

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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January 2004

The Editor-s Den

By Grady Calhoun

The January Forked Tongue features an article by Grady Calhoun on Prehensile-Tail Skinks.

Calendar of Events

2/4 **Monthly Meeting at NKU**

2/21 & 22 **Educational Program at Krohn Conservatory**

3/3 **Monthly Meeting at NKU**

February Meeting

As you may be aware, a new ban on reptiles and other exotics has been proposed in Dayton. Dean Alessandrini has been actively involved with the city counsel hearings regarding this issue. It has been proposed, in all likelihood, because of the man who was bitten by his rhinoceros viper and subsequently died. For the February meeting we will be discussing this proposed legislation and developing a position for that the GCHS will take in the event that such legislation is proposed in the tri-state area. Terry Wilkins will be attending the meeting to provide his perspective on such legislation. In addition, we have invited pet store managers to attend as they will also have a vested interest in any such legislation.

New Conservation Committee Chairman!

As many of you know, our vice-president, Dean Allesandrini, has been actively involved in various conservation efforts. He suggested that he would like the society to get more involved with conservation and real herpetology. He has volunteered to head up the conservation committee. Typically, one individual has chaired conservation and education efforts but it makes sense to split them so that each task can have more individualized attention. Peggy Fille will continue to be the chair of the education committee. Please call Dean if you know of anything you would like the conservation committee to get involved in. Better yet, give him a call and tell him you want to get involved!

New Website is Up!

Take a look at our new website. The address,

www.cincyherps.com, did not change but the site certainly did. Thanks to GCHS member Tom Nagel of Midwest New Media, the site is much more functional and professional in appearance. We are in the process of placing as many old Forked Tongues on the site as we can. At the last meeting John Bellman volunteered to start indexing back issues by topic so that we can have easy access to information.

Rescued Animals need Homes

We need volunteers to adopt animals that are given to the society. If you are willing to provide a good home for iguanas, large boas or pythons, tortoises or crocodilians please contact Chris Bauer at (513) 424-5818 or Peggy Fille at (513) 528-4452.

Change in Meeting Place

The monthly meetings of the GCHS will be held at the Cincinnati Nature Center beginning with the April 7th meeting. The dates and times for the meetings remain the same, the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm. We are really excited about the move. We are hoping that it encourages more people to attend and may also result in the GCHS getting more involved with real herpetology such as animal surveys etc. The Nature Center is a wonderful place that is loaded with herps. Come early and take a stroll through the center. The last time that I was there I saw five-lined skinks, broad-headed skinks, eastern red-spotted newts, bullfrogs, toads, Northern water snakes, painted turtle, snapping turtles and more. This was in about an hour! We are very fortunate to have a place like this to meet.

The 49 Footer is not Real!

As most of us expected, the reported 49 foot reticulated python turned out to be significantly shorter than this reported length. It was actually closer to 20 feet. The keeper of the snake explained that the snake got bigger and smaller when it ate.

Observed Behaviors in Prehensile Tail Skinks

By Grady Calhoun

Yeah it-s another article on some of my animals. I am in my third year of maintaining Solomon Island Prehensile

The February Meeting is Wednesday, February 4th at 7:30 at NKU

Tail Skinks (*Corucia zebrata*). Although I originally bought 4 wild-caught animals, I have had several given to me. I am finding that these are some of the most complex reptiles that I have ever maintained. I have established a routine of observing their behaviors almost every day. These are robust lizards that require rather large caging. Before I obtained my first specimens I read everything I could find. It was frequently mentioned that these animals do much better in social groups. It was also mentioned that animals purchased together sometimes do better than animals that are introduced into existing groups. Both of these proved to be very true. The specimens I purchased were supposedly one male and three females. They were maintained together from the day that they were received. There were absolutely no signs of aggression observed within this group.

