

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXX, No. XII

www.cincyherps.com

December 2005

The Editor's Den

The December Forked Tongue features an update on my Sulcata breeding project, an update on recently discussed legislation, and great story on how the GCHS has impacted local conservation.

Calendar of Events

2/1/06 – Monthly Meeting featuring Scott Shupe speaking on venomous Snakes of the US.

2/25-26 – Herp Display at Krohn Conservatory.

3/1/06 – Monthly Meeting Featuring Jeff Davis speaking on Frogs of Ohio.

4/5/06 – Monthly Meeting Featuring Carl Brune speaking on Herping in the Deserts of California.

4/21-23/06 Herpetology Weekend at Natural Bridge State Park

5/3/06 – Monthly Meeting Featuring Michael Graziano speaking on Successful Captive Maintenance and Breeding of Salamanders.

Legislative Update

There is currently a bill being kicked around in Ohio that addresses the permitting and banning of many exotic species. This is in the very early stages so there is no reason to panic. Dean and I made an appointment with State Representative Reinhart to discuss the bill currently being discussed and offer the assistance of the GCHS on any such legislation. As is typical the proposal came about because of an irresponsible exotic keeper. This time it wasn't a reptile! Evidently someone was keeping a puma on a dog run. The animal got free and a dog attacked it. Guess who won? People in the neighborhood got upset about this and looked to their elected officials for help. We went up prepared to speak only about herps. We had a professionally-bound report to provide and Dean gave the presentation to the representative's assistant with Powerpoint on a laptop. Although the representative couldn't meet with us at the last minute, his assistant seemed genuinely interested and was informed about the issue. She mentioned that the Bill would probably receive significant rewrite if it were proposed. As written the Bill would have banned venomous snakes and required some type of permitting system for constrictors. We went into the meeting stating that we were NOT in favor of any regulations on big constrictors. However we did say that if they were bound

and determined to regulate these constrictors that they should only regulate those that have been known to kill humans. These include the Reticulated Python, Burmese Python, Amethystine Python, Anaconda, and African Rock Python. The assistant thanked us and promised to keep us in the loop as the bill develops.

Sulcata Egg-laying update

by Grady Calhoun

Previous issues of the Forked Tongue included information on the egg laying activity of one of my sulcatas. As reported earlier she had laid three clutches of eggs, apparently without incident, and was later determined to be "egg bound" with her fourth clutch. On Thanksgiving Day, I prepared a heated outdoor enclosure over her favorite egg-laying site. The enclosure consisted of a wooden frame and walls, a 250 watt infrared bulb for heat, a 100 watt incandescent bulb for light, an old quilt to keep the heat in and a plastic tarp for a wind break and rain shield. I first injected the female with a calcium solution and followed up an hour later with oxytocin. Immediately after the oxytocin injection, I placed her in the egg laying enclosure and began the watching game. The first time I checked her, about 45 minutes after the oxytocin injection, she was backed into the hole and appeared to be laying eggs. I left her in there for several hours as we completed our obligatory turkey day rounds with the relatives. Upon returning that night, I checked the progress. She had left the hole and was resting in a corner. I checked the hole and there were six eggs, five of which were in very good shape. I am going to try to incubate them even though I'm not sure what the extended retention will cause. A week or so later I had her x-rayed again and found that there were still 5 eggs that had not been laid. Those of you who are sharp will realize that there is an egg missing. The original radiograph clearly showed twelve eggs and the follow-up clearly showed five. I still don't know what happened to that egg. Prior to the induction of labor, the female was not eating normally. She seemed very curious of everything placed in her cage but was eating very little. After laying the eggs she began to eat normally although she still seemed a little restless from time to time. I followed the same labor induction regime on Christmas day without any luck. I probably won't try again until the spring as long as she keeps eating and looks healthy. On a related note I have

The February meeting will be held on Wednesday February 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

determined that some of the eggs from the third clutch are fertile. I opened every egg from the first two clutches after a couple of months of incubation and there were no signs of life. I have tried to candle the eggs with a strong flashlight. All indications were that there were no blood vessels etc. I accidentally broke open one the eggs (that had been laid with significant damage) while attempting this candling. There was an embryo that looked to be very well developed. As usual, I'll keep you up to date.

