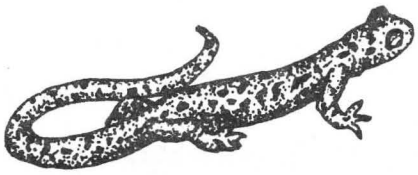
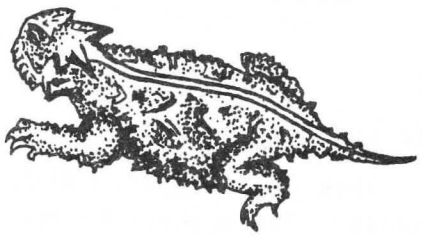


KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



Number 13 June 1976

NEXT KHS FIELD TRIP & MEETING AT GREAT BEND

The next meeting and field trip of the Kansas Herpetological Society will be held 21-23 July 1976 at the Brit Spaugh Zoological Park in Great Bend and at Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Refuge. The meeting/field trip program will be as follows:

21 July (Friday)

6:00-8:00pm	KHS members assemble and camp overnight in the maintenance compound at Cheyenne Bottoms.
8:00pm to ?	Night hunting for frogs and snakes.

22 July Saturday)

8:00am-noon	Morning collecting for amphibians and reptiles.
noon-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00-3:00pm	KHS meeting in education room at Brit Spaugh Zoological Park in Great Bend. Bring your 10 best color slides for an afternoon of good sights and pleasant comaraderie. Its too hot to hunt snakes!
4:00-6:30pm	Long Dinner break plus KHS Executive Council Meeting.
6:30pm to ?	More night collecting for frogs and snakes. Retire for overnight camping at Cheyenne Bottoms.

23 July (Sunday)

8:00am-noon	More morning local searches for (by now) thoroughly frightened amphibian and reptile fauna.
noon	Disperse!

The Zoo and Cheyenne Bottoms are governmental property---No alcoholic beverages are permitted. Soda pop is okay. Bring friends. It should be a great meeting. We are indebted to KHS member Janet Krause for making available the facilities at the Brit Spaugh Zoo, and to the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission for permission to camp at Cheyenne Bottoms.

THE KHS GOES TO CHETOPA

This year's spring field trip took us to Chetopa in far southeast Kansas. The weekend of the 22nd of May provided near perfect weather for the twenty or so KHS members who participated. The area around Chetopa is a low, flat, swampy coastal plain. For a person who is used to central Kansas, (in fact any other part of Kansas), the area around Chetopa seems to have been transplanted from somewhere near the Bootheel of Alabama. To attest to the "nonKansas" nature of the habitat, the site of the campground, just over the Neosho River on the east edge of Chetopa, was where the only known specimen of the Western Cottonmouth was taken in the state. The area is also known for other typically eastern herps.

The first arrivals were there Friday afternoon, and almost everyone was there by nightfall. As soon as camp was set up, a stroll along the east bank of the Neosho turned up several watersnakes which abound in the area. From high up in a cottonwood tree a grey tree frog serenaded KHS members while they prepared dinner. Before turning in Friday night the species tally included: Acris crepitans; Hyla chrysoscelis; Rana utricularia; Natrix erythrogaster transversa; Natrix rhombifera; and Natrix sipedon.

After breakfast Saturday, the freshly-fueled herpers headed for an oxbow just north of Chetopa. Ranging from swampy bog to open lake, the oxbow provided much habitat for semiaquatic herptiles. Thirteen species were collected in or near the oxbow which was abounding in watersnakes. The Saturday morning sortie added: Elaphe obsoleta; Regina grahami; Thamnophis proximus; Chrysemys scripta; Graptemys sp; Terrapene carolina triunguis; Terrapene ornata; Chelydra serpentina; Sternotherus odoratus; and notably Chrysemys floridana hoyi to the species tally.

Shortly after our return to camp, Jan Perry arrived and treated us to another chapter in the continuing drama of Perry vs. Tent. Tent nearly got Perry, but Jan's perserverance and ingenuity outlasted the tent once again. One could not help but feel that the tent was already looking forward to next time.

