



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 3

March 2014

March HHS meeting

March 19th 7:00 P.M. Holliday Park Auditorium

Guest Speaker: Tony Evans, Biologist Stantec Consulting

Topic: "Snakes & Lizards of the Ocoee River Gorge, Tennessee"

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is pleased to welcome **Tony Evans** as this month's guest speaker. Tony is a biologist working for Stantec Consulting Co. in Louisville, Kentucky. After growing up in eastern Kentucky, he attended Morehead State University where he was awarded a B.S. in Environmental Science and a M.S. in Biology. While attending MSU, Tony completed several herpetological projects, including "A Survey of the Reptiles and Amphibians of Martin County, KY." and "A Survey of the Herpetofauna of Broke Leg Falls Nature Preserve, Menifee County, KY". Tony completed his masters work on "Dietary Analysis of the Northern Ring-necked Snake, *Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*, in Eastern Kentucky" This month's topic will be the "**Snakes and Lizards of the Ocoee River Gorge in Tennessee**". Tony has a wealth of field experiences and his talks are always interesting and informative, sprinkled with a good deal of humor. Be sure to attend this special meeting

Welcome Hoosier Herpetological Society Members!

Returning members

Jeff Wines

Courtney and Jeremy McIntire (Sustaining membership)

John Olsen (sustaining membership)

Zach Truelock (sustaining membership)

Connor Davis

New

Chris Walker

Jennifer Laughlin

James Gregory

Josh Harrison

Laura Halsey

President's message

Jim Horton

The HHS is hosting the **Midwest Herpetological Symposium** (MHS) October 17-19. Just to give you some updates on the symposium. We now have our full lineup of guest speakers and are now working on their topics.

Several HHS board members were on hand at the North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC) show at Tinley Park, Illinois to promote the symposium. We thank the NARBC show promoters for the complementary booth for this purpose.

I'd like to welcome our new members and thank our returning membership! I hope you enjoy our members, meetings, and outings throughout this year and years to come. Special thanks to member, Zach Truelock for his donation the HHS!

In the event of a meeting cancelation or other interruptions, please check the HHS website, Facebook page, or don't hesitate to contact me. Stardali84@hotmail.com

Our *Herp of the Month* presenter will be Jackson Rhoads. Jackson is one of our younger members who is excited to be showing his bearded dragon.

Our guest speaker this month will be Tony Evans (Stantec Consulting Co.), Louisville, KY. Mr. Evans has been here in the past and he always gives us a really good talk. Hope to see you there!

Year of the Salamander Four-toed Salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*)

By Jim Horton

The four-toed is one of Indiana's smallest salamanders. Adults measure only 2 – 3 ½ inches! This species was once thought to be rather rare in the state with spotty distribution. But it has been recently recorded all across Indiana. The removal from the *endangered* list to *Special Concern* status proves that it seems to be doing quite well.

Coloration is bronze to dark grayish with mottled black specking. Tail and limbs are dull orange with gray. The ventral side is white with black spots.

Typical habitat for *H. scutatum* may be tamarack bogs and in the north to spring fed woodland ponds. Ferns and rich mosses typically border the perimeter of these water sources. Micro habitat includes rotting logs, leaf litter, and thick moss.

During breeding season, females deposit eggs within thick mosses near a water source. This keeps the eggs hydrated and away from potential predators. Females stay close to the eggs.

These salamanders feed upon small Insects and other tiny arthropods.



Adult four-toed salamander (photos - Jim Horton)



Underside of four-toed salamander

HACHLING SEA TURTLES TRACKED

March 4, 2014 www.sciencedaily.com

A team of scientists from the UCF, Florida Atlantic University, University of Miami (UM) Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, and University of Wisconsin, led by biologist Kate Mansfield (UCF), tracked 17 loggerhead turtles for 27 to 220 days in the open ocean using small, solar-powered satellite tags. The goal was to better understand the turtles' movements, habitat preferences, and what role temperature may play in early sea turtle life history.

Some of the findings challenge previously held beliefs.

While the turtles remain in oceanic waters (traveling between 124 miles to 2,672 miles) off the continental shelf and the loggerhead turtles sought the surface of the water as predicted, the study found that the turtles do not necessarily remain within the currents associated with the North Atlantic subtropical gyre. It was historically thought that loggerhead turtles hatching from Florida's east coast complete a long, developmental migration in a large circle around the Atlantic entrained in these currents. But the team's data suggest that turtles may drop out of these currents into the middle of the Atlantic or the Sargasso Sea.



Photo credit - *Jim Abernethy*

The team also found that while the turtles mostly stayed at the sea surface, where they were exposed to the sun's

energy, the turtles' shells registered more heat than anticipated (as recorded by sensors in the satellite tags), leading the team to consider a new hypothesis about why the turtles seek refuge in Sargassum. It is a type of seaweed found on the surface of the water in the deep ocean long associated with young sea turtles.

