



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 27 Number 5

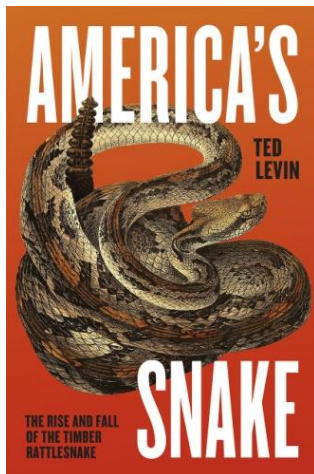
May 2016

H.H.S. Monthly Meeting

Wednesday May 18, 7:00 p.m.

Holliday Park Nature Center

The Hoosier Herpetological Society welcomes: Mr. Ted Levin, author/journalist



Ted Levin has worked as a zoologist at the Bronx Zoo, a naturalist for the National Park Service, and a wildlife biologist for the Audubon Society. He is the author of *Blood Brook: A Naturalist's Home Ground*, *Backtracking: The Way of the Naturalist*, and *Liquid Land: A Journey through the Everglades*, which won the Burroughs Medal for exemplary nature writing in 2004. He has written for *Sports Illustrated*, *Audubon*, *National Wildlife*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and other publications.

Welcome New Members!

New Members

Abbie Watson & Rex Morell, Coletta Kosiba

Returning Members

Ian McMillan, Robert E. Wendling, Bill G. Martinson, Jet Kaiser, Gene & Ramona Holmes

April HHS meeting review

By Jim Horton

Dr. Steve Thompson DVM, DABMP (Purdue University) was our featured speaker for the evening. He performed surgeries in the field with timber rattlesnakes. This included inserting battery operated transmitters into the snakes body. These transmitters allow researchers to track snakes in the wild to learn more about them.

This is part of an ongoing study in Indiana state forests.

Mr. Thompson had never done this in the past and he did his homework by researching what others had done in the past. He found that other researches had lost about 10% of their study animals. He thought that was too large of a number, especially since these are a state endangered species.

He found that in the 80's and early 90's, researchers were using refrigeration for anesthetics. This was unacceptable. Since reptiles feel pain and the ethics committee at the university would not let this happen. Back in the 90's, herpetologists used a cotton ball of Ketamine in the field as a local anesthesia. Steve found that Isoflurance worked best for this use. He also used a numbing agent and pain killers for his surgery patients. During surgery, they cut the skin and not scales of the snake. This less invasive method allowed for a quicker healing process. The Holohil transmitters are 20cm long (about 8 inches) with antennae. These are 2-3 year transmitters so the timeline for this study was limited. GIS radio-telemetry data is utilized with this transmitter.

They studied 47 snakes over 5 years, from 2007-2011.

Here is some data that I managed to jot down during the meeting. 71 rattlesnakes were studied over 5 years, between 2007-2011. 41 snakes were male and 30, female. Twenty-one snakes had a second surgery to replace or remove transmitters. One snake did not come out of the den. They lost only one snake of 71 surgeries. All of the study snakes were named to identify them easier. Larger snakes headed underground to the dens earlier in the year. Males moved on average 35.3 yards per day. Females moved 17 yards per day. Males traveled 5000 meters all season on average. Females traveled 3200 meters all season.

Thanks to Heather White for contacting Mr. Thompson. This was an excellent presentation!

President's message

Jim Horton

The Hoosier Herpout was once again, a great success! Read more about it in this issue.

This month our guest speaker will be Ted Levin. Ted is the author of "*America's Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake*". Copies of the book will also be available at the meeting for sale.

Next month we will hold our annual *Show and Tell* meeting. This is always a favorite for members.

We typically have a kayak/canoe float every year and this year it will most likely be in August. We'll decide on a date at the next board meeting.

Herpetology Weekend in Slade, Kentucky was also (as expected) the usual fantastic event! Several HHS members made the trip south for the weekend. I highly recommend this event for next year!

I'd like to make a correction regarding the Indiana Master Naturalist gathering. I had stated in the last newsletter that a donation was made to the HHS by the Friends of McCormick's Creek State Park. **This donation was made to the HHS by the Indiana Master Naturalist Program.** Thank you!

2016 Hoosier Herpout (review)

Jim Horton

Another successful Herp out is in the books.



This was our 16th year of herping the wild areas of Monroe County. I arrived at the shelter house at 9:00 AM and a few members trickled in afterwards.

