



# 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 9

September 2014

HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**Celebrating 25 years!**

## **September HHS Meeting**

**Wednesday Sept. 17th 7:00 p.m.**

**Holliday Park Auditorium**

**Guest Speaker: Chris Rex (Ball State University)**

**Topic: "Snakes: Beyond the Scales and Dispelling their Myths"**

Chris Rex is this month's guest speaker. Chris received his B.S. in Zoology, Ecology, and Biochemistry from Ball State University and an M.S. degree from the University of Northern Colorado. His master's research focused on venom variation within rattlesnakes as a function of season and captivity. He is planning to begin his PhD next year. For the past 15 years he has given snake presentations at schools and state parks to audiences ranging from children to Indiana's full-time park naturalists. He also has created online articles and videos about snakes. His presentation will cover many of the myths and misconceptions regarding snakes and trying to replace people's fear with respect. Be sure to attend this interesting meeting.

## **2014 AMPHIBIAN EXPO DONATES FUNDS**

Proceeds from the National Amphibian Expo in Indianapolis will be donated to support the **Crawfish Frog Research and Recovery Project** in Indiana. The amount of \$1,500.00 is a result of an outstanding event turnout and a great silent and live auction.

Dr. Michael Lannoo, Rochelle Stiles, and Jonathan Swan attended the event provided some great information regarding their work with Crawfish Frogs here in Indiana.

# The First Time I Attended NARBC at Tinley Park

By Mary Hylton

If you're into reptiles and you're into breeding them (or just keeping them) then you shouldn't miss the great North American Reptile Breeders Conference. The event takes place in both Spring and Fall (March and October) in Tinley Park, Illinois. The Spring show (they say) is "smaller" than the Fall one but I have a hard time imagining that!

In my four years as member of HHS I had yet to experience this event. (October 11-12). I'd always heard about it but since I personally do not own any amphibians or reptiles of my own (I simply prefer stalking them in their natural environment -- nothing against all you keepers out there) I never saw the need to go to this event. As all of you know (or if you don't you should) the 29<sup>th</sup> Midwest Herpetological Symposium is being hosted by HHS this October (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>) here in Indianapolis at the La Quinta Inn and Suites on the south side of town. In March I decided to make the trek north with Erin Wagner for my very first experience at NARBC and to join other fellow HHS-ers: Roger & Holly Carter, Ed Ferrer, Pat Hammond, Jim Horton, and Dale Schoentrup to help staff the HHS table on Saturday to promote the symposium. (Thanks also to Will Brown and Angela Thomas for joining the promoters on Sunday.) Dale brought along a tank of axolotls to display and to sell at the table. They were quite the attraction being the curious looking creatures that they are.



The HHS promotion table was located just outside the entrance to the hall--not far from the alligator action. Although the location wasn't what we had anticipated it did enable us to catch everyone going in to the show plus we didn't have to compete with all of the hubbub that was going on inside. Jim and Pat—who arrived much earlier than the rest of us that morning -- did a great job of setting up the table and making it look very attractive. Great job, guys!

As you enter the exhibit hall your senses immediately begin feasting upon a smorgasbord of intriguing sights, sounds and smells. There are reptiles, reptile dealers, pet supplies, and supply vendors galore. I was especially excited to see Dav (**not** a typo) Kaufman of Herpers video fame there at the show. I had wanted to purchase the latest DVD in the Herpers series and here was my chance! When I told him how much I enjoyed them he asked if I would like a photo with him (since he saw my camera in hand). How could I resist? 😊 So Erin kindly snapped the picture of me with Dav. I know the man is tall but it wasn't until I saw the picture afterwards that I could see just how tall he really is. That's Tall with a capital T! Then again, anyone who knows me might say that **anyone** standing next to **me** looks tall and they would be right. I've included a picture so you could see for yourselves what I mean. But I digress...



The show did not disappoint. It was HUGE! Upon entering the convention center I must say that I was **not** prepared for what greeted us. As we approached the entrance to the exhibit hall there on the floor in front of us was a live alligator available for people to pose with and to have their pictures taken (for a small fee). "OK," I thought to myself. "This is really different." I couldn't help wondering what else lay in store for me.



