



# 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 7

July 2013

**July HHS General Meeting**  
**Wednesday July 17th 7:00 P.M.**  
Guest Speaker: Andrew Hoffman  
Topic: *"Indiana's Changing Landscape and Our Native Venomous Snakes"*  
Holliday Park Auditorium

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to welcome back Andrew Hoffman as July's guest speaker. Andrew received his BS degree from Hanover College in 2010 and his master's degree from Missouri State University in 2012. He will begin work on his doctorate this fall at Indiana State University with Dr. Mike Lannoo. Andrew has done extensive field studies on all types of reptiles and amphibians but he has always had a special fondness for Indiana's four venomous snake species. He will recount his personal experiences with each species including radio telemetry field studies. This talk will focus on the four species of viperid snakes that were historically found in Indiana and how habitat loss has affected their distribution throughout the state. These much maligned snakes are in need of our protection and are fascinating and beautiful in ways few people get to see. These snakes are often the subject of myths and legends. Be sure to attend this meeting to discover the truth and current status of these amazing serpents!

## President's message

Jim Horton

We have a date for our annual canoe/kayak trip – **Saturday, August 10.**

This year we're trying another outfitter. Wildcat creek is near Lafayette IN. This creek has been designated as one of Indiana's Natural Scenic Rivers. For more information visit their website at: <http://www.wildcatcanoeandkayak.com/>  
More HHS activities are being planned for this year.

Mark your calendars for the 2013 Midwest Herpetological Symposium – (August 31-Sept. 3) Several HHS members attend this annual event and will be traveling to Peoria for this one as well. Hope to see you there!

Thanks to our members who exhibited their animals at the Holliday Park Nature Center last month. If you would like to participate in a live animal display, watch the website, message board, Facebook, and this newsletter for future programs.

# Welcome Hoosier Herpetological Society members!

## RENEWALS

*Rick Marrs (sustaining membership)*

*Ed Ferrer (sustaining membership)*

*Brett Clark*

*Mary Ann Watson*

*Juan Horner*

*Wanda Horner*

## NEW

*Carl McDougall*

*Jennifer Loftus*

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

## Sealy Slimy Day at Holliday Park

Ed Ferrer

On Sunday afternoon June 23rd members of the Hoosier Herpetological Society presented an exhibit of reptiles at Holliday Park. Visitors were able to see, touch and in some cases hold many different reptiles and also participate in reptile themed crafts by staff volunteers at the park. A special thank you goes to HHS members Roger and Holly Carter, David and Laurie Mitchell, Nikki Shonk and Tanya Beck, Andy, Emma and Lia Hicks, Ed Ferrer and Pat Hammond for sharing their "herps" that afternoon. It is a good example how HHS can educate the public about these often misunderstood animals. Seeing these creatures up close and personal leaves a much more lasting impression than watching videos or reading books about these animals.

## KNIVES AND HERP ART (Part 28)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This knife is so long it could almost be considered a machete. It is twenty-two inches long with the blade at sixteen inches long at the top edge. On one side of the blade is the etched image of a cobra with the word "stainless" and the word "China" on the other side of the blade. The blade is not sharp. The handle is a brass-like color showing a cobra wrapped around a branch with the face of a human skull at the end of the handle. In the cobra's coils there is a "trigger" that, when pressed, makes the eyes of the cobra glow red, which you can't see in these black and white pictures (you will have to go to the web site to see the glowing eyes).





The Central Illinois Herpetological Society is hosting the 2013 Midwest Herpetological Symposium. (Four-day event). The speakers are among the best herpetologists in the country. Saturday night will be hosting an auction followed by a dinner. On Sunday check out the animal sale, and then join CIHS in car pooling to Southern, Illinois for an evening and then spend the next day at Snake Road, photographing herps. The Midwest Herpetological Symposium is the longest running herpetological symposium in the U.S. and we hope to see you there!

This weekend-long event brings together herpetologists, herpetoculturists and field herpers from all over the United States. This year's theme is conservation.

**Weekend Activities:**

**Friday, August 30th**

- All-Night Socializing, Food and Drink

**Saturday, August 31st:**

- Educational Speakers
- Dinner Banquet
- Keynote Speaker: Dr. Robert Sprackland
- Live Auction
- All-Night Socializing, Food and Drink

**Sunday, September 1st**

- Animal Sale
- Car pool to Southern Illinois
- Tent Camping

**Monday**

- Photograph Herps on Snake Road in Southern Illinois

**For more information – [www.centralillinoisherp.com](http://www.centralillinoisherp.com)**

## **Oh, don't ask why: 40 million years after extinction, giant lizard is named after The Doors' 'Lizard King' Jim Morrison**

Jun 7, 2013 08:46 AM ET // by [Jennifer Viegas](#) - Discovery.com

A newly discovered 6ft lizard that is up to 40 million years old has been named after The Door's frontman Jim Morrison – adding a whole new meaning to the words 'musical scale'.

