

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXXI, No. IV

www.cincyherps.com

April 2006

The Editor's Den

The April Forked Tongue features an article on the growth rate of baby star tortoises over a year and an article on the Kirtland's Snake

Calendar of Events

5/17/06, Joe Collins speaking on "*The Amphibians, Turtles, and Reptiles of Custer State Park, South Dakota*"

7/05/06, Brian Horne speaking on "*Herping the Daly River and other adventures in the Northern Territory, Australia*"

8/02/06, Tim Sisson, President of the local Wildlife and habitat conservation organization, *The Western Wildlife Corridor*, speaking on how the WWC preserves critical habitats in Hamilton County.

9/13/06, Danna Baxley is conducting extensive field research on Black Pine Snakes in Mississippi.

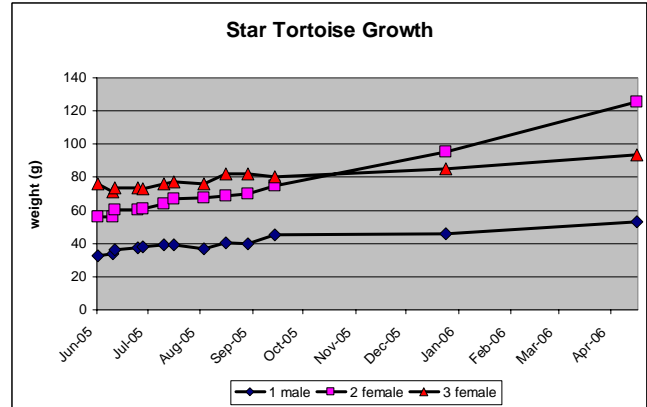
Growth Rate of Young Indian Star Tortoises

by Grady Calhoun

My son acquired three very young star tortoises in the summer of 2005. It is likely that they were hatched that year. We started periodically logging their weights to monitor their growth. This is the first time I have done this and I was a little surprised by the results. I have labeled the animals # 1, #2 and #3. Although the sexes are not definite, they were supposedly incubated such that #1 is a male and #2 and #3 are female. These animals have lived together since they were acquired. All are captive bred and hatched babies and all have had the same heating, lighting, and food available. Their starting weights on 6/21/05, the first date I started, were as follows:

#1, male	32.6 g
#2, female	55.9 g
#3, female	76.1 g

It is obvious that #1 was significantly smaller than the others when he was acquired.



What jumps off of this graph is that tortoise #2 has a growth rate significantly higher than the other two. This tortoise struggled with chronic respiratory infections during the summer of 2005. They were serious enough to require two cycles of injectable antibiotic treatment. In this case, Baytril was used. This tortoise was suffering from what I have learned is a fairly common illness, especially in young tortoises. The eyes appeared puffy and swollen and remained closed most of the time. The tortoise was lethargic and ate very little. Liquid was observed coming from the nose. It responded fairly well to antibiotic therapy and daily soaking in luke warm water. As can be observed, once the illness was under control, the tortoise thrived. The other tortoises have had no observable illness since we have had them. During the cooler months the tortoises are kept in large heated melamine cages with full spectrum lighting. They are fed dark leafy greens and mixed vegetables. In the warmer months they are kept outside and eat primarily grass. During this 11 month period the weight gained is as follows:

	Weight Gained	Percent Increase
#1, male	20.3 g	62.27
#2, female	69.5 g	124.33
#3, female	17.3 g	22.73

I am not concluding that the antibiotics had anything to do with growth rate. The difference in growth rate among animals kept in identical environments is what I find interesting.

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17th at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

Kirtland's Snake

Printed from the Center for Reptile and Amphibian Conservation and Management website
http://herpcenter.ipfw.edu/index.htm?http://herpcenter.ipfw.edu/outreach/accounts/reptiles/snakes/Kirtlands_snake/index.htm&2

Identification

The Kirtland's Snake is a small, slender snake. Adults are typically between 14 and 18 inches long. The dorsal surface is usually brown to gray and is patterned with four rows of alternating dark spots. The belly of the Kirtland's Snake is generally red with a line of dark spots down each side. **Ventral** coloration can also be orange or pink. The combination of dark **dorsal** blotches and a reddish belly with two lines of dark spots is unique to the Kirtland's Snake.



Distribution and Status

The Kirtland's Snake's distribution extends from Ohio west to eastern Missouri, north to southern Michigan and south to northern Kentucky. A small disjunct population can also be found in western Pennsylvania. **MAP**. The Kirtland's Snake is listed as state Endangered in Indiana and Michigan, and state Threatened in Illinois and Ohio. In Missouri, the Kirtland's Snake is listed as a species of possible occurrence, and its distribution within the state is currently unknown. The last documented sighting within Missouri was in 1964 (J. Briggler, pers comm.). The species is absent from Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Click [HERE](#) for state by state status descriptions.

