

KANSAS  
HERPETOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 33

OCTOBER 1979

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THE 1979 ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD AT THE TOPEKA ZOO

The annual meeting of the Kansas Herpetological Society will be held on Saturday, November, 17, at 9:30 AM in the Lecture Room of the Topeka Zoo.

The itinerary for this meeting is:

- 9:30 AM - Coffee and Conversation - Lecture Room
- 9:55 - Notices - Mike Coker, Topeka Zoo
- 10:00 - "The San Salvador Experience"-Robert F. Clarke, Emporia St. Univ.
- 10:45 - "Devenomation in Snakes"-Ole Neuhring, Topeka Zoo
- 11:00 - "Snakebite"-John Atherton, Wichita
- 12:00 - Group Photo - Larry Miller, Caldwell
- LUNCH and Executive Council Meeting during lunch
- 1:10 PM - Business Meeting (includes voting for new officers)
- 1:30 - "The Honduras Experience"-Kelly J. Irwin, KU (KHS President)
- 2:15 - 1979 Kansas Herp Summary - Joseph T. Collins, KU
- 2:30 - 2nd Annual Non-animal Auction - Joseph T. Collins, Auctioneer
- ??? - Adjourn at end of Auction

Bring items for auction!

Bring money for auction!

Clarke will donate a 1st edition of Mary Dickerson's, The Frog Book, 1907, 253 pp.; two mounted prints of his paintings of the Poisonous Snakes of Kansas; and a group of reprints of various authors. Others will be bringing cages, herp sacks, publications, and who knows what. Be sure not to bring live herps, however.

Larry Miller will be taking 8" x 10" color photos of the group. These will be available at a cost of \$3.00 each.

This is the BIG meeting, so don't miss it!

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Anyone interested in submitting articles for the KHS Newsletter should send them to HANK GUARISCO, EDITOR, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, 66045. ASSOCIATE EDITOR, Rose Etta Kurtz, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 66045.

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NOMINATIONS OF SOCIETY OFFICERS

The following members have been nominated for 1980:

President-Elect: Jeffrey Burkhart  
Chris Stammier

Secretary-Treasurer: Larry Miller

Officers will be selected at the annual meeting in November at the Topeka Zoo.

The Nominating Committee consisted of Jim Knight, John Tollefson, Shelley Skie and Hank Guarisco.

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KHS SEPTEMBER FIELD MEETING AT HAYS, KANSAS, AND SCOTT COUNTY STATE LAKE

Friday, 14th - Campout at Hays. Ten participants met with Dr. Mike Nelson, Chairman of the Geology Department at Ft. Hays State University, at the Museum. Dr. Nelson discussed the field trip the next day, summarized events that occurred during the Cretaceous Period over one million years ago, and showed fossils taken from rocks of that age that we would visit on the field trip.

Saturday, 15th - Four cars of KHS members joined the geology field trip caravan, which departed promptly at 8:00 AM from the university campus. Stops, with explanations of rock and land formations, were made at a number of places in Ellis and Trego counties, ending at Castle Rock. Noteworthy herp observations for the day include: 1) one Sceloporus undulatus was found "sunning" in a large crack of the railing of the bridge over the nearly-dry Smoky Hill River. 2) Two miles farther south, an adult Ambystoma tigrinum was uncovered beneath a rock. 3) Topping this, though, was another A. tigrinum crossing a dirt road just after we entered Trego County. This new county record escaped into a roadside tangle of weeds, and a quick search by some of our avid herpers failed to reveal it. 4) At a quarry close to Cedar Bluff Reservoir, John Clarke was able to acquire one Gastrophryne olivacea (new county record) and a strange Bufo, which had a large boss on top of the head, and, apparently, lacked cranial crests. We immediately dubbed it B. compactilis (B. speciosus), which generated much interest and photography. Later, sober, inspection and reflection has produced judgment that this specimen really represents a B. woodhousei with a strange head. On the return trip, John and I came back to the same spot and turned practically all of the rocks, but found no other Bufo. We did get three more Gastrophryne and one Diadophis; even saw one Holbrookia, which embarrassed me by not allowing itself to be captured. 5) A hillside lunch stop produced more Sceloporus and one Terrapene ornata. 6) Arrived at Wildcat (Wildhorse) Canyon in Trego County, which is a famous collecting spot for fossils from the Cretaceous chalk cliffs and ravines.