The *Barbatorex morrisoni*, which roamed South East Asia between 36 to 40 million years ago, was christened as such in tribute to Morrison who was known as 'The Lizard King'.

The discovery was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Jason Head, from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, led the investigation.

"I was listening to The Doors quite a bit during the research," he said. "Some of their musical imagery includes reptiles and ancient places, and Jim Morrison was of course 'The Lizard King', so it all kind of came together."

He and a team of palaeontologists analysed fossilised remains of the *Barbatorex morrisoni* and discovered that it was the largest plant-eating lizard to have ever existed.

It is thought that higher temperatures at the time helped the creature to evolve to its enormous size.

American-born singer-songwriter and poet Morrison died in Paris aged 27.

## Study finds for first time frogs and other amphibians declining around U.S. at alarming rate

*Scientists Predict Amphibians Could Disappear From Half Their Current Habitat in 20 Years*

Published May 23, 2013

Associated Press

WASHINGTON— Declines of frogs, toads and salamanders are more widespread and severe than previously realized, according to a [study](#) released this week. In the report U.S. Geological Survey scientists and collaborators conclude that amphibian declines are occurring in populations nationwide — even in protected national parks and wildlife refuges.

“This new study confirms that our country’s amphibians are facing an extinction crisis that demands aggressive action to tackle threats like habitat destruction and climate change,” said Collette Adkins Giese, a Center for Biological Diversity biologist and attorney focusing on protection of amphibians and reptiles. “Scientists have known for a long time that frogs, toads and salamanders are in big trouble, but the declines this study documents are surprising and disturbing.”

The study found that on average, populations of amphibians vanished at a rate of 3.7 percent each year. At that rate these species would disappear from half their current habitats in about 20 years. Amphibians already listed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature are vanishing from their habitats at an even faster rate of 11.6 percent a year. At that pace the threatened species would disappear from half their current habitat in six years.



Boreal toad photo by Chris Brown, USGS.

“Threats like habitat loss, disease and climate change are pushing many frogs, toads and salamanders to the brink of extinction. That’s why we’re working hard to get the rarest amphibians protected under the Endangered Species Act,” said Adkins Giese. “The Endangered Species Act has a track record of saving 99 percent of animals under its care. It’s the best tool we have to help reverse this accelerating loss of amphibians.”

The Center is working to gain Endangered Species Act protection for dozens of imperiled amphibians in the U.S. In 2011 the conservation group filed the largest-ever Endangered Species Act [petition](#) focused solely on protecting U.S. amphibians and reptiles. Also in 2011 the Center and its allies filed a petition to protect the boreal toad, one of the species analyzed in this week’s study. In response to that petition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a full status review for [boreal toads](#) in the southern Rocky Mountains, Utah, southern Idaho and northeastern Nevada.

## Biologists find rare snake near Gila River

Posted: 07/06/2013 03:15:05 AM MDT

The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—The northern Mexican garter snake was once thought to be extinct in New Mexico. Not so, according to biologists at the Albuquerque BioPark.

They found three of the snakes in early June near the Gila River and another three later in the month. Two of the snakes were studied, tagged and released. The remaining four were brought to the Albuquerque Zoo to establish a breeding population.

The goal is to produce offspring that can be reintroduced to protected habitat in the wild.

Doug Hotle, curator of reptiles and amphibians at the BioPark, said one of the snakes found last month was a

young female, which indicates the wild population is reproducing.

"Based on what we've seen so far, this is a very successful group of snakes living in ideal wetland habitat," he said.

"We can do on-the-ground study to find out more about these rare garters and what their needs are here in New Mexico."





Northern Mexican garter snake (Photo – Kingsnake.com)

The snakes at the BioPark are expected to go on public display soon.

The northern Mexican garter snake is a candidate for federal endangered species protection. It was once found throughout Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and parts of Mexico. Scientists said it had been nearly 20 years since the last confirmed sighting of the snake in New Mexico.

Hotle said the discovery marks a huge step forward for his team.

"We have spent nearly three years and thousands of man-hours looking for the northern Mexican garter snake," he said. "Although many have written this species off for the state, we thought it was still here somewhere undetected. This discovery means there is still hope for the species and its habitat."

## HHS June meeting

Jim Horton

Mr. Todd Pierson was the guest speaker at the last meeting (June 19). Todd, a recent graduate of the University of Georgia, had given a talk titled: *Herping the Rooftop of the World*.