Breeding behavior

One of the original four animals aggressively tried to breed with two of the other three. Although copulation was never observed, the animals were frequently observed in typical mating posture with tails wrapped. These animals reportedly cannot be sexed with much accuracy based on external characteristics. This made me pay no attention to the fact that the animal that was typically attempting to breed the others was rather small boned with a relatively small head. The animal that was the most frequently mounted had the stereotypic male appearance B larger body and a head that was disproportionately large. Two of the animals died within about 6 months. After about a year of captive maintenance, two slugs were found in the cage. This was not observed but it was assumed that the larger bodied animal was the layer of the slugs. Two months ago two more slugs were found in the cage. This time, one of the lizards was observed right next to the slugs. Upon examination, it appeared that this lizard had lost a significant amount of weight. Its abdomen appeared to be completely concave. The really odd thing about this was that this was the lizard that was continually trying to breed the other lizards. Although the actual laying of slugs was not observed, I believe that the slugs were produced by the animal that I thought was the male. If this is what actually occurred, a female lizard aggressively attempted to mount and breed male and female lizards.

Aggression

As mentioned previously, I read everything that I could find regarding these animals. It was often reported that aggression was observed when new animals were introduced into an existing social group. By this time, I had six animals, two of the four animals originally

purchased in a group and four animals that were obtained individually. In an effort to form social groups and promote breeding, virtually every combination of animals was tried. As it turned out, I observed three very different types of personalities. As was frequently documented, two of the animals were very aggressive to every other animal with which they were combined. (One of these two animals is the female described above that attempted breeding with the others.) Even though the caging was four feet wide, two feet deep and six feet tall, this animal would charge out of its hiding place and attack every single animal added to the cage. It was not breeding behavior. The other animal that consistently exhibited very aggressive behavior is believed to be blind. For obvious reasons, this lizard would not charge others from across the cage. Whenever another lizard came within a couple of inches however, the fight began. This happened with every lizard introduced.

Two of the other lizards were relatively ambivalent to all of the other lizards to which they were introduced, at least before they were attacked! The other two lizards exhibited the behavior that surprised me the most. They were completely terrified of every other lizard introduced regardless of the other lizards' aggression or lack thereof toward them. These animals would tirelessly try to get out of the cages and would stay at opposite ends of the cages, even when they were placed together. When with other animals, they refused to eat or drink and did not appear to calm down even after three days.

Although I can't draw a lot of conclusions about these observations, it certainly brings to light the fact that a lot of care must be taken when introducing these animals. It can result in injury anorexia or even death. If I could have definitively determined the sex of these animals, it may have added more useful information.

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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
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

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 gcalhoun@seidata.com.

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 desired publication.

Classifieds

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

For Sale: I will have baby corn snakes available in July, a few albino Okeetee corns and the offspring of a ghost X hypererythristic(red) cross. The latter will probably look normal, depending upon hidden traits, but breeding these offspring together should result in a variety of possibilities, including young with extra red, amelanistics, hypomelanistics, and ghost. Young are \$15 ea. and will be feeding. Al Winstel 513-729-2563. Could probably bring to meeting.

For Sale: Snakes, 2.0 CB ball pythons (*Python regius*), 1 baby (\$20), 1 yearling (\$30), both feeding; 1 baby Amazon tree boa (*Corallus hortulanus*), eating thawed pinks (\$25); 1 aberrant patterned Pueblan Milksnake (*Lampropeltis t. campbelli*) (\$25), 2 years old. eating thawed pinks, fuzzies. Call Al Winstel 513-729-2563.

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 January Meeting is Wednesday, January 7th at 7:30 at NKU

Currently Held Positions

President (513) 564-6041	Grady Calhoun (812) 926-1206 Editor Grady Calhoun	Vice President (812) 926-1206	Dean Alessandrini (513) 347-0099
Treasurer	Peggy Fille (513) 528-4452		(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
Secretary	Vacant	Chris Bauer	(513) 424-5818

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.

P.O. Box 14783
Cincinnati, OH 45250

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