Travel was tough due to construction and graduation traffic at Indiana University. We herped the area around the shelterhouse while waiting for the rest of our group to show up.

Temperatures were in the high 60s and the sun peeked out shortly afterwards.



Pat Hammond and an eastern garter snake

This brought out a few herps. An eastern box turtle (*Terrepena carolina*), an eastern garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*), and skinks were easily found. Someone spotted a silver haired bat that was clinging to a tulip tree. We took photos and left it alone.

After everyone arrived, set off to herp our usual nearby spots. Our second snake of the day was an adult worm snake (*Carphophis amoenus helenae*) found under a

board in a clearing. We moved to another area with large stones along the shoulder of a road. Here I spied and captured a large southern black racer (*Coluber constrictor*) for photos. Midland water snakes (*Nerodia s. pleuralis*) were also spotted before they zoomed off into the rocks.

A hike up a woodland trail revealed beautiful woodland wildflowers, such as spiderworts (*Tradescantia virginiana*) and wild comfrey (*Cynoglossum virginianum*). A northern fence lizard (*Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus*) and several eastern box turtles were found along the forest floor.

After the hike, we made our way to the shelter house for a cook out. Rain had started and kept on for a few hours. This rain dampened our spirits a bit. Some folks headed home while the rest of us decided to herp on. The sun came back out for the remainder of the day and we did pretty well.



Copperhead!

On the road to the “Dairy Barn” (a phrase Rick Marrs came up with for the abundance of milk snakes found there), we moved several more box turtles off of the road. Flipping debris delighted us with northern

ringnecks (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsi*) and eastern milk snakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum*).

A stop at a creek allowed those with rubber boots to tromp through the cool water. Longtail salamanders (*Eurycea l. longicauda*) were abundant beneath flat rocks along the edge. More wildflowers grew here. *Syndandra* (*Syndandra hispidula*) and Large-Flowered Valerian (*Valeriana pauciflora*)



Another good find!

At the Poke Farm (another appropriate name coined by Rick for the poke weed plant in the area), we hiked through deep vegetation to reach the bounty of car hoods, roofing tin, and other debris. Here we found more ring necks, milk snakes, box turtles, long tail salamanders, a wood frog, Jefferson’s/smallmouth salamander, a racer, and two northern copperheads (*Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*). We helped two more box turtles off to the other side of the roadway on our way out.

Another great day spent herping, hiking, and enjoying the great outdoors with some wonderful HHS members!

Until next year!!

INDIANA'S RACERS

by Ed Ferrer

When I do snake programs I am often asked a lot of questions at the end of my presentation. One of the most common questions asked is "What is the fastest snake in the world". Since this is the "Month of May" and our state is full of activities around the Indianapolis 500 race, I thought it would be good to consider the speed of snakes would be of interest.



Blue racer (*Coluber c. foxii*)

The answer to that question regarding the world's fastest snake is the black mamba, *Dendroaspis polylepis*, of Africa. The accepted record is 12 miles per hour! I imagine when viewed slithering through the grass and brush it probably appears even faster.

What is the fastest Indiana snake? I would imagine that most veteran field "herpers" would consider the Southern black racers, *Coluber constrictor priapus*, and the blue racers, *Coluber constrictor foxii*, as our fastest snakes. In experimental

trials they have been recorded at about 3.5 miles per hour.

Sherman Minton, in his book Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana, offered the opinion that he thought they could actually travel a little faster over a short distance. These are diurnal hunters that spend most of their nights and dark days in burrows or under cover. Both species normally reach an adult length from 36 to 60 inches, some records are slightly longer. They are normally found on the ground but may be seen in low bushes. They are very alert and when discovered they usually vanish suddenly seeking holes or rock crevices but sometimes will climb vines or bushes. I think we have all heard people say that they or someone they know were chased by a racer. I always tell them that no snake that weighs about 3-4 pounds will chase a human that is hundreds of times its size. The snake was probably going toward a den or other covering and if a person is in that area it may give the person the impression that he or she is being chased. If they are cornered with no escape route possible they may strike repeatedly causing wounds that bleed freely.

Blue racers are found in the Northern 2/3 of Indiana while the Southern black racer is found in the lower 1/3 of the state (with

the exception of the Evansville area.) The blue racer may actually be shades of blue, bluish gray, olive, brownish or lead coloring.

A construction crew once gave me a blue racer asking me to find it a new home away from the busy site. It was beautiful shade of teal blue! I took two of my grandchildren to watch me release it. It slithered so fast that they barely got a glance at it! Southern black racers are black to very dark gray.



