

# THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXXI, No. III

[www.cincyherps.com](http://www.cincyherps.com)

March 2006

## The Editor's Den

The March Forked Tongue features an article on color morphs of the Honduran Milksnake and an article on Marbled Salamanders. **THE NEXT MEETING IS MAY 17 featuring JOE COLLINS. THIS IS NOT THE NORMAL MEETING TIME!!! This meeting takes the place of our normally scheduled June Meeting. There will be no meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup>.**

## Calendar of Events

**5/17/06**, Joe Collins speaking on "*The Amphibians, Turtles, and Reptiles of Custer State Park, South Dakota*"

**7/05/06**, Brian Horne speaking on "*Herping the Daly River and other adventures in the Northern Territory, Australia*"

**8/02/06**, Tim Sisson, President of the local Wildlife and habitat conservation organization, *The Western Wildlife Corridor*, speaking on how the WWC preserves critical habitats in Hamilton County.

**9/13/06**, Danna Baxley is conducting extensive field research on Black Pine Snakes in Mississippi.

## Genetics of Honduran Milk Snakes Morphs

by Grady Calhoun

Again you have to hear about my latest acquisitions unless I get some articles. I recently purchased a pair of Honduran Milk Snakes that will prove to be a very interesting genetics project. These two animals either exhibit or are recessive for the following traits: hypomelanism which is defined as a lesser melanin content than normal; and anerythrism which is the lack of red pigment. Both of these traits are recessive and therefore need to be contributed by both parents (homozygous) to actually be observed. My male is a hypomelanistic tangerine Honduran Milksnake, affectionately referred to as a hypo tango hondo, that is recessive for anerythrism. This snake is banded with two shades of bright, almost fluorescent, orange and light (hypomelanism) black. My female is an anerythristic Honduran Milksnake that is recessive for hypomelanism. This snake is banded with two shades of gray and black.

So what will these two adults produce? In theory there will be 25% normal tangerine phase animals that are heterozygous for hypomelanism and anerythrism; 25% hypomelanistic tangerine phase animals that are heterozygous for anerythrism; 25% anerythristic animals that are heterozygous for hypomelanism; and 25% ghost phase animals. The ghost phase is the exhibition of both hypomelanism and anerythrism. This means that the normally white bands will be very white with very little flecking, the other bands are light gray and light black.

## Marbled Salamander

Rogers, G. 2000. "*Ambystoma opacum*" (On-line), *Animal Diversity Web*. Accessed May 09, 2006 at [http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Ambystoma\\_opacum.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Ambystoma_opacum.html).



**Geographic Range:** *Ambystoma opacum* is found throughout most of the Midwest and even into northern Florida. Its Midwest range is, however, limited. It is only in the southernmost portion of Michigan and a few southern sections of New England (Flank 1999; Conant and Collins 1998).

**Habitat:** *Ambystoma opacum*, being an amphibian, is extremely susceptible to desiccation. Because of this, it prefers habitats close to ponds, streams, or damp woodlands. This species however, is not known to enter the water. Occasionally can be found around dry

**The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center**

hillsides, but never far from a moist environment (Flank 1999).

**Physical Description:** *Ambystoma opacum* is one of the smaller species in the Ambystomatidae family. It attains an adult length of approximately 9-10.7 cm (Conant and Collins 1998). Sometimes called the banded salamander, because of its white or light gray crossbands across the head, back, and tail. Considered sexually dimorphic, males have silvery white crossbands, which become very white along with swollen cloacal glands, during the breeding season, (early autumn). The female, being the larger of the two, possesses silvery gray crossbands (Petranka 1998).

**Reproduction:** Unlike most others in this family, *Ambystoma opacum* has a very unusual reproductive strategy. Instead of breeding ponds or other permanent water sources, in spring months, *Ambystoma opacum* is a fall breeder, and breeds entirely on land. After finding his mate, the male will court with the female, often moving in a circular fashion with her. The male will then proceed to undulate his tail, and raise his body. Following this, the male will deposit a spermatophore onto the ground. If interested, the female will then proceed to pick it up with her cloacal lips (Petranka 1998). After mating the female will venture off and select a small depression in the ground. This depression is usually a reduced pond, or dried bed of a temporary pond, or ditch (Petranka 1998). The female will lay a clutch of between fifty and one hundred eggs. Once deposited the female will remain with them to keep them moist, until nests are flooded. As soon as the autumn rains come the eggs will hatch in the depression they were originally laid in. If rain never comes the eggs will "over-winter", if temperatures do not fall too low, then hatch the following spring (Flank 1999). Once hatched the gray colored larvae (1 cm) grow extremely quickly, eating primarily macrozooplankton. Large larvae, however, will eat amphibian larvae and eggs (Petranka 1998). The timing on metamorphosis depends on geographic location. Those that are found in the South can go through metamorphosis in as little as two months. Those in the northern climates generally take between eight to nine months (Petranka 1998). Young juveniles are approximately 5 cm, and attain sexual maturity in about 15 months, after metamorphosis (Flank 1999).

**Behavior:** *Ambystoma opacum* is, for the most part, a

solitary species, spending most of the time under leaf litter or underground (up to one meter). It is thought that species will defend burrows they inhabit against others of the same species. Occasionally, adults will share burrows with each other. Adults do, however, tend to be more aggressive towards each other when food is scarce (Petranka 1998). The only time species are in contact with one another is during the breeding season. Males will often arrive at potential sites about a week before the females (Petranka 1998).

**Food Habits:** Even with its small size, *Ambystoma opacum* is a voracious, carnivorous predator, consuming large amounts of food. Small worms, insects, slugs, and even snails, make up its diet. Attracted to movement as well as odor, this species will not eat dead prey. (Flank, 1999)

**Predation:** Marbled salamanders are preyed upon by various woodland predators (snakes, owls, raccoons, skunks, shrews, weasels). Poison glands located on the tail provide a degree of protection. (Petranka, 1998)

**Conservation Status:** This species is listed as threatened by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In other areas it is not considered threatened and can be locally common. Declining populations in the Great Lakes region can be attributed to both declining habitat but more so the effects of widespread temperature cooling after a warmer postglacial climate brought them into the area.

**Contributors:** Garry Rogers (author), Michigan State University.

[James Harding](#) (editor), Michigan State University. David Armitage (editor), Animal Diversity Web Staff.

**References:** Conant, R., J. Collins. 1998. A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America: Third edition, expanded. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company. Petranka, J. 1998. *Slamanders of the United States and Canada*. Smithsonian Institution Press.

**The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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: 1.0 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](mailto: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 Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 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 Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center