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More Sceloporus were taken, along with a juvenile Cnemidophorus and a juvenile Masticophis. 7) Castle Rock was our last stop on the geology trip. We got Sceloporus, but two adult Masticophis and one juvenile Cnemidophorus escaped capture.

We headed west in the late afternoon for Scott County State Lake and only became lost once. Some of the KHS members had elected to go there directly rather than accompany the geology group. We all finally got together at one spot near the lake, and about dark had the tents pitched and campers readied for the night. The lake was half dry or half full (there was a non-philosophical debate on this matter). The mosquito population was at full strength, however. Fortunately, soon after dark it became so cold that the mosquitos quit. Our group sat and stood around a nondescript fire swapping lies, while Kelly Irwin demonstrated his inability to light a Coleman lantern and his ability to ingest abandoned food. Lack of TV sets drove everyone to bed at an early hour.

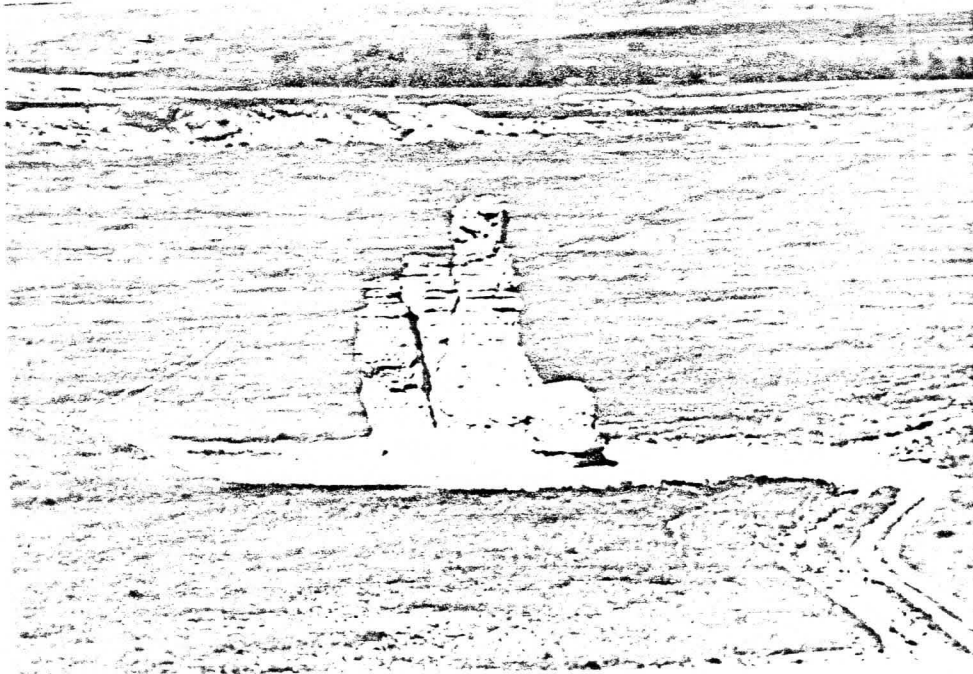
Sunday, 16th - The serene peace of a frigid morning was shattered at 7:00 by an unseen Quasimodo in a mission-like building across the road. This bell ringing must have been intended to rouse most of Scott County. It did a fine job on some of us, who got up and started a fire. Little by little the size of the group grew as uncomfortable-looking visions emerged from the warmth and security of their nightly sanctuaries. Most popular items at this time were the bushes and the coffee pot. Soon, behavioral thermoregulation began to accomplish its task and a few words began to pass back and forth; some even ate crude breakfasts. President Irwin gathered those KHS officers present around a picnic bench and declared an official Executive Council session. Most of the meeting concerned plans for the November meeting. At the conclusion of a rather short session, everyone packed up, said goodbye, and took off for home.

In all, about 18 persons attended the meeting, which was a good turnout for such a distance and time of year. We look now to indoor activities for awhile and, like our herps, we'll be outside again after our winter's rest.

In addition to the herptiles listed previously, the group that came directly to Scott County State Lake provided the following list of species seen or taken in the area: Bufo woodhousei, Rana catesbeiana, Rana blairi, Chrysemys picta, Sceