

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXX, No. III

www.cincyherps.com

March 2005

The Editor's Den

The March Forked Tongue features articles on the protection of Eastern Box Turtles in Indiana and a care sheet for my new favorite gecko.

Calendar of Events

- 4/06/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Jim Harrison speaking on envenomation.
4/16/04 GCHS day at the Cincinnati Zoo See details below
4/22- 4/24 Herpetology Weekend at Natural Bridge Kentucky
5/4/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Brian Horn, Adventures of a Tropical Herpetologist.
7/6/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Phil Peak and Will Byrd speaking on Snakes of Kentucky.
8/3/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Joe Collins Speaking on "North American Herpetology, Problems and Perspectives"

Indiana Box Turtles

Collecting eastern box turtles from the wild in Indiana will soon be illegal. An Indiana law, effective October 23, 2004, prohibits the collection of eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) or their parts from the wild in Indiana. Individuals who currently possess an eastern box turtle, a subspecies, or their parts will need to apply for the new box turtle possession permit. There is no cost for the permit. The eastern box turtle is tottering between maintaining stable populations and becoming endangered.

"Prohibiting the taking of the eastern box turtle in Indiana is one of the best ways that we can help protect this species," said State Herpetologist, Zack Walker. Current studies reveal that male eastern box turtles must hear or see a female before the mating process will even begin. Low animal numbers in populations prevent adequate contact between males and females. Additionally, we now know that box turtles have a homing

instinct. Turtles displaced by humans will instinctively attempt to return to their home habitat, often times forcing them to travel through unsafe conditions.

Past collection has already harmed many box turtle populations. The loss of habitat and an increasing number of roads through their habitat also contribute to their decline. Walker reports, "We now are aware of how detrimental incidental collection and displacement is to the population and it is essential that it does not continue as it has in the past."

The eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) is a small to medium-sized turtle with a domed shell. The top of the turtle's shell is variable in color and pattern but is typically marked with yellow to orange streaks and blotches on a dark background. The eastern box turtle is very similar in appearance to the state-endangered Ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*).

The Natural Resources Commission approved the recommended administrative rule changes on July 20, 2004. The Governor's Office, Attorney General's Office and the Indiana Secretary of State gave final approval of the rule changes on September 23, 2004. This change in the administrative rules puts Indiana in the top ten of states in the country trying to conserve the eastern box turtle.

Specific information about eastern box turtles and new possession permits in Indiana is available on the Wildlife Diversity Section's website at: www.IN.gov/dnr/fishwild/endangered

Permit information may also be obtained by contacting the Division of Fish & Wildlife at 317-232-4080.

The April meeting will be held on Wednesday April 6th at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

UROPLATUS PHANTASTICUS CARE SHEET

BY ROBERT GUNDY

(Printed with permission from the Geckos unlimited website www.geckosunlimited.com)

INTRODUCTION

Uroplatus phantasticus is a small species of the Uroplatus (Leaf Tail or Flat Tail Geckos) Genus from parts of Madagascar. *Uroplatus phantasticus* is a small Uroplatus reaching about a maximum from 5-6 inches in total length at adulthood with an “eyelash” over each eye. These “eyelashes” make them look very interesting. Their tails are very advanced in camouflage at resembling dead leaves. They are the exact shape of most dead leaves and some will have small partitions taken from the sides to make the “leaf” look as if eaten by an insect. Very cool looking. It has several common names including Satanic, Eyelash, and Fantastic Leaf Tail Geckos. Most specimens found for sale are WC and imported into the U.S. Few people are successfully captive breeding them. Prices will range from \$50-\$100 retail for WC, \$75+ for CB, but CB is not easy to find. Most imports will suffer from either dehydration or a heavy parasite load; and therefore should be isolated and treated appropriately before introducing into colonies.

THE ENCLOSURE

You can keep a pair to trio of *U. phantasticus* in a 10 gal tank. A screen top is necessary for proper ventilation and air circulation. I keep my breeding trio in a 20 gallon high tank. You can use a hexagonal or normal, but it can be hard to find a top for a hexagonal, and expensive as well. Reptariums and screen mesh cages made for Chameleons are not a good choice for *U. phantasticus* because it is hard to keep the humidity up in those conditions.