I had watched the second Herpers video which focuses largely on the reptile trade, the different breeders, the animals they handle and some background about how they got started in the trade. The video also highlights various reptile breeders' conferences around the country featuring scenes from the Tinley Park show which provided me with an idea of what to expect.. The only reptile shows I'd personally

attended beforehand were those at the State Fairgrounds and in Noblesville. The experience of seeing those provided me with a sense of scale for comparison with Tinley. Actually, you just can't compare. The many varieties of animals that were present astounded me. There were so many cool critters to gaze upon that I'd never seen or heard of before. Of course, I still consider myself a "newbie" when it comes to the world of captive reptiles and so it goes without saying that I still have a lot to learn. As you might imagine not only were there lots of animals but tons of "stuff to go along with the animals—everything that is necessary to have when you keep/breed reptiles—from snake hooks to aquariums—from food to vet care items—you name it and it was there.

If you want to know more about the NARBC then mark your calendars for **October 11<sup>th</sup>—12<sup>th</sup>** and make that journey northward. Of course, you would be more than welcomed to help HHS promote the symposium by joining us at the table. Oh and while you're at it feast your eyes on all that lies before you. You won't regret it!

## Midwest Herpetological Symposium

### Who should attend?

EVERYONE! This is an annual weekend event for anyone interested in amphibians and reptiles. The main focus of every symposium is education, providing a wide array of speakers and topics. It is a chance for herpers to mingle in a relaxed social atmosphere, visit with old friends, make new acquaintances, and share information and experiences.

### What is it?

The Midwest Herpetological Symposium is an educational event hosted by regional herp societies. Typically, the festivities begin Friday night with a social Icebreaker as the attendees start to arrive at the hotel. Saturday opens with illustrated talks presented by local, regional and international speakers. After the last speaker there is a short break, followed by the banquet where more time is available for socializing. The after-dinner keynote speaker's presentation is followed by an auction of items donated by individuals, vendors and societies. For most hosting societies, the auction provides funding for special projects or grants. Other activities such as workshops, tours, group sessions or vendor sales, including live animals can be planned for Sunday; depending on the host society's interests.

### What else do I need to know?

The registration fee of \$50 to \$70 for the weekend covers most of the events and there is usually an early registration discount. The banquet is a separate fee and is not required-if you do not want to attend the dinner. Hotel costs vary by location and special rates are normally available for Symposium attendees. Host societies usually provide an insert for the MHS newsletter to help get the word out to any interested people. This gives the potential attendee a chance to review the cost, location and speaker list. It contains all the registration information you need to get on your way. Car-pooling is a great way to share the traveling expenses. There usually are other activities nearby for those in your family that may not share your interest. Also, most hotels have a pool - great for the kids.

# Last Month's Program

## Herps Commonly Found in Mexico

By Mary Hylton



Unfortunately, last month's guest speaker, Greg Ammon, was unable to join us for our August meeting due to a bout with pneumonia. He hopes to visit us in the near future to present the program he'd originally planned which was titled "Herping the Yucatan Peninsula."

Those attending the meeting were not left hanging, however, because our dedicated HHS members: Ed Ferrer, Holly and Roger Carter stepped up to save the day! Guests were treated to live specimens of herps found in Mexico and the desert southwest. Roger proudly displayed his knives, and sculptures featuring herps as art. Ed and Holly displayed the following herps and discussed their habitats and distinguishing characteristics:

- **Grey-banded Kingsnake** – frequently found in west Texas and Mexico; Grey-banded Kingsnakes are moderately sized snakes, can grow up to 4 ft in length, with the average being 3 ft. Their markings are generally on a grey background with white and/or black accenting. They feed primarily on snakes, lizards, rodents, and sometimes frogs. They lay clutches 3–13 eggs in early summer, which hatch in approximately 9 weeks. Hatchlings are around 10 inches in size.
- **California King snake** – non-venomous constrictor native to the western United States and northern Mexico. Common food items include rodents, other reptiles, birds, and amphibians. The "king" in their name refers to their tendency to hunt and consume other snakes, including venomous rattlesnakes that are commonly indigenous to their natural habitat. It lays eggs as opposed to giving live birth like some other snakes. The typical clutch size is five to twelve eggs with an average of nine, though clutches of 20 or more eggs are known. The hatchlings usually emerge another 40–65 days later, and are approximately eight to thirteen inches in length.
- **Black Milk Snake** – a non-venomous subspecies of milk snake. It is the largest known milk snake. Black milk snakes are found in the mountains of Costa Rica and Panama. Hatchlings of black milk snakes are between 12 and 16 inches in length. They are red, black, and white or yellow as hatchlings. When they are between 6 and 10 months of age, the black milk snakes will begin to change colors, and start to turn black as they grow to adulthood. Adult black milk snakes average between 4 feet - 6 feet 4 inches, but some have been known to grow up to 7 feet in length. Black milk snakes typically eat mice, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, reptile eggs, birds, and bird eggs in the wild
- **Mexican Black King Snake** – is part of the larger colubrid family of snakes and a subspecies of the common Kingsnake. They typically occupy rocky areas and places lush with vegetation in various regions of the Sonora Desert, Northwestern Sinaloa, Mexico, and small parts of Arizona. The Mexican black Kingsnake is a constrictor, using its powerful body to envelop and suffocate its prey, and so lacks any venom. Their diet *does* include other snakes— particularly rattlesnakes which are also common to the region. As a result, they have developed an immunity to various kinds of venom. The Mexican black Kingsnake's diet consists mainly of small rodents, lizards, birds, eggs, and other snakes
- **(Red tailed) Boa Constrictor** – Red Tail Boas have beautiful markings and distinct red colorations on their tails. Boa Constrictors generally can be found in a region that stretches from northern Mexico through Central America to South America north of 35°S . This includes the countries of: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Belize, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina. They are also found in many other islands along the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America. Boa constrictors



give birth to live young. The female will then give birth to young that average 15–20 inches in length. The litter size varies between females, but can range between 10 and 65 young with an average of 25. The bulk of their diet consists of rodents, but larger lizards and mammals as big as ocelots are also reported to have been consumed. Young Boa constrictors will eat small mice, birds, bats, lizards and amphibians. The average size of a mature female boa is between 7–10 feet in length; 6–8 feet for males. A full grown boa constrictor (red tailed) will reach 8-10 feet long and weigh up to 50 pounds.

- **Mexican Burrowing Python**--Mexican burrowing pythons are native to the southern region of Mexico and parts of Central America -- chiefly Honduras and Costa Rica. They are capable of reaching a maximum of 3 feet in length. Their overall coloration is a lustrous deep brown or reddish-brown with markedly paler, almost yellow lower portions. Mexican burrowing pythons' heads are shaped like shovels enabling them to burrow -- one of the components of their common name. They are often seen in moist rainforests and scrublands. These snakes typically remain underground, although they frequently come up to look for sustenance, as well. They are nocturnal creatures. Mexican burrowing snakes feed on a lot of lizards, rodents, wee mammals and tiny invertebrates. Eggs from reptiles are also major staples for them. The females lay eggs in small clutches of approximately two to four eggs.
- **Cape Gopher Snake** --is a subspecies of non-venomous, colubrid native to extreme southern Baja California Sur, Mexico. The cape gopher snake's prey is believed to include many small rodents, birds, and eggs, though there really is no certainty due to a lack of research of these snakes in the wild. In captivity, small rodents and eggs suffice. A single cape gopher snake can exhibit wild color and pattern variations along the length of its body. Most begin with bright H-shaped marks in differing orange shades against an intense yellow background. As you trace the patterns down toward the tip of the tail, they begin to change in shape and darken until they are completely black while the yellow background loses its intensity. The average total length of an adult cape gopher snake ranges from 36 - 66 in. Hatchlings are born at 12 - 18 inches in total length.. Typical clutch sizes range from 5 to 10 eggs. When threatened, the snake flattens its head while simultaneously vibrating its tail and hissing, closely imitating a rattlesnake
- **Texas Indigo**--is a large, non-venomous, colubrid snake native to Texas and Mexico. Texas indigo snakes are predominantly black in color, with a high sheen which gives their smooth scales a marked iridescence. Their underside is often a salmon pink color. They are large snakes, regularly attaining total lengths beyond 6 ft. 8 ft. long specimens are not unheard of. They will consume almost anything they can overpower and swallow, including mammals, birds, lizards, frogs, turtles, eggs, and even other snakes, including rattlesnakes. Because of its aggressive attacks on rattlesnakes, many farmers in southern Texas consider it a useful ally. Clutches that average 10-12 eggs are laid in the spring. Hatchlings can be up to 26 in long. Maturity is reached in 2-3 years. The Texas Indigo Snake is listed as a threatened species by the state of Texas. Its primary threat is from habitat loss due to human development