His travels in China led him to the Tibetan Plateau which is known as the Rooftop of the World. He gave us a brief history of the region along with his take on what he saw. Getting around was tough with the language barriers and strict Chinese government. Todd really liked the food and other cultural experiences.

He covered the biology of the Giant Salamanders (Cryptobranchidae). This includes The Chinese giant salamander, the Japanese giant salamanders, and the Hellbender. He had recently spent about 2 months in China in search of the Chinese giant salamander and had his theories of why they aren't faring so well in the wild. Todd noted that most of these salamanders have a spotty distribution. Most are living in underground caves. This habitat is clean, cool, and *undisturbed*.

In addition to establishing the breeding program, the BioPark herpetologists will continue participating in field studies and overall population management along with experts from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and game and fish departments in New Mexico and Arizona.

Scientists from several universities in the two states are also working on the project, which looks at overall population health, behaviors like movement, hibernation and breeding and habitat conditions.

The rarest of the eight types of garter snakes in New Mexico, the northern Mexican garter snake lives only in wetland areas with thick vegetation. They hunt for tadpoles and minnows.

Biologists say more than 90 percent of riparian habitats have disappeared in the last century due to overgrazing, water diversion, wildfires and drought. Invasive species like bullfrogs and crayfish eat young garters and are an additional threat to the species.

**HHS Editor's note:** Just a note on the Bio Park herp Curator. Mr. Doug Hotle used to be an Indiana resident. In fact, he worked at the Indianapolis zoo. At that time he was also an HHS member.

There are many reasons for the demise of this animal. Some of the problems reported by Todd are habitat destruction, silted and polluted water, and over-harvesting. The locals of the region didn't like Todd and his colleagues hunting near their villages so they hunted at night. What they found along a river previously known for giant salamanders was trash and lots of it. Among the trash were items such as feces and syringes. Searching the river proved difficult. The water was muddy due to mining operations up river.

The land around the waters had changed rapidly due to the building of dams, and gold, gravel, and sand mining. Needless to say, Todd didn't find any giant salamanders. He did travel a bit more and found a few herps at about 4500 meters. The only reptile found was a lizard



Plateau frog [Nanorana pleskei](#) (Todd Pierson – Photo)

However, several frogs were found. Among them were the plateau frog, *Nanorana pleskei*, The Plateau brown frog, *Rana kukunoris*, Xizang alpine toad, *Scutiger boulengeri*, and the Tibetan toad, *Bufo tibetanu*.

An Alpine stream salamander, *Batrachupaerus tibetanu* was also mentioned in his talk. Todd is a huge *salamander guy* so this was one of his prize finds.

All in all it was a great presentation featuring culture, geology, flora, and fauna of southeast China.

## 2013 EVENTS

**July 7, 2013** - Indiana Reptile Expo, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, 10am-4pm, \$6.00 admission  
[www.indianareptileexpo.com](http://www.indianareptileexpo.com) HHS has a booth at this event!

**July 17, 2013** – HHS meeting, Guest Speaker – Andrew Hoffman (Hanover College) Topic - TBA

July 31-August 3 – The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual International Herpetological Symposium will be held in New Orleans, LA  
<http://www.internationalherpetologicalsymposium.com>

**August 21, 2013** – HHS meeting. Annual *Show and Tell* meeting. This is one of our most popular meetings. Members share their favorite herp or herp-related item(s).

**August 25, 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](http://www.midwestreptile.com) Other dates: October 20, December 8

**August 31-September 3** – Midwest Herpetological Symposium, Peoria, Illinois. A four day event featuring guest speakers, field trips, dinner, auction, and live animal sale. Register now at - <http://centralillinoisherp.com/>.

### **Mostly Reptiles**

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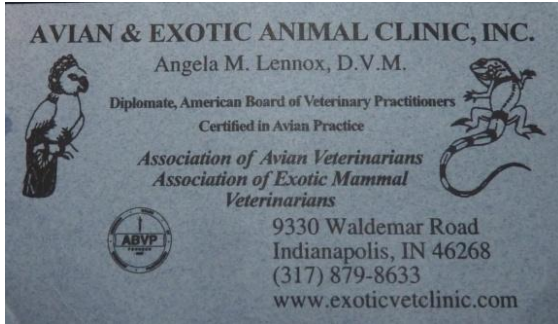
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The 36<sup>th</sup> International Herpetological Symposium will be held in New Orleans, LA USA - July 31-Aug 3, 2013  
For information visit the website: <http://internationalherpetologicalsymposium.com>



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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**

The Monitor is printed courtesy of:

**Harding Poorman**



**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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