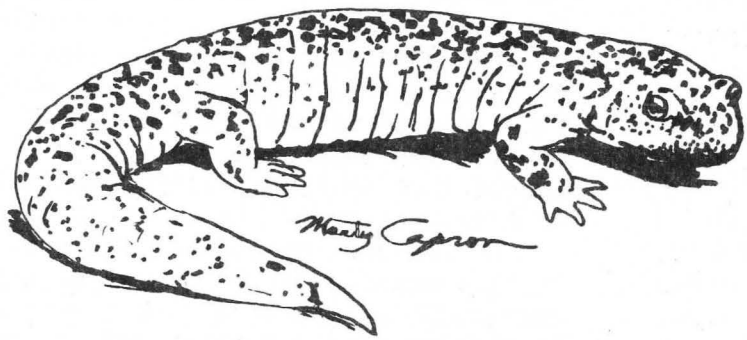
Heading east after lunch, the group found itself in a grove of beautifully huge pecan trees. Through the area flowed several shallow streams and swampy sloughs. A high bridge over one stream provided a clear view of several turtles at the surface and one in particular near the bridge abuttment. At this point, Martin Capron began stalking the turtle with the stealth and skill of a hungry jaguar. As the turtle disappeared into the murky water, Marty (perhaps reacting to the words of encouragement from Tom Collins), sprang head first into the stream, confidently coming up with his quarry.

An after-dark return trip to the oxbow added only Bufo americanus to the species list. Packing up and preparing for the long trip home was the main activity on Sunday morning. The Kansas Herpetological Society collected a total of 21 species in the Chetopa area, which are: Chrysemys floridana hoyi; Sternotherus odoratus; Chelydra serpentina; Terrapene carolina triunguis; Terrapene ornata; Trionyx spinifer; Graptemys sp; Chrysemys scripta; Acris crepitans; Hyla chrysoscelis; Rana utricularia; Rana catesbiana; Bufo americanus; Thamnophis proximus; Natrix erythrogaster transversa; Natrix rhombifera; Natrix sipedon; Regina grahami; Elaphe obsoleta; Cnemidophorus sexlineatus; and last but not least a skink of some kind.

Seven county records were established and these are: Sternotherus odoratus; Hyla chrysoscelis; Chrysemys floridana hoyi; Regina grahami; Natrix rhombifera; Natrix sipedon; and Natrix erythrogaster transversa.

The KHS field trip to Chetopa was not only an enjoyable one but a productive one as well.

--DAVID GROW



REPTILE SYMPOSIUM ON CAPTIVE PROPAGATION AND HUSBANDRY

What? A gathering of interested professional and amateur herpetologists to hear papers and exchange information and ideas about keeping and breeding reptiles in captivity.

Where? Rosenstock Auditorium, Hood College, Frederick, Maryland

When? 8:00 to 6:00, Saturday July 24th.

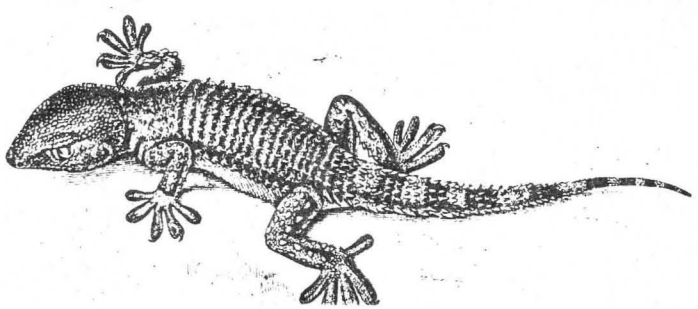
How? By pre-registration to address given below or registration on day of symposium (8:00 to 8:30 only). Cost $25.00/person includes two coffee breaks.

Why? Because it will be the most informative herp gathering of 1976.

