

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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September 2007

The Editor's Den

Thanks to Al Winstel we have an article on what not to do with a legless lizard.

Calendar of Events

September 5, 2007-Monthly Meeting featuring Marc Frevola speaking on "Using herps for Learning in the Classroom."

October 3, 2007- Monthly Meeting featuring Jeff Davis speaking on the Eastern Massasauga, an Ohio Endangered Species.

2007 Elections

At the August meeting the nominating committee presented a slate of officers willing to run for the office. Believe it or not they are the same officers that are currently in place. We will be accepting nominations from the floor at the September meeting. The only requirements for nominating someone to run for office is that they must be willing to accept the nomination and they must be a member with one year in good standing.

Forked Tongue Digitizing Process

As you know we are in the process of digitizing all of the Forked Tongues ever written. Our goal is to have a complete digital set of Forked Tongues that can be searched according to subject. We are finding that the more recent years are harder to put our hands on than the earlier years. We actually have complete records from the very first newsletter up until the 1995. It is possible that no newsletters were written between April of 2000 and July of 2002. The society was in pretty rough shape during that period. If you are one of those individuals who saves your old newsletters please look at the table in the next column. We need copies of each of the months marked with an "X".

	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02
Jan	X					X	X	X
Feb							X	X
Mar	X			X			X	X
Apr	X	X				X	X	X
May				X	X	X	X	X
Jun	X		X			X	X	X
Jul						X	X	X
Aug					X	X	X	
Sep					X	X	X	
Oct					X	X	X	
Nov			X		X	X	X	
Dec			X	X		X	X	

If you have any of these please either send me a hard copy or scan it and e-mail it to me at gradycalhoun@embarqmail.com.

Never Hand Feed an Ophisaur!

By Al Winstel

Ophisaurus apodus, the "legless snake lizard" from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, is the largest of the glass lizards, occasionally reaching 4 feet in total length. Most of this is tail. My animal is 26.5 inches total length, 10.25 inches snout-vent, or about 60% tail. Another name sometimes used is "sheltopusik." My guess at the correct pronunciation is "shell toe' poo sick." Recently I obtained one of these mottled tan/brown lizards, sex unknown. Since the imports are fairly inexpensive, captive-breds are not often offered. I am assuming that this was an import. The lizard was initially set up in a 10 gallon glass tank with a wire mesh lid and newspaper substrate for a week or two to check for mites and other possible problems. It was obviously limited in movement in the small tank, so I then moved the animal into a wooden frame, wire mesh covered cage approximately 39 inches wide by 15 inches high by 26 inches front to back.

The Next Meeting will be Wednesday, September 5th at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

The cage had a fluorescent reptile bulb for UV A/B and a clip on incandescent light for basking. Substrate was aspen mulch and furniture included several pieces of cork bark and rock for hiding/climbing. Later a lidless Rubbermaid container covering about a third of the cage bottom was added. It was full of cypress mulch for burrowing.

The sheltopusik fed on a variety of critters including thawed pinky and fuzzy mice, canned “easi-pillers” (silkworms), easi-hopperr (grasshoppers), and also canned crickets. Live crickets were also taken. I hadn’t kept a legless lizard for years and at first it was difficult to tell if the animal was behaving naturally, since they have a somewhat stiff uncoordinated way of moving in comparison to a snake. The lizard spent time investigating corners and edges and I was concerned about nose rubbing, but damage was minimal and seemed to heal OK. A water bowl was included and used on regular basis to get a drink, although soaking was not observed. I have been unable to sex the lizards. Males are said to have a broader head, but at this point, I have no basis for comparison. Also references suggest that placing two males together is a bad idea. Perhaps I should wait until my animal is a bit bigger to see if the head broadens before I try to get a mate.

Most of the articles I have seen on this animal emphasize their tameness and willingness to feed from the hand. I decided this would be a neat thing to try. I therefore took a thawed pink mouse (the ophisaur’s favorite) and held it a couple inches away from the lizard’s head. There was no response, not even a flicking of the slightly forked dark colored tongue which usually signals interest in food. I wiggled the mouse a bit to attract some attention. The lizard seemed interested, slid slowly up the mouse, and BIT MY FINGER. I had been assured that these guys were unlikely to break the skin, but it had quite a grip. This was an understatement. The lizard held onto my right index finger just below the nail and proceeded to twist its body on the long axis much like the feeding rotation of an alligator. The grip reminded me of pliers. I grabbed his body to try and remove the jaws, but this just provided more

purchase for him to push against as he rotated. Eventually I was able to remove the jaws by moving a clean probe into the back of his mouth and sliding it forward between my finger and the jaws. The obvious damage was minimal, a slight cut below my nail, but the finger hurt and felt bruised for at least an hour afterwards. There was no long term damage, but I certainly learned to be careful around that critter’s jaws. I should mention that I have handled the ophisaur many times without it attempting to bite, so this was probably just a feeding grab gone awry. I certainly enjoy watching the animal, which is active during the day, unlike many snake species and hope to pair it up in the future. Surely a bite from the babies would hurt less. Oh, yeah, I also got bitten on the same hand later that day by a corn snake as I reached across its body to drop a thawed mouse in front of its cage mate. Not a good day in the reptile room!



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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
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 CD or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 47001.

Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gradycalhoun@embarqmail.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 editor's possession no later than the meeting previous to the publication.

Classifieds

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)

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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 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

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