(NOTE: Since I am not a fast note-taker I was unable to catch all the information that Ed and Holly imparted about their herps. Therefore, in an effort to “fill in the facts” I did some quick research via Wikipedia to find basic, descriptive information about each snake along with its habitat, food and reproduction characteristics. The majority of my research was done quickly and so, apologetically, Wikipedia served as my chief source for the “common knowledge .”

Following the herp portion of the program, Roger presented a Power Point titled,” Knives, Swords and Herp Art.”Among the items proudly displayed were:

- A folding knife simply called “Rattlesnake” by Remington. The interesting feature about this item was that the snake image on the blade was added by a laser beam. Although a decorative knife it is also quite functional.
- Stiletto – long, slender blade and handle—snake image on the blade was one of a snake wrapped around a tree branch
- Another knife depicted an Egyptian pharaoh with a cobra coiled around and on top of the pharaoh's head

Space and time do not permit me to include all of the intriguing items contained in Roger's presentation but suffice it to say that each of them was truly unique in its own way. The ability to view the items in great detail was an added benefit of displaying them using a Power Point presentation. Thanks, Roger, for sharing your collection with us! Thanks also to Ed and Holly for sharing your live herps! All in all a very interesting program! HHS members rise to the occasion once again!

## President's message

Jim Horton

This is it!! The **Midwest Herpetological Symposium** is very near! (October 17-19). Please attend this event. You'll love it! The MHS is educational and fun. It is also our **main HHS fundraiser** for the next several years. We need your support!

It takes a lot of HHS people to have a successful symposium. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please contact myself or any board member.

Thanks to Mary Hylton for her great write ups in this issue! I appreciate Mary stepping up and writing reviews for those of us who missed events.

A big **Thank you** goes to Ed Ferrer and Roger and Holly Carter. These three stepped up and gave a presentation last month when our guest speaker was unable to attend due to personal illness.

HHS members are still needed and welcome help out at some of our upcoming exhibits. Our last display/exhibit of the year is **November 1<sup>st</sup> at Garfield Park**. If you are interested in bringing some of your herps for display, please contact me. My contact information is inside the back page of this issue.

I hope to see our members at the next meeting coming up September 20 at Holliday Park. Ed has done an excellent job with guest speakers all year. This month is sure to be a great talk with **Chris Rex** as our guest.



La Quinta Inns and Suites 5120 Victory Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46203

# SEE YOU THERE!

## 2014 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**September 17, 2014** – HHS meeting, Holliday Park Nature Center, Guest Speaker – Chris Rex (Ball State University). Topic – “*Snakes: Beyond the Scales and Dispelling their Myths*”.

**October 5, 2014** - Indiana Reptile Expo in Noblesville, IN on the first Sunday of the month from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Hamilton County Exhibition Center & 4-H Grounds.

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

**October 19, 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)

**November 1, 2014** – HHS live animal exhibit at Garfield Park Conservatory, 10am-1pm. Volunteers needed for this event. Please contact Jim Horton for more information.

### **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**

[www.hoosierherpsoc.org](http://www.hoosierherpsoc.org)

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- Sustaining Membership \$25.00 or more**

**Herpetological Interest(s)**

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