AGENDA

8:45	Keynote Address
9:00	Panel discussion on general captive maintainence of reptiles.
10:30	Coffee break
10:50	Short talks on reptile nutritional, lighting, humidity, heating, and caging requirements.
12:30	Lunch
1:30	Medical management of reptiles including common parasite identification and treatment, restraint and stress, antibiotic treatment, blood levels, etc.
2:40	Coffee break
3:00	Selected talks on reproduction of reptiles, including snakes, lizards, crocodilians and turtles.

For registration forms or further information contact Reptile Symposium, c/o Catoctin Mountain Zoo, Box 126, Route #3, Thurmont, Maryland 21783.



RATTLESNAKE HUNTS: CRIMES AGAINST NATURE

I have recently returned from the annual rattlesnake hunts in a small town in Oklahoma, and can best describe the proceedings by reviewing a small booklet on the event which I purchased while there. The booklet calls rattlesnake hunting a "true American sport". As a "true American" I can only regard this as an insult to my nationality. I must admit that while I was there my family did in fact collect several rattlers, but only for the sake of scientific study. The snakes we captured will fare far better than those caught that weekend of which most will be exhibited, exploited or dismembered for use in various "novelty" items.

On the opening page a motive is put forth for hunting rattlesnakes. It is something to the effect of the "THRILL OF THE CHASE" and the excitement of capturing a big rattler (though many of those pictured in this booklet and displayed at the "hunt" are a long ways from being big). These arguments for the wholesale slaughter and destruction of rattlesnakes do not hold up when one examines the methods used in some instances and the actual degree of thrill one experiences.

The various activities pictured in the book are unbelievable in an ecological or moral sense. Snakes are shown being butchered, funneled full of liquor, and piled in stacks to be smothered and crushed to death.

To criticize these actions categorically, I should start with the practice of eating rattlesnakes. The book describes snakemeat as "the original health food". I can see no valid reason why one should be forced to resort to snakes as food except in case of emergency survival in the wilderness. The amount of usable food on a snake should discourage the widespread use of them as anything but a strictly gourmet (?) food item. In an indescribaly poor manner there are descriptions explaining how the butchers' make a fascinating show of the decapitation of the snakes.

Next I should say something of the contest held at the climax of the affair. It seems there is sort of a booby-prize given for the smallest snake captured. Since these snakes are difficult to pin and measure the prescribed method for measuring them is to drop them onto the stage and crush their heads flat with the heel of the judges boot. These proceedings are called "clean western fun".

The most appalling aspect of the hunts is the treatment of the snakes in the "snake-pit". They are kicked about, thrown around, teased and chased in a most cruel manner. At least they are not so thick as those told about from the 1960 "harvest" which arrived at the "zoo" that purchases those lucky enough to escape being eaten. These lay in piles so thick that hundreds died daily of suffocation.

Snake hunts such as these are now receiving critical fire from herpetologists and ecologists nationwide. This book (which in its enitrety is both a laugh-producer and a horror story) will serve only as good ammunition for those fighting the "thrilling" example of "sport" that it honors.

--LAWRENCE A. CAPRON, Box 542, Oxford, Kansas 67119

CURRENT LITERATURE

This current literature section has been compiled by Mary E. Dawson and Joseph T. Collins, and contains articles and books on amphibians and reptiles of possible interest to KHS members.

Ashton, R. E. (compiler), S. R. Edwards and G. R. Pisani (Editors)
1976. Endangered and threatened amphibians and reptiles in the United States. SSAR Herp. Circ., 5:1-65. Available for $3.00 from: Dr. Henri Seibert, Department of Zoology, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701

Edwards, S. R. and L. D. Grotta
1976. Systematic collections and the law. ix + 29pp. Assoc. Systematic Collections, Lawrence, Kansas. Available for $1.00 from the ASC, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence 66045.