"We propose that young turtles remain at the sea surface to gain a thermal benefit," Mansfield said. "This makes sense because the turtles are cold blooded animals. By remaining at the sea surface, and by associating with Sargassum habitat, turtles gain a thermal refuge of sorts that may help enhance growth and feeding rates, among other physiological benefits."

More research will be needed, but it's a start at cracking the "lost years" mystery. The "lost years" refers to the time after turtles hatch and head to sea where they remain for many years before returning to near-shore waters as large juveniles.

The findings are important because the loggerhead turtles along with other sea turtles are threatened or endangered species. Florida beaches are important to their survival because they provide important nesting grounds in North America. More than 80% of Atlantic loggerheads nest along Florida's coast. There are other important nesting grounds and nursing areas for sea turtles in the western hemisphere found from as far north as Virginia to South America and the Caribbean.

"From the time they leave our shores, we don't hear anything about them until they surface near the Canary Islands, which is like their primary school years," said Florida Atlantic University professor Jeannette Wyneken, the study's co- PI and author. "There's a whole lot that happens during the Atlantic crossing that we knew nothing about. Our work helps to redefine Atlantic loggerhead nursery grounds and early loggerhead habitat use."

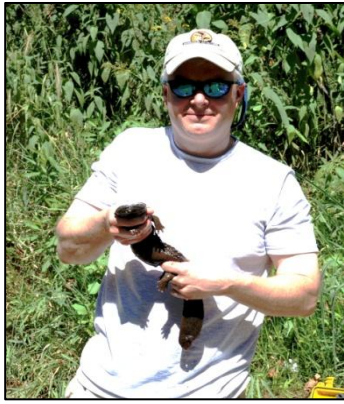
www.hoosierherpsoc.org

Last month's speaker (February)

By *Jim Horton*

Mr. Jim Anno visited us from the Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society. Jim's talk "Herping South Florida", focused on the many areas he has visited over the years and it didn't disappoint. He started off with tips on herping such as: knowing the area, becoming familiar with local laws, and some of the dangers like mosquitoes and Africanized bees.

Wearing gloves was something that he touched on frequently due to the many dangerous situations that he has encountered.



The importance of artificial cover was an interesting topic. Jim mentioned that in the heat of the south, tin isn't very productive because it holds in too much heat in an already steamy-hot atmosphere. He found more herps in and under carpet and wood. The two forementioned items will stay cool and hold more humidity.

An in-state fishing license is required for hunting amphibians. Dipnetting or aquatic trapping may be utilized for this purpose.

He mentioned several areas by name (that I won't mention here) where the *icon* of the south, indigo snakes hibernate during the winter months. Some of his favorite habitats to herp are the cane fields and canals/ditches.

Road cruising may be very productive in Florida and Jim showed slides of his finds from this technique. Dirt roads seemed to work best during hot days while paved roads were better in cooler days.

Some of Jim's photo tips included in situ shots for sensitive species that should not be touched. With snakes, he uses a cover to place over the animal to calm it before taking photos. He jokingly said that D.O.R. (dead on road) snakes pose very well for the camera.

Two videos were shown of Jim and his buddies in action. The first one was the unraveling of some discarded carpet. The carpet revealed a five-lined skink and then a beautiful scarlet kingsnake. The other video featured finding a pigmy rattlesnake under a palmetto leaf.

Jim went on to show more amazing herps in the natural surroundings. Some species were the Everglades ratsnake, indigo snake, Florida kingsnake, corn snake, eastern coachwhip, Florida cottonmouths, and several species of water snakes.

This talk was well received by our audience. They were most likely ready to get out in the field themselves. I know I am.

Indianapolis Zoo Updates

Since the construction of the International Orangutan Center restricted access to the Deserts Dome, it has given the zoo time to refresh the Snake Gallery. The (photo op) giant snake model has been restored along with more LED lighting in the *snakes* exhibit hallway.

New additions to the deserts area exhibits include a male **Desert Iguana** from the Oregon Zoo and to male **Taylor's Cantils** from the San Antonio Zoo.

Crocodylians Using Lures

Source – sciencedaily.com

Vladimir Dinets, a research assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, is the first to observe two crocodylian species -- muggers and American alligators -- using twigs and sticks to lure birds, particularly during nest-building time.

The research is published in the current edition of *Ethology, Ecology and Evolution*. Dinets' research is the first report of tool use by any reptiles, and also the first known case of predators timing the use of lures to a

seasonal behavior of the prey -- nest-building.



A mugger crocodile balances twigs on its nose to tempt birds collecting small branches to build nests with, at Madras Crocodile Bank, Tamil Nadu in India. Photo - *Vladimir Dinets*

Dinets first observed the behavior in 2007 when he spotted crocodiles lying in shallow water along the edge of a pond in India with small sticks or twigs positioned across their snouts. The behavior potentially fooled nest-building birds wading in the water for sticks into thinking the sticks were floating on the water. The crocodiles remained still for hours and if a bird neared the stick, they would lunge.

