

# THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXIX, No. X

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

October 2004

## **The Editor's Den**

The September Forked Tongue features articles regarding efforts to save the Hellbender and Amphibian Decline from the Center for North American Herpetology.

## **Calendar of Events**

**12/1/04** Holiday Meeting at Ryan's Steakhouse in Florence KY. Speaker will be Erik Keyser speaking on Japanese Giant Salamanders.

## **Annual Holiday Meeting**

The annual holiday meeting will be held at Ryan's Steakhouse in Florence KY. We have been meeting there for the past several years. Our speaker will be of the Cincinnati Zoo speaking on Giant Japanese Salamanders. The cost of the meal will be Adults \$8.19 plus \$1.13 for a drink  
Children 4 to 12 years old are 50 cents per year of age  
Tips are not included but are appreciated.

Directions from I-75 South out of Cincinnati  
At exit 182, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto SR-717 [Thoroughbred Blvd]  
Turn RIGHT (East) onto SR-842 [Houston Rd]  
Turn RIGHT (South-East) onto SR-1017 [Turfway Rd]  
Turn RIGHT (South-West) onto SR-18 [Burlington Pike]  
Turn RIGHT (North-West) onto Cavalier Blvd  
Address: 40 Cavalier Boulevard,  
Florence, KY 41042  
(859) 282-9199

## **Scientists Try To Save Hellbender, Largest Salamander In North America**

St. Louis, Missouri: The population of North America's largest salamander is plummeting in Missouri and Arkansas, and scientists from five states met to consider how to prevent the creature's disappearance.

About 35 members of the Hellbender Working Group met for meetings at the St. Louis Zoo last week to review research and plans for helping prevent the

extinction of the 2-foot-long salamander, which lives in a few cold, spring-fed Ozark streams.

Stanley Trauth, a zoology professor at Arkansas State University, showed pictures of Hellbenders with open sores, tumors and missing limbs and eyes. He said that nine out of 10 animals found in the Spring River this year had serious abnormalities. "I'm at a loss, folks," Trauth said. "We just don't have a good explanation for what's causing this."

Max Nickerson of the University of Florida, who has worked with Hellbenders for three decades, said his early research did not find nearly as many abnormalities. He called the new results baffling. Researchers say it was easy to find 100 Hellbenders in a day in the 1970s and 1980s; now they are lucky to find a few.

Biologists believe that many factors may have hurt the Hellbender, including logging, gravel mining, sewage plant effluent, agricultural runoff, introduction of trout, disturbance from boaters, poaching, deliberate killing and scientific

collection. One researcher found evidence that Hellbenders fare poorly in streams with lots of plants growing out of the water and slowing down the current. Others are looking at water quality issues, including the possible influence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals on Hellbender reproduction.

Another research project involves the effect of trout, which are not native to Missouri. Alicia Mathis, a behavioral ecology professor at Southwestern Missouri State University in Springfield, found that young Missouri Hellbenders do not recognize trout as a predator. Mathis is teaching some of the 150 young Hellbenders being reared in tanks at the Zoo to freeze when they smell trout in the water. If the project works, the schooled youngsters could be released into the wild with less chance of being eaten. "It could be a shot in the arm, for a population that really needs a shot in the arm," she said.

Amphibians in dramatic decline - Up to 122 extinct since 1980. Study finds nearly one-third of species threatened with extinction.

The December meeting will be held on Wednesday December 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Ryan's Steak House

The world's amphibian species are under unprecedented assault and are experiencing tens of thousands of years' worth of extinctions in just a century, according to the most comprehensive study ever conducted. More than 500 scientists from over 60 nations contributed to the Global Amphibian Assessment, the key findings of which were published on-line by Science Express and will appear in the journal Science.

Over the past three years, scientists analyzed the distribution and conservation status of all 5,743 known amphibian species, which include frogs and toads, salamanders, and caecilians. Of these, 1,856 (or 32 percent) are now considered threatened with extinction. In addition, sufficient data are lacking to accurately assess the status of nearly 1,300 other species, most of which scientists believe are also threatened. Amphibians are widely regarded as canaries in the coal mine, since their highly permeable skin is more immediately sensitive to changes in the environment, including changes to fresh water and air quality.

