

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Editor's Den

By Grady Calhoun

The December *Forked Tongue* features articles by Dean Alessandrini on creating Hybrid Species and Al Winstel on the New Caledonian Crested Gecko.

The December meeting will be held at Ryan's Steak House in Florence Kentucky

Calendar of Events

- 12/4 Annual holiday meeting at Ryan's Steakhouse featuring Greg Lipps speaking on herps of Belize.
- 1/8 Monthly Meeting in room 420 Speaker TBD

Announcements

We will be holding the annual holiday meeting at Ryan's Steak House in Florence, Kentucky. **It will start at 7:00 pm.** We did this last year and it turned out to be very nice. The cost is \$7.99 for adults and 45 cents/year of age for children up to 12. Pay at the door. No registration required. This includes an all-you-can-eat buffet with steak and just about everything else you can imagine. Drinks and tips are extra. We will have a private room and program. Directions are as follows
From I-75 S take the KY-1017 exit number 182 toward Turfway Rd.
Merge onto Thoroughbred Blvd
Turn Right onto Houston Rd
Turn Right onto Turfway Rd
Turn right onto Burlington Pike.
Turn Right onto Cavalier Blvd

The January meeting will be held on **January 8th** which is the **SECOND WEDNESDAY of the Month.** This is because the first Wednesday is New Years Day. The meetings will now be held in room 420 of the Natural Science Building. Right down the hall from our usual meeting room. All subsequent meetings will be held as usual on the first Wednesday of the Month in room 420.

The December Meeting is Wednesday, December 4th at 7:00 at Ryan's Steakhouse in Florence KY

GCHS 25th Anniversary Shirts Available!

We have three options for GCHS 25th Anniversary Shirts:

The first is a Forest Green T-shirt with a John Bellman original Tuatara water color on the back and the GCHS logo on the front breast. These are heavyweight poly-cotton blend shirts.

The second is a black sport shirt with collar featuring the GCHS 25th Anniversary Logo embroidered on the front in gold. There is no animal picture on this shirt. The third is a long sleeve heavy twill shirt. It will be light brown (mocha) with the GCHS 25th Anniversary Logo embroidered on the front in forest green. There is no animal picture on this shirt

These make great Christmas Gifts and must be pre-ordered. Order by the December Meeting.

Can I Breed my Corn Snake with your Bull Snake? (Or...the Ethics of Creating Unnatural Hybrids)

by Dean Alessandrini

There are a lot of strong feelings surrounding hybrids in the world of herpetoculture.

In today's world, hobbyists are creating man-made hybrids that cross the lines of subspecies, species, and even genera that, in some instances, are geographically separated by hundreds or even thousands of miles.

In my opinion, it should be considered unethical to create hybrid animals in captivity that do not naturally hybridize in the wild, unless there is a valid scientific reason to do so. The primary reason these hybrids are being created is to create new and exciting colors and patterns in snakes that can then be sold for high profit as a new "unique" animal. Many of the animals that are being unnaturally crossed may have competing instincts. I.E. the methods that they kill prey, the types of prey that they consume, preferred habitat and temperature ranges etc.

I would ask the pro-hybrid folks to consider how snakes originally came to be through natural selection. It took many generations and thousands of years for

the animals best suited for their environment to slowly develop and evolve into what they are today. So now...they simply take animals from completely different ecosystems and toss them together. I ask...what is the resulting animal suited for...life in a cage looking pretty?

To me, these animals are not in the LEAST interesting, and their development encourages the most selfish side of human nature. I have long promoted the combination of science and hobby when it comes to the amateur Herpetologist. Many of us gained our initial interest in herps when we saw a "pretty" snake. As thinking humans however, I'd like to think that we'd progress past that; gain an interest in the natural history of the animals, and develop interests in conservation and education regarding the animals we love.

Creating fancy unnatural hybrids encourages the "candy store syndrome" in herp hobbyist and urges people to have no interest in the animals other than to have the prettiest, weirdest...whatever...animal in a box that they can.

As this develops so does the craving for the almighty dollar. People lose all connection to the natural history of the animals, because they no longer HAVE a natural history. They become property with a dollar sign attached, nothing else. If a hybrid is created that looks like a certain pure strain, who is to say that the dealer, in search of the maximum profit, will not sell the snake as a pure strain? This type of event could be catastrophic, ultimately contaminating the genetic pool of an entire species of captive animal.

It seems as though unnatural hybridization is only going to grow as more people find they can make money whenever they "make" something new. I would urge hobbyists not to buy these animals in order to discourage their "production" in the future.

Rhacodactylus ciliatus, the "Cili" Gecko

By Al Winstel

Recently, I got interested in adding a new species to my reptile collection. Every once in a while, adding a new critter helps keep up my interest, gives me an opportunity to learn something new, and provides a different challenge.