Southern black racer (*Coluber c. priapus*)

Neonates of both racers have reddish brown blotches on a body color of light gray which turn to their adult coloration after one year.

This past weekend at the Hoosier Herpout HHS members found three Southern black racers among their other discoveries. With their size, coloring and amazing speed both racers make excellent finds in any field herping field trip!

References:

Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana, Sherman Minton, 2001

Reptiles and Amphibians, Eastern and Central North America, Roger Conant/ Joseph T. Collins, 1998

Field experience of several herpers

Photos by Jim Horton

Special meeting/may 18

We welcome a very special guest this month. Mr. Ted Levin (journalist/author) will discuss his new book – “America’s Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake”.

The book will be available for purchase at the meeting. Mr. Levin will also personally sign your copy.

“I’m not sure I would have believed in advance that someone could write 500 fascinating pages about a single species of rattlesnake, but Ted Levin has done just that. America’s Snake is so engaging the reading borders on effortless; the writing is masterful, inspiring non-stop interest and confidence in Levin’s scholarship. The book will be of interest to herpetologists and conservationists, as well as to everyone concerned with how we can live with dangerous animals.”—Harry Greene, author of Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature

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ZGreenFest 2016

By Jim Horton

Zionsville’s green version of earth day is called the ZGreenFest. This event was celebrating the 10th year in 2016. Ten HHS members were there with live herps. In fact, we needed more tables than they could obtain for us. It was a most beautiful day which helped out in our favor with live reptiles and amphibians.



I’m pretty sure we wowed them with our collection of herps. I’d like to thank Heather White, Neill

Jones, Abby Watson, Rex Morell, and Holly Carter for joining me in this event.



Bill Martinson drove down from the Michigan/Indiana line just to be there! He brought along his one and only “Snappy” the common snapping turtle. This was one beast of a turtle! Snappy weighed in at 50 pounds. He raised this snapper from a youngster and it was as friendly as a puppy. Thanks Bill for being there. Again,

thanks to everyone for taking the time to be there educating the crowd.



SWORDS AND HERP ART (Part 5)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

These are Japanese style Katana swords that also have some ancient Egyptian symbols.

This is a set of three swords in different lengths that have a cobra-like snake at the end of the scabbard that looks like the snake is coming out of the end of the scabbard and near the cobra is an Egyptian scarab beetle. The handle is four cobras wound around the handle and hooded up with a clear ball on top. I think the ball is some sort of plastic and not glass. The color of the images is mostly dark silver with some gold on the snakes on the handle and on the band at the end of the scabbard. Near the guard is a gold band with golden images of the Egyptian Ankh, the symbol of life. The short sword is twenty-five and three/quarter inches long, the middle sword is twenty-nine and seven/eighths inches long and the long sword is forty and one/half inches long. These blades are not sharp and, on each blade, is etched "440 STAINLESS CHINA".

This is the last of all of my knives, letter openers and sword articles. I hope that everyone has enjoyed reading about my collection.



2016 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

May 18, 2016 – HHS Meeting. Guest Speaker: Mr. Ted Levin (author/journalist), presentation, book sales, book signing. “America’s Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake”.

June 15, 2016 – HHS meeting, Topic – Annual *Show and Tell* meeting. Members are encouraged to bring their favorite herp(s), books, or anything herp-related to present to the audience.

June 22-25, 2016 - International Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO.

June 26, 2016 - 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 Other dates: August 28, Oct. 30

July 20, 2016 - HHS meeting, Guest Speaker – Todd Pierson will discuss the evolution and distribution of lungless salamanders in Appalachia.

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 Meetings.**

Shirts for Salamanders 2016



Funds raised through the National Amphibian Expo "Shirts for Salamanders" campaign will go towards helping with the costs of the *ex situ* component of the salamander studies at the C.R.A.R.C. and Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Please visit the following links for more information on the two projects benefiting from this campaign: cramphibian.com & blog.frogsneedourhelp.org

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Mary Hylton	(317) 966-4591	liblady81@hotmail.com
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Roger Carter	(317) 873-6561	drymarchonzz@hotmail.com
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Ed Ferrer	(317) 787-7448	pythonpals1@msn.com
Angela Thomas	(317) 882-5266	necali@comcast.net
Barbara Filtri		webmaster@hoosierherpsoc.org
Pat Hammond	(317) 656-9496	gnavbone92@yahoo.com
Rick Marrs		rickmarrs@ymail.com
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Hoosier Herpout 2016!



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