"Amphibians are one of nature's best indicators of overall environmental health," said Russell A. Mittermeier, president of Conservation International (CI). "Their catastrophic decline serves as a warning that we are in a period of significant environmental degradation."

Key findings of the study include:

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, at least 1,856 amphibian species are threatened with extinction, representing 32 percent of all species.

By comparison, only 12 percent of all bird species and 23 percent of all mammal species are threatened.

At least nine species have gone extinct since 1980, when the most dramatic declines began. Another 113 species have not been reported from the wild in recent years and are considered to be possibly extinct.

43 percent of all species are in population decline; fewer than one percent are increasing. Twenty seven percent are stable, and the rest are unknown.

427 species are considered Critically Endangered (CR), 761 are Endangered (EN), and 668 are Vulnerable (VU).

Colombia has 208 threatened amphibian species – the most in the world – followed by Mexico with 191, Ecuador with 163, Brazil with 110, and China with 86. Haiti has the highest percentage of threatened amphibians, with 92 percent of its species at risk of extinction.

"After birds and mammals, amphibians are the third group of species to be completely evaluated on a global scale. This study significantly expands our current knowledge and provides a baseline from which we can monitor our impact on the environment over time," said Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN (The World Conservation Union). "The fact that one third of amphibians are in a precipitous decline tells us that we are rapidly moving towards a potentially epidemic number of extinctions."

In the Americas, the Caribbean, and Australia, a highly infectious disease called chytridiomycosis has hit amphibians especially hard. New research is showing that in some regions, outbreaks of the disease may be linked to drought years, which scientists are increasingly attributing to the effects of climate change. But in most parts of the world, including Europe, Asia and Africa, chytridiomycosis is currently less of a problem. Other threats, such as habitat destruction, air and water pollution and consumer demand are leading causes of amphibian decline.

Still, scientists are confident that an immediate commitment of resources and effort could reverse many of the present negative trends. Creating new protected areas, captive breeding programs, better community engagement and protection of freshwater systems would enhance amphibians' chances of survival. "Since most amphibians depend on freshwater and feel the effects of pollution before many other forms of life, including humans, their rapid decline tells us that one of Earth's most critical life support systems is breaking down," said Simon Stuart, Senior Director of the IUCN/CI Biodiversity Assessment Unit, and leader of this research.

"We already knew amphibians were in trouble, but this assessment removes any doubt about the scale of the problem," said Bruce Young, a zoologist with the conservation group NatureServe. "Now we need greater protection of natural areas and accelerated research on amphibian diseases to stem the extinction tide."

Scientists from CI, IUCN, and NatureServe collaborated on the Global Amphibian Assessment. They analyzed data contributed by more than 500 of the world's leading amphibian specialists, and assessed each species for its level of threat, determined the distribution of each species, and gathered other essential.

Complete data about each species, as well as country and regional breakdowns, is available in a searchable database at [www.globalamphibians.org](http://www.globalamphibians.org).

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### 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.**

### Classifieds

For Sale: Captive Bred albino boa constrictors, (Peter Kahl strain). These are 2004 babies, all feeding and looking great! \$1000.00 each. Partial stripes available for \$1600.00. Call Scott Kass at 513-779-8124

For Sale: Albino (gold) axlotyls. 3"- 4" long. \$10 each. Call Harrison Pet Center 513-367-1115.

For Sale: Captive bred Grey banded kingsnake. Three months old. Eating live pinkies. \$50.00 each. Call Grady Calhoun at 513-564-6041

For Sale: 7.0 '03 Tiger Rat Snakes (*Spilote pullatus*) Very well started, nice black and yellow coloration. Approximately 30 inches or more. Feeding voraciously on live hoppers. \$60 each or two or more for \$50 each. Call Marc (859) 344-9626

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)

### 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 desired publication.

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### 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

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