A GCHS Victory in Conservation

by Dean Alessandrini

For many years, local herpers and naturalists have known of a vernal pool just across from Shawnee Lookout Park in Northbend, OH. The small pond lies on the property of the DuPont Fort Hill manufacturing plant.

Vernal pools, or temporary ponds, are critical breeding sites for some species of frogs and salamanders. This particular vernal pool has been well known as one of the few known annual breeding sites for the Jefferson salamander, *Ambystoma jeffersonianum* in Hamilton County. Scores of these salamanders were an annual site during late winter rains crossing the road to court and breed in this small pond. Their egg masses were an annual site here. Just as significant, if not more so, a few Wood Frogs, *Rana sylvatica* were recently observed in this pond. In 2005, a single Northern Leopard frog, *Rana pipien*, was seen on Brower Rd, not far from this pond. Both the Wood Frog and the Northern Leopard frog were, (until these sightings) thought to be extirpated from Hamilton county. The Wood Frog and the Jefferson Salamander ONLY breed in vernal ponds and, by instinct, return to the pond where they hatched each year to breed.

This fall, several GCHS members, including me, were very unhappy to see that this pond has recently been drained. It appeared that two channels had been dug out of the back to intentionally drain it. After much discussion, we decided to make a call to the DuPont plant, explain the situation, and see if they were willing to repair the pond. After being patched around for several days, I spoke to Mr. Roger Beacom, the plant's production manager. After a few awkward moments explaining that I wanted to talk to him about salamanders and trying not to get hung up on, I managed to get Mr. Beacom's attention, and he was surprisingly concerned and genuinely interested in the situation. Roger explained that the pond had been drained in the summer of 2004 in the name of mosquito control, and that they had no idea that it had any ecological significance. Taking the advice of Greg Lipps (ODNR salamander guru and GCHS member), I forwarded Mr. Beacom

articles explaining that vernal ponds with amphibians do not produce many mosquitoes (the larvae of the amphibians eat the mosquito larvae). I also sent him various sources of information about vernal ponds, and about wetland conservation in Ohio. Most of these sources were from Greg Lipp's Ohio amphibian website. (see: <http://www.ohioamphibians.com/>)

In my next conversation with Roger, he told me that he had read all the information and found it very interesting. He needed to get the ok from his boss (the plant manager), but felt strongly that they could fix the pond. I urged him to try to make it happen before February, as that is the time the Jefferson salamanders usually breed in Hamilton County.

Since the pond was drained in 2004, one breeding season has already been missed, but salamander experts seem to be confident that they will return.

I was very happy to receive a phone call from Mr. Beacom several days later. He explained that he got the approval to repair the pond. On Saturday, January 7, I drove to the pond and found that the repairs had indeed been made. The upcoming weeks forecast rain, and I look forward to seeing the pond fill, and, hopefully...seeing the amphibians return very soon.

This experience was a small project for the GCHS, but I feel it could lead to a giant leap for wetland conservation in Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 95% of Ohio's wetlands are gone. We need to preserve what remains wherever possible. Wetlands, and in particular vernal ponds, are extremely unique ecosystems that support species that cannot survive in other environments. The success of this project demonstrates that corporations may be willing to try to co-exist with native reptiles and amphibians, if they are only shown how to do so. I hope that this is the first of many conservation victories that are at least in part due to the input of the GCHS. It is up to organizations like the GCHS to educate; and promote conservation of these habitats that are in our own back yards.

If we don't, who will?

For more information on vernal ponds, wetland conservation, and Ohio's amphibians, see:

<http://www.ohioamphibians.com/>

The February meeting will be held on Wednesday February 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

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

For Sale: 0.0.1 captive bred and born **Northern** Blue Tongue skink. Born 7/2/05. Eating great! Comes from dynamite parents. \$100 Call Grady at (812) 926-1206.

For Sale: 1.1 Captive bred and hatched grey-banded king snakes, Blair's phase. \$75 each. Hatched 7/19/05. Eating live pinkies. Call Grady at (812) 926-1206.

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)

The February meeting will be held on Wednesday February 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

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

The February meeting will be held on Wednesday February 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center