

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Editor's Den

By Grady Calhoun

The March *Forked Tongue* features an article on an observation of the first herps of the season and highlight's from January's monthly meeting.

Calendar of Events

- 3/5 Monthly Meeting in room 420 Speaker Grady Calhoun on Captive maintenance of all and reproduction of some of my entire lizard collection.
- 4/2 Monthly Meeting in room 420 Speaker Al Winstel on Amazon Tree Boas.
- 5/17 Tentative field trip to central Ohio.

Announcements

Herpetology weekend at Natural Bridge State Park will be held on Easter Weekend this year (4/18, 19 & 20) Everyone that I have known to participate in this event has had a blast.

March Meeting

Due to the generous donation of a member of the public we have obtained several VERY good herpetology books. We will be raffling these off over the next several months. There are however two books that we will be auctioning off because they appear to be quite collectable. They are:

Venomous Reptiles: Illustrated with Photographs by Shermon and Madge Minton, paperback, 1969

and

Snakes of the World by Raymond Ditmars, hardback 1960

We will start the bidding at \$5.00 each. Bids can be submitted via our new website www.cincyherps.com. Please specify the book you want and your bid.

The raffle book for the March meeting will go when we get \$15.00 in raffle tickets. It is:

The Reproductive Husbandry of Pythons and Boas by Richard A Ross and Gerald Marzec, paperback . This is a very nice, very technical book.

January Highlights

Our speaker on January 8th was again Dean Alessandrini speaking and showing his slides on the beautiful and rare Indigo Snake. Dean reported on a December trip he, his son and other naturalist friends took in order to explore a large preserve SW of Savannah, Georgia where the terrain looked quite suitable for a population of Indigos. In this area were hundreds of Gopher Tortoise burrows, upon which many animals depend including the Southern Pine Snake, the Eastern Diamondback (although these do not like to be underground, but will be found around the edge of the burrows under fronds and bushes), and especially the Indigo Snake. As Dean puts it, Gopher Tortoise activity is synonymous with the presence of Indigos. Good habitat includes grassy open areas, patches of sand, and sun! The sand provides a good digging medium for the tortoises, and they can eat the grasses. Habitats often suffer and get clogged with too many trees and no open spaces when natural fires are suppressed due to the possibility of property loss. This area is no exception, as long leaf pine trees need fires for seeds to open, and other wildlife depends on the meadows and open spaces that are created by the fires. This particular area must have been allowed to burn. Salamanders in the area include the spotted, mole and tiger salamanders. Other indigenous turtles include yellow-bellied sliders and cooters.

The actual search for snakes turned out to be quite a science. Gopher Tortoise burrows can be 8 feet deep and 15 to 20 or even 30 feet long. Gopher Tortoises are subtropical animals, and this area is the northern part of their range where the temperatures were 40 or 50 degrees in and around the burrows. The Indigos will

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bask in the winter when the air temperature on a sunny day gets above the temperature of the burrow. One clue to the presence of a snake would be a shed skin near the primary retreat. Usually the snakes choose one burrow and stick to it. In addition to sheds are tracks. In the white sand tracks can remain apparent for 3 or 4 days. Tracks on the apron indicate whether a snake has exited the burrow, reentered, or not. It was these observations that led to the discovery of several well-fed and robust male specimens (!), as I understand it, not the time and energy that was spent with various technical hardware items, mainly a \$300 laser thermometer that Dean described as a difficult instrument to get down a hole (I've told you how long and deep they are, and they wind!) Dean described the think of the thermometer as it ran into one resident tortoise. The guys could at least shoot the surface temperatures around the burrows Mirrors to reflect sunlight only work up until that first bend. Other facts came to light as Dean discussed his favorite herp. It is thought that Indigos may not actually be laying eggs in these Tortoise burrows. Indigo nests have been observed nearer to water. Indigos do cannibalize and will eat anything. Evidently this four page list of food items includes all kinds of herps and snakes, rodents, birds, eggs, worms B and anything that moves that they can swallow. This means also the eggs of the Gopher Tortoise with whom they share their den. Those of us at the meeting pondered the wisdom of this symbiotic relationship, which does not seem to be to the advantage of the tortoises.

Indigo Snakes are endangered, and have been protected in Florida since 1973 and federally since 1978. After the fun and successful efforts to locate the Indigos of this area, it was decided by one of the official naturalists in Dean's group that the area should be posted, thereby alerting caring and responsible people to the presence of an Indigo population in the area. But as we all know, this signage also serves to inform people who have no honest intentions. And therein lies the dilemma.

First Herps of the Season

Grady Calhoun

It was the first warm rain of the winter of 2003. A completely out of place warm day occurred on February 2. The Cincinnati winter has been brutal by past standards. It has been VERY cold with copious snowfall. The end of January had temperatures well

below freezing, into the teens, on most nights. On the evening of February 2, my son told me that he saw Jefferson's Salamanders (*Ambystoma jeffersonium*) crossing the road towards a vernal pond about 1 quarter of a mile from my house. This day had a high of 57 recorded. It was reportedly 55 degrees Fahrenheit at 10:00 pm. It was about 8:30 pm when he came home. We immediately grabbed the camera and went out to investigate. We walked the road where he had seen two of the salamanders. The herpetology god's were with us because the rain which started early in the morning stopped as we arrived at the site. I was hoping to witness droves of the large salamanders crossing the road but none were found. We walked down to the pond and found it completely frozen. I am not confident that the salamanders could have even gotten under the ice. Careful observation at the pond also yielded no salamanders. A little disappointed, we decided to get into the car and do a little road cruising. Our last effort was to drive past the pond again. This time we found what we were looking for. A large Jefferson's Salamander was crossing the road toward the pond. I had never actually seen one of these in the wild. It was absolutely stunning. These are relatively heavy bodied salamanders with high-set distinct eyes. They have a smiling appearance and are about 8 inches long. I am afraid that some of these critters didn't make it as the low the next day was 17 degrees, but I guess Mother Nature knows best...

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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.

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.

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 (513) 564-6041	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206 (513) 564-6041
Sargent-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452			
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842	Education Conservation Committee Co-Chairman		
Secretary	Polly Whittaker	(513) 321-1884		Matt Fille	(513) 528-4452
				Chris Bauer	(513) 451-1203

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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