To pass the winter in a state of rest. During this time metabolic rate and body temperature are much lower than during the active season. Embryos are contained in eggs with persistent membranes, but there is no

calcareous shell. The young break out of the membrane during the birthing process, and so are born "live." A plant community that is growing where ground water comes to the surface. The ground water source may be permanent, seasonal or only periodic. The substrate is peat (largely composed of partially decomposed vegetation) or mineral soils and may be alkaline, neutral or slightly acidic. Sedges are often a dominant plant in these areas.

Ecology

Kirtland's Snakes inhabit moist to wet "grassy" habitats (such as wet meadows, wet prairies, **fens** and grasslands) in close proximity to water bodies, such as open and woodland ponds, streams and marshes. Occasionally, individuals may also be found in residential and urban grassy areas under boards and trash. However, these sites are usually the first targeted for collection by the pet trade industry. The Kirtland's Snake is a reclusive species, spending large periods of time under objects or underground. Its diet is comprised of mainly earthworms and slugs, which helps explain its somewhat "secretive" behavior. During winter months Kirtland's Snakes often **hibernate** in crayfish burrows. The species is also **ovoviviparous**.

Threats and Management Issues

Habitat loss and degradation are important factors contributing to the decline of this species. Although the distribution of the Kirtland's Snake appears continuous across its range, populations are actually isolated in remaining patches of suitable habitat. The pet trade industry has also had a profound affect on the abundance of this species. When discovered, populations are often exploited by collectors despite the fact that this species fares poorly in captivity. As well as considering these factors, management ideas and recommendations targeted at the Kirtland's Snake would also be greatly improved by an increase in research on the species, as available literature is currently limited. The [Habitat Management Guidelines for Reptiles and Amphibians of the Midwest](#) provides some excellent land management and conservation ideas for habitats used by the Kirtland's Snake.

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Classified Advertising Policy

GCHS Members may run a free classified ad of 7 lines or less at no charge for an unlimited time; however, the ad will be canceled after one month unless the editor is informed to continue it. Please include scientific names for the animals with your ad as well as your phone number and area code. Ads of up to 7 lines for non-member are \$2 per issue; ad charges for items more than 7 lines long are as follows:

Business card size	\$3 per issue
1/4 page	\$6 per issue
1/2 page	\$10 per issue
Full page	\$20 per issue

The GCHS is not liable for the quality of the merchandise advertised. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.

Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 47001.

Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gradycalhoun@earthlink.net.

Black and white photographs can be included with articles. Photo submissions should include your name, phone number, and description of photo on the back. Photos can be returned.

All time dependent submissions must be in the editors possession no later than the meeting previous to the demaled publication.

Classifieds

Rats and Mice for sale. Reasonable price. Call Jesse or Tom (513) 876-0579.

For Sale: 3.3 Normal Adult Okeetee Corn Snakes \$50 each. 2.1 Banana California Kingsnakes, adult proven breeders, \$100 each. 0.0.10 Cornsnake hatchlings of last year, \$30 for amelanistic, \$25 for normals. Call Mike Matthews at (513) 734-1336.

For Sale: 3.3 South Carolina Corn Snakes (*elaphe guttata guttata*). These were bred by me, and are approx. 1.5 years old. All are nice looking, but a few have exceptional orange and red coloring, and all are feeding very aggressively on f/t mice. I am asking between \$40-\$50 each. Very healthy snakes. Feel free to call me at 228-0293 or e-mail at kdobrien76@aol.com with any questions. Ask for Kevin.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at *All Creatures Animal Hospital*. Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures, 1894 Ohio Pike, Amelia, OH 45102, 513-797-7387.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card carrying members of the GCHS at Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic, 5989 Meijer Dr., Suite 2, Milford, Ohio 513-576-0131

(Number to left of decimal indicates males; number to right of decimal indicates females; number to right of second decimal indicates number of unknown sex. For example, 3.2.1=3 males, 2 females, and 1 unsexed specimen)

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Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
		(513) 564-6041	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452			(513) 564-6041
Sergeant-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452	Education Committee Chairman		
Advisor	Vacant		Peggy Fille		(513) 528-4452
Secretary	Kyle Becker	(513) 831-4898			

About the GCHS

The Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society holds monthly meetings which typically consist of a short business section, a refreshment intermission, and a program related to herpetology. Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in reptiles and amphibians. New members may sign up by mail or at the monthly meetings. Members receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue* and free classified advertising. Annual dues should be directed to the secretary at the society's mailing address, according to the rates below:

Student	\$10.00	Corresponding	
	\$10.00		
Individual	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$20.00	Institutional	\$30.00
Contributing	\$50.00		

Why Be a Member?

Receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue*

- Meet individuals knowledgeable about herpetoculture
- Have access to captive-bred herps and feeder animals
- Participate in society-sponsored field trips, and outings.
- Receive a 10 percent discount on herp-related items and services when you show a valid membership card at the following establishments:

Delhi Pet Center	(513) 451-4015
Kentucky Reptile Zoo	(606) 663-9160
Harrison Pet Center	(513) 367-1115
All Creatures Animal Hospital	(513) 797-7387
Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic	(513) 576-0131.

P.O. Box 14783
Cincinnati, OH 45250

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