To see if the stick-displaying was a form of clever predation, Dinets and his colleagues performed systematic observations of the reptiles for one year at four sites in Louisiana, including two rookery and two nonrookery sites. A rookery is a bird breeding ground. The researchers observed a significant increase in alligators displaying sticks on their snouts from March to May, the time birds were building nests. Specifically, the reptiles in rookeries had sticks on their snouts during and after the nest-building season. At non-rookery sites, the reptiles used lures during the nest-building season.

"This study changes the way crocodiles have historically been viewed," said Dinets. "They are typically seen as lethargic, stupid and boring but now they are known to exhibit flexible multimodal signaling, advanced parental care and highly coordinated group hunting tactics."

The observations could mean the behavior is more widespread within the reptilian group and could also shed light on how crocodiles' extinct relatives -- dinosaurs -- behaved.

"Our research provides a surprising insight into previously unrecognized complexity of extinct reptile behavior," said Dinets. "These discoveries are interesting not just because they show how easy it is to underestimate the intelligence of even relatively familiar animals, but also because crocodilians are a sister taxon of dinosaurs and flying reptiles."

Dinets collaborated with J.C and J.D. Brueggen from the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park in St. Augustine, Fla. More of his crocodile research can be found in his book "Dragon Songs."

KNIVES AND HERP ART (Part 31)

Photos & text by Roger Carter



This is in an ancient Egyptian style with a cobra reared up coiled around the image of a Pharaoh. The sheath has a lot of nice hieroglyphics molded into it but I don't know if they mean anything. The entire unit is sixteen and one/half inches long. When separated the knife is fifteen and one/half inches long with the blade seven and one/half inches long and the edge is not sharp. On one side of the blade is engraved "FURY 65543". I don't know what that means. The images are probably some kind of resin and the blade is probably stainless steel. This was made in China.



2014 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

March 19, 2014 – HHS meeting – Guest Speaker - Tony Evans, Biologist Stantec Consulting, Topic: "Snakes & Lizards of the Ocoee River Gorge, Tennessee

March 15&16, 2014 – North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC), Tinley Park, IL. Sat 10:00AM-5:00PM, Sun 11:00AM-4:00PM Tickets - \$15.00 adults, kids under 13-\$8.00, under 5-free

March 22, 2014 – *An Amphibian Outing*, HHS will be participating in this event. Features presentations, a *kids* amphibian triathlon, and hiking field trips to find salamanders. 2:00PM till dark, McCormick's Creek State Park, Spencer IN.

March 23, 2014 – Indiana Reptile Breeders Expo, Richmond, IN. 10:00AM-4:00PM admission-\$5.00
www.irbexpo.com

April 6, 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 (future dates: June 1, Aug. 31)

May 9 & 10, 2014 – Herpetology Weekend, Natural Bridge State Park, KY Field trips all day Saturday. Herpetology professionals will be speaking on Friday and Saturday evening in the Woodland Center. For more information, contact Brian Gasdorf at brian.gasdorf@ky.gov or call 1-800-325-1710.

May 17, 2014 – Hoosier Herpout, Hardin Ridge Recreation Area, Hoosier National Forest, Bloomington. HHS event featuring field herping, Powerpoint presentation, a cookout, camping, and outdoor fun.

June 4-7, 2014 – Biology of the Pit Vipers 2 Symposium, Tulsa, OK. biologyofthepitvipers.com

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

Mostly Reptiles

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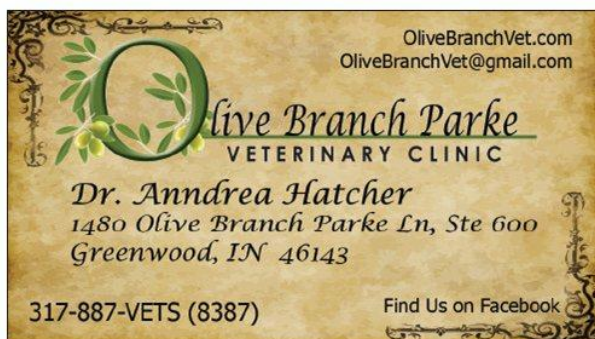
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The Hoosier Herpetological Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the conservation of all reptiles and amphibians. General monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Holliday Park Nature Center. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meeting**

Parking at Holliday Park

7:00pm to 9:00pm is our 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.

6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, IN

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Renewal

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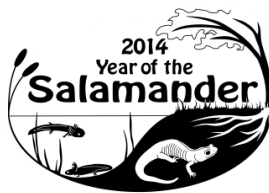
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Individual/Family Membership \$15.00

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Herpetological Interest(s)

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Address Correction Requested

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