TEMPERATURES AND HUMIDITY

Temperatures should range from 65-80, usually from 70-75. I have them under an AC vent to help keep them this cool because I am in Florida, and it gets pretty hot. Humidity should be kept at 75-

90%, usually staying in the 80-90% range. Mist the cage as often as needed, generally between 2 and 3 times a day. I have also found it helps if you occasionally water the substrate some. This helps to keep humidity up also. I have observed when the humidity drops some individuals will immediately go into shedding.

SUBSTRATES

For a substrate there is a variety of possibilities. Things such as Peat Moss, Sphagnum Moss, Bed-a-Beast, Orchid moss, live pillow moss, soil and orchid bark. I personally prefer a naturalistic setup with a Bed-a-beast substrate for the plants and a layer of leaves over that. It is a fine substitute for soil when used properly. I do not like sphagnum moss because it smells, can have sharp twigs in it, and may be hazardous if a gecko lunges for a meal on the floor. Orchid moss makes a very nice substrate because it is soft, does not smell, retains humidity well and is pleasing to the eye. Live pillow moss is a very attractive substrate, but can be difficult to maintain. Crickets also will find their way underneath this, and make become trapped, die, and rot. With soil you have to go through the hassle of making sure you get the kind without fertilizer, you have to buy this enormous bag that ends up spilling everywhere and it does not keep in humidity very well. It also will commonly dry out and harden, making it tougher for plants to grow.

CAGE ACCESSORIES

For cage accessories I stress that you not use too many light colored cage accessories if you have darker colored animals. I prefer not to use grape wood because I have experimented with it and they did not seem to like it. They do not camouflage with it, therefore feeling vulnerable. Things such as cork bark, bamboo, Bio-Vine, and certain sterilized branches are good cage accessories to use with them. In my experience they seemed to prefer the Bio-Vine and natural branches. I have found that artificial plants (like those stuck to wooden fixtures that they sell at pet stores in the "reptile section") work well. Good plants for *U. phantasticus* enclosures include *Ficus sp.*, *Dieffembachia* and Golden Pothos. Other kinds

will work too as long as they are strong enough and large enough to support the animals on the leaves and branches. Some of the bromeliads are poor choices. Most store water where crickets can be trapped and drown, they need high light conditions and can be difficult to keep alive. Always pick healthy plants and wash them thoroughly to get rid of any pesticide residues.

UV LIGHTING

As for UV lights everyone has his or her own opinions. Some say UVB is good for them and helps w/ fertile egg production, and others say too much light will stress them. I have always used UVB lights on my animals. If not for the animals, they are beneficial for the plantlife. I have used UVB for other gecko species and I do notice that it enhances their color. You can acquire hoods at Wal-Mart for \$8 for fluorescent tubes. I believe the best UV lights are the Repti-Sun 2.0 Fluorescent tubes. I have also used a generic full spectrum bulb for plants called Sunshine from Home Depot. Places such as Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc have fluorescent tubes for indoor plants. They are cheaper than the reptile bulbs. The choice is yours.

FEEDING

For adults, crickets make the best diet. The crickets are cheap and have a good nutritional value. I feed them 1/2 inch and 3/4 inch. Other insects like mealworms, waxworms, silkworms and moths can be offered as well. I have not offered waxworms, silkworms or moths. Mealworms are slow moving and burrow underground before noticed. It is best to gut load the crickets with some sort of calcium enriched feed and dust them with by alternating Rep-Cal or Miner-All, Herptivite and not dusting every feeding. One feeding I dust with Rep-Cal or Miner-All, the next feeding I use Herptivite and the next feeding I don't dust them at all, then I repeat the cycle. I give them as many crickets as I think they can handle, and I feed them every other day.

BREEDING

Cycling is probably not necessary in the captive breeding of *U. phantasticus*, but it can't hurt. It is

generally a matter of opinion and/or preference. So far I have not done anything to entice them to breed. Eggs are generally laid every 30 days. The eggs take around 90 days to hatch at room temperature (70-77F). Some people say that keeping them together in colonies such as 2.2 or more will help in breeding because of breeding competition. Some keepers have also had experiences where the two males will fight. When the females lay the eggs, they will lay them on the ground. They will usually lay under a piece of cork bark or at the base of a plant, bush or tree.