Noting that my snake collection was pretty much full, I began to look at lizards. Iguanids usually don't have a high interest for me and I have no experience with agamids. Uromastix are attractive, but high temperature hot spots are necessary, along with a

cage having a large floor area. Geckos have always been appealing with their rubbery skin and alien looks, but many of them are small, skittery, and a real problem to handle and confine. Finally I turned my attention toward crested geckoes (*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*). When crested first appeared in the hobby a few years ago, I noticed that they were pretty unusual looking, but their initial high price dissuaded me from investing in any. It appeared that photos, even close ups, in crested articles were taken without restraining the animals. Since the price had by now dropped into a more reasonable range, due to the ease of captive breeding, I decided to buy a couple and find out if their handling characteristics were responsible for the unrestrained close ups.

I purchased an adult male with green sides and an orange back and a hatchling (hopefully) female with a red back, dark gray sides, and black "dalmation" spots. I soon discovered that these weren't just any typical gecko. First of all, they are fruit and insect eaters and some fanciers even seem to keep their crested on fruit baby food alone, with the addition of a vitamin/mineral mix (a commercial crested gecko food mix is reportedly in the works). Furthermore, it appears that each crested has a different food preference. Some eat insects but not baby food, Others are the reverse. Even among the baby food eaters, some prefer peach flavor, others Hawaiian Delight, others apple and chicken. Also the food doesn't seem to disappear all that quickly. A few licks of baby food a night seem to keep the gecko's weight steady. This may be explained by their relatively calm demeanor. Cresteds often will allow their keeper to pick them up and place them on a hand or arm without any attempt to bite. The gecko then just sits there awhile before climbing the keeper's arm, to eventually launch itself into space if you don't watch out! I discovered it was a good idea to hold the animal within its cage in case of a jump. The hatchling was more active than the adult.

Cresteds have an unusual way of moving while in a tree. They seem to prefer many small branches to one large one and wrap their toe pad covered fingers and prehensile tail around a branch to support themselves. The tail is equipped with an adhesive tip, much like the toes and this also helps support the animal. The crested's strange movements, calm demeanor, and demonic facial expression suggest to me that maybe they should be called "silly" geckoes rather than crested. Their movements in a tree suggest the

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activity of a tree frog more than those of a typical gecko.

So far my animals are too young to breed, but this is my eventual goal. The hatchling has continued to exhibit a very slight bulge at the tail base. The bulge's edges are more straight than rounded, allegedly a characteristic of young females. However, crested also have a reputation for turning from an apparent female to an actual male overnight as they mature, so we'll just have to wait and see. What colors to expect in the young of these 2 animals, I have yet to determine. There are a multitude of colors available, some heavy on white and brown, others completely red or orange, some with yellows, black spots, or a combination of several of these colors. The reason for this wide color variation is unknown, but crested are found on New Caledonia, a small group of islands near New Zealand and appear to have few predators except for larger lizards, such as *Rhacodactylus leachianus*. Perhaps the lack of too many other predators has allowed the crested to

evolve as multicolored relatively slow moving creatures, truly odd balls of the gecko world. I would also love to try the crested's bigger cousin, *leachianus*, but prices of these animals still remain rather prohibitive. As I am finishing this article, I have just added a third crested, hopefully another young female, this time a brindled yellow color with a few black spots.

Classified Advertizing 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 advertized. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.

Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

1. Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 4700.
2. Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gcalhoun@seidata.com.
3. 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.
4. All time dependent submissions must be in the editors possession no later than the meeting previous to the desired publication date.

Classifieds

For Sale: Herp books, 2 by Bartlett & Bartlett: Monitors, Tegus, and Related Lizards; Geckos. Both are Barron's soft cover @\$3.00 ea. plus postage if mailed. One by Sprackland: Savannah & Grassland Monitors, AVS soft cover @\$4.00 plus postage if mailed. All in almost new shape (I bought two copies at different times, pretty smart, huh?) Located in N. Hamilton County. Al Winstel 513-729-2563

For Sale: Amazon tree boas (*Corallus hortulanus*) born 10/13. Various garden phases from gray to tan with light to moderate pattern. \$40.00 ea. Will probably have some eating by mid November. Al Winstel 513-563-4513. Local sales or could bring to GCHS mtg.

For Sale: Feeder rabbits and rats. Call Rod Surber at (812) 637-0305 or e-mail me at Indianarockshop@aol.com.

For Sale: Aquariums-all shapes and sizes (5-90 gallons). Boa Constrictor(s) may be available, prices negotiable.

Call Chris at (513) 451-1203.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at All Creatures Animal Hospital where I examine and treat many different reptiles.

Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures Animal Hospital, 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)

Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
		(513) 564-6041			
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
					(513) 564-6041
Sargent-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452	Education Conservation Committee Co-Chairman		
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842		Matt Fille	(513) 528-4452
				Chris Bauer	(513) 451-1203
Secretary	vacant				

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	\$12.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$18.00	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

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