Pisani, G. R.
1976. Comments on the courtship and mating mechanics of Thamnophis (Reptilia, Serpentes, Colubridae). Journal Herp., 10(2):139-142. Reprints available free from George Pisani, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Kansas, Lawrence 66045.

Schoenherr, A. A.
1976. The herpetofauna of the San Gabriel Mountains, Los Angeles County, California. 95pp. Available for $5.00 from: Southwestern Herpetologist's Society, Department of Biology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90007.

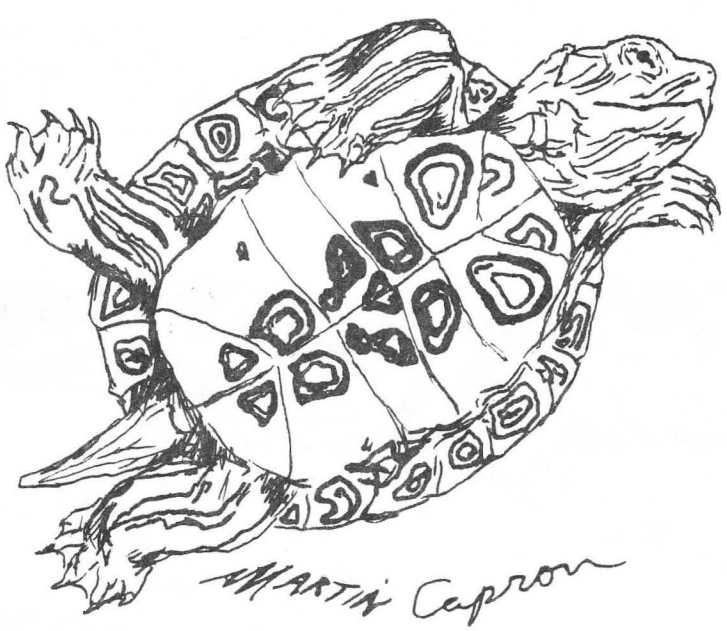
Smith, H. M. and R. B. Smith
1976. Synopsis of the herpetofauna of Mexico. Volume III. Source analysis and index for Mexican reptiles. Pagination irregular, but volume is approximately 3 inches thick. Available for approximately $25.00 from : John Johnson, North Bennington, Vermont.

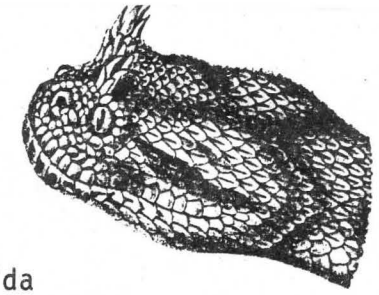
NEW FEMALE ALDABRA TORTOISE AT SCZ

Having been conceived with public education in mind, the Sedgwick County Zoo is not likely to embark upon a program of acquiring numbers of rare and endangered species without feeling reasonably sure of breeding such animals. The aldabra tortoise is a difficult animal to breed in captivity and is quite rare in the wild. Previously only males of the species were exhibited, feeling that females, as rare as they are, should be either left in the wild or left for zoos that have established breeding programs. Taking males out of the wild would not put as much pressure on the population as would the removal of females. Noticing the zeal with which one of our males, who is nicknamed Rocket, attempted to mate with one of our other males and the frequency with which this occurred, the decision to acquire the female was made. In addition, aldabras require a very soft substrate for breeding such as loose gravel or mud. The bouyancy or support such soft substrates provide facilitates successful breeding. Our exhibit has loose gravel and mud and can be arranged without trouble, as one corner of the exhibit can be flooded by way of the water moat.

With all this in mind, we introduced the new female tortoise to Rocket who was the only other occupant of the exhibit. Keep in mind Rocket had been without female companionship for at least the past four years. To the casual eye, male aldabras look exactly like female aldabras. After four years, Rocket's eye was hardly casual. For the past few months they have been observed breeding about once a week. Now we just have to wait for the eggs. That is not quite as simple as it sounds. Eggs are rare. Fertile eggs are rarer and hatching aldabra eggs have been likened to a miracle; but we are confident. We also have our fingers crossed.

-- DAVID GROW





ITEMS OF INTEREST TO KHS MEMBERS

David Osborn (1512 Big Tree Road, Neptune Beach, Florida 32233) would like to correspond with anyone interested in keeping and studying lizards.

Larry Miller, KHS member from Caldwell recently attended the Kansas Association of Teachers of Science Meeting. At this meeting, Larry presented a talk entitled "Amphibians and Reptiles in the Classroom". Informative information about how to keep, study, and enjoy amphibians and reptiles in the classroom was given.

Andrew Finfrock, graduate student at the University of Kansas and KHS member, has been elected President of the Jayhawk Audobon Club in Lawrence.

Dr. William E. Duellman (Lawrence), Dr. Linda Trueb (Lawrence), and Dr. Alberto Veloso (Chile) have spent the month of June traveling to Alaska to attend the ASIH meetings being held in Fairbanks.

The American Association of Zoo Keepers has added to its publication, The Animal Keeper's Forum, a section on herpetology. This section will contain articles usually pertaining to cultural techniques and problems, although it will not be limited to such. The section is called "Reptile and Amphibian Potpourri" and is compiled by Trooper Walsh of the National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C.

HERP HUNTIN' IN THE HOLLER OR OZARKIAN ODYSSEYS I HAVE KNOWN

The most startling thing to this Texan (adopted) was his first time collecting in the Ozarks of southern Missouri and the fantastic quantity of herps to be found there. Granted, Texas has some of the quality herps, but even the famed and fabled "sonora hillsides" of the Benbrook-Aledo area can't compare in volume with the reptiles and amphibians to be seen on a good spring day in the Missouri Ozarks!

The bulk of my Ozarkian collecting experience has been around Springfield, Missouri, in the southwestern part of the State. The Missouri Ozarks are not mountains in the Colorado, California, or Texas sense of the term, but instead show a relief reminiscent of the Texas hill country (except that the Ozarks have 11,000,000 instead of 1,100 springs). The Ozark Plateau is much dissected by generally eastward flowing streams, which are clear, cool, rocky-bottomed, and very nice on a hot summer day. Add 10 inches annual precipitation

and subtract 10° F mean annual temperature, and the climate is similar to ours. The whole region is heavily forested, mostly deciduous in the north and coniferous in the south of the Springfield area. And, to the herper's delight, there are multitudes of rocks, boulders, ledges, logs, old cabins, old farmhouses, and old stills (to overturn).

One of my favorite spots is Fulbright Springs Park (and pumphouse) at the north city limits of Springfield. The Fulbright Springs are still there, and gushing, supplying the city of Springfield with a goodly portion of its excellent water. The springs flow out of the base of a ridge oriented east-west on the north side of the park. Some of the best, accessible collecting in the Springfield area is to be found there. Beyond the springs to the north, there is no more city--only more collecting.

All along the ridge, especially on the southern side, are multitudes of caves, including a few "wet" ones. I have found larvae of Typhlotriton spelaeus in the stream, but was never able to locate the adults in the caves. Eurycea longicauda melanopleura is common among the stones along the edge of Fulbright Creek. Chelydra, Kinosternon subrubrum, and Natrix sipedon are also found in the stream.

On the hillsides above, under the many flat limestone rocks, the prize for "commonest herp" would have to be divided between the following: Plethodon glutinosus, Eumeces fasciatus, Eumeces anthracinus pluvialis, Carphophis amoenus vermis, Diadophis punctatus arnyi, and Tantilla gracilis hallowelli. Less common, but still abundant under the rocks are Masticophis flagellum flagellum, Lampropeltis getulus holbrooki, Ambystoma tigrinum, Lygosoma laterale, Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta, and Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis. On the trees and logs in the area, Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus and the large male Eumeces laticeps (the "scorpion"). Now don't misunderstand; there are rare herps in the Ozarks (e.g. Lampropeltis doliata syspila, Haldea valerea elegans, Ambystoma annulatum, Rana sylvatica) and presumably at Fulbright too --only I have never found any species at Fulbright Springs that was not common.

I have heard of oil wells, gas wells, water wells, sulphur wells, H. G. Wells and well wells, but until I went collecting at Fulbright, I never heard of, saw, dreamed of, thought of, or fell into, a frog-well! Downstream from the pumphouse about a half a mile, while collecting crinoids one day (dead fossilized ones, that is), I discovered an old well, lined with stones, uncemented, hidden by the brush and mostly full of water. I say mostly, because in the dorsal 3½ feet of the well, water was replaced by Rana, or more exactly, Ranae. Sitting unconcerned in the crevices and crannies around about 250° of the circular well were hundreds of Rana pipiens. The remaining 110° of the segregated from well was inhabited by the anti-social Rana palustris.

There are many other very nice collecting spots in the Springfield area. In northern Stone County, along the Finley River west of where it crosses U.S. Highway 160, orange Natrix sipedon pleuralis with chestnut blotches may be found, along with Agkistrodon contortrix mokeson, Lampropeltis doliata syspila, and the very

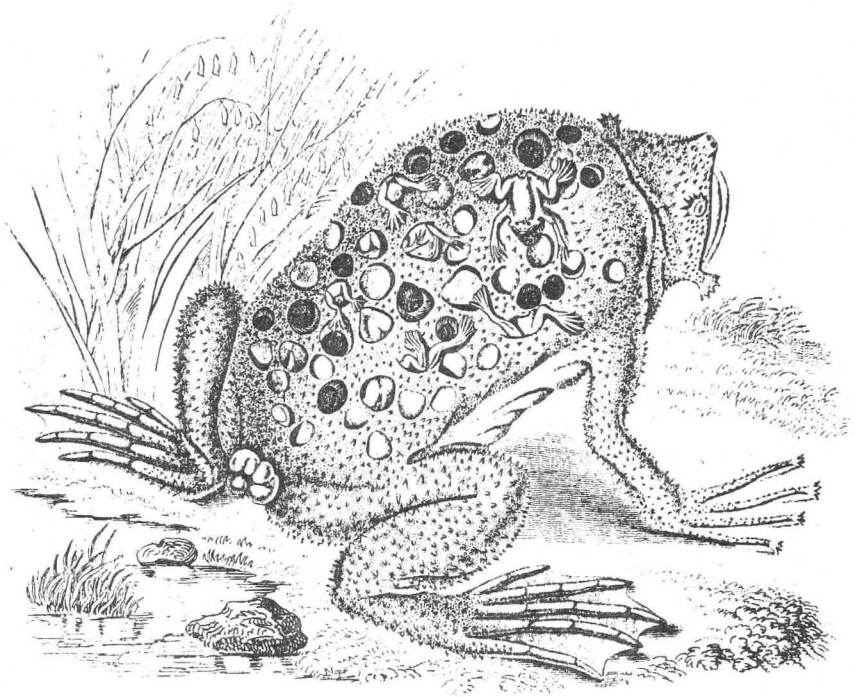
beautiful Eurycea lucifuga in the caves near the river. The forested hills and the cool stream make it a pleasure just to be there, even if no herps could be found.

Smallins' Cave near the Finley River Ozark, Christian County, Missouri, besides being the type locality for Acris crepitans (gryllus) blanchardi, contains many adult Typhlotriton spelaeus, and the strange white, eyeless crayfish. General collecting is also good at Smallins', there being plenty of Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta and Lampropeltis calligaster in the area.

In planning collecting trips this season, don't overlook the Missouri Ozards. A ten hour drive up Highways 69 and 66 (from Texas) will put you in some of the most beautiful herp country in easy reach. For a change, why not try it sometime?

--RICHARD E. SMITH

This article has been reprinted from the John K. Strecker Herpetological Society, Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas.



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