any financial support is fully tax deductible. Let's all work together to make this symposium the best ever!

## Birthday Present

By Ed Ferrer

Part of my snake education business now that I am retired from teaching science is doing birthday parties with my snakes. These are always fun, using my snakes to teach kids about reptiles and nature in a close, informal hands-on setting. All the kids get a free snake souvenir and the birthday child gets his or her picture taken with their favorite snake during the party as a special memory. Last May I scheduled a birthday party for Hoosier herp member Mitchell Wehrle. He and his dad, Chris, have been coming to our monthly meetings regularly for the past year and he asked his dad about our discussions regarding the upcoming Midwest Herp Symposium. His dad explained to him that it took money to rent the hotel rooms, pay the guest speakers' travel costs, advertising and other expenses. Mitchell, on his own, decided to include in the birthday invitations that instead of bringing presents, he would request that his guests bring donations to the Hoosier Herp Society to be used to help fund the upcoming symposium! When his dad told me about this extraordinary idea I have to admit I got a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye. I know that most 8-year-old boys look on their birthdays as a big event and a chance to cash in on their favorite toys and video games. To think an 8-year-old boy would pass on such an opportunity and instead donate to our society was simply amazing! I made sure that I brought some special herp related prizes for Mitchell to show my appreciation for his kind act. As it turned out all seventeen of his expected guests arrived and we had a very special birthday party! I got to thinking if an 8 year old child would do this for our society just think what we adults could do!

### ***HERP HAPPENINGS***

**June 21, 2006** – General Meeting - Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Robert Broadman, St. Joseph College. Topic: *Herping Adventure in South Africa*.

**June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006** – 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. info. table. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)

**July 14-16, 2006** – Reptile Weekend, Indiana State Museum, Indpls, IN. H.H.S. members will exhibit live amphibians and reptiles to the public. Part of the *Pets in America* exhibit at the museum.

**July 19, 2005** – General Meeting, Annual Show and Tell Meeting. Bring in a few of your most prized or interesting herps and tell a little about them. Open to all members.

**July 29<sup>th</sup> 2005** – H.H.S. live amphibian/reptile exhibit. Franklin Library, Franklin, IN 10 A.M. – 2 P.M.

**November 3-5, 2006** – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Westin Hotel, downtown Indianapolis. In coroporation with the Indy Reptile Expo, Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana



## Classifieds

**For Sale:** 2 Neodesha arboreal cages 2ft x 2ft, in excellent condition 100.00 each. Green tree pythons c.b. 03/03/06 high yellow parents, 400.00 each. P. Metallica Gooty Ornamental tarantulas c.b.02/21/06 rare in U.S. collections 300.00 each. all animals guaranteed to be eating and healthy. Mike Wood 574-269-3441 or email at: [2bears@myvine.com](mailto:2bears@myvine.com)

**Ride Needed:** Bloomington HHS member in need of a ride to the meetings, and possibly the Midwest Reptile Show. Will chip in \$ for gas. Please tell me I'm not the only HHS member in the Bloomington/Bedford area! Contact Sheryl at [Roseroar1@aol.com](mailto:Roseroar1@aol.com)

**For Sale:** '05 rough-scaled sand boas, eating and healthy, \$50.00 '05 Indian Sand Boas, growing and eating fine, the largest of the sand boas, \$90.00 each. Call Jim Horton at (317) 865-0464 or email [Stardali84@hotmail.com](mailto:Stardali84@hotmail.com)

### **Monty's Reptiles, Education and Adoption**

A non-profit organization based in Terre Haute, IN dedicated to educating the public about local and exotic reptiles. We also take in unwanted reptiles, and find new appropriate homes for them.

Website: [www.montysreptiles.org](http://www.montysreptiles.org)

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Visit the H.H.S. website at:  
[www.HoosierHerpSociety.org](http://www.HoosierHerpSociety.org)

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 IBM or compatible, formatted, 5¼ or 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.