INCUBATION-

Incubating temperatures should be from 70-75, 72 being ideal. Humidity should be around 80%. There are several ways to incubate them and several different mediums to use. I have mine in deli cups at room temperature. Vermiculite, perlite, peat moss, sphagnum moss, bed a beast, orchid moss all can be used. Some have had success using paper towels or brown paper bag pieces to rest the eggs on. I have used bed-a-beast, vermiculite and orchid moss on *Uroplatus* eggs. For *U. phantasticus* I prefer vermiculite or orchid moss. The eggs of the *phantasticus* are about the size of a pea, literally!! I personally just don't like sphagnum moss that much for any use with these geckos, or any others for that matter. Another way to incubate the eggs is to keep them in a deli cup or similar container with the incubating medium of your choice at room temp somewhere on a shelf or something where they will not be disturbed, but can easily be checked on. One last method is to keep the eggs in the cage, but simply place a small screen mesh cubicle over the eggs to ward off crickets. If water will drip onto the eggs, then it is best they be incubated elsewhere. Moisten the substrate by dripping it around the eggs slowly. Do not drip water on the eggs or flood the incubation medium. Do not apply any mold killers and all should be well.

CARING FOR THE HATCHLINGS

Taking care of the babies is the most difficult part in captive breeding *U. phantasticus* from the info I have gathered. Babies should be kept with temperatures and humidity identical to that of the

adults. A small cage like a Kritter Keeper or 5 gallon glass tank can be used. As a substrate I prefer brown paper towels as substrate. Brown is preferred over white because it may strain the eyes of the hatchlings. Small sterilized sticks, Bio-Vine and small Golden Pothos plants are appropriate choices for cage furniture. Offer crickets about 1/8" (1-2 weeks old). Small terrestrial snails may be offered. Dust crickets with a Herptivite/Rep-Cal (or similar calcium supplement) at every feeding for the first month. I believe a good amount of calcium is extremely beneficial for hatchling *Uroplatus*.

CONCLUSION

I hope this care sheet gave some helpful information to all of those interested in keeping *Uroplatus phantasticus*. They are a wonderful and amazing species of gecko that will bring enjoyment to those who will take the time and dedication to properly care for them. If you have any further questions on *U. phantasticus* or *U. sikorea* as well, I will be happy to answer them. You can email me at Reptiluvr@yahoo.com.

SUGGESTED READING

Henkel, F. W. and W. Schmidt. 1995. Geckoes. Krieger Publishing Company. Malabar, Fl.

Spiess, Petra. Nature's Dead Leaves and Pez Dispensers: Genus *Uroplatus* (Flat-Tail geckos). Rocky Mountain Herpetoculture

Love, Bill. 2001. Reptiles Magazine. Stalking the Action (Parts 1 & 2).

Glaw, F and M. Vences. 1994. A Fieldguide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar. 2nd ed. Germany: Moos Druck, Leverkusen

Boulenger, G. A. 1888
Descriptions of new Reptiles and Batrachians from Madagascar.
Ann. Mag. nat. Hist. (6) 1: 101-107.

NUSSBAUM, R. A. and C. RAXWORTHY 1995
New *Uroplatus* DUMÉRIL (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) of the ebenau-group from the

Anosy Mountains of southern Madagascar.
Copeia. 1995(1):118-124.

NUSSBAUM, R. A. and C. RAXWORTHY 1994
A new species of *Uroplatus* DUMÉRIL (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) from southern Madagascar.
Herpetologica. 50(3):319-325.

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 desired publication.

Classifieds

For Sale: 1.0.0 Carpet x Diamond Python (*Morelia spilotes*), 6 years old, tame, 8 ft +, eats pre-killed large rats. Has been in my collection for 4+ years. \$125 or trade. Call Mike McMullen (513) 753-1899.

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

Savannah monitor (*Varanus exanthematicus*). Feeds very well, approx 32". Healthy, tame, feeds on canned dogfood, mice, boiled chicken, eggs, etc. Free to good, experienced home but must come back to me if you get rid of it.

Nile monitor (*Varanus niloticus*) about 28". Feeds very well, approx 27". Healthy, NOT tame, feeds on canned dogfood, mice, boiled chicken, eggs, etc. Free to good, experienced home but must come back to me if you get rid of it. For Sale: 1.1 Captive bred grey-banded kingsnake. Eating live pinkies. \$50.00 each. Call Grady Calhoun at 513-564-6041

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 April meeting will be held on Wednesday April 6th 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 Co-Chairman		
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842		Peggy 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

The April meeting will be held on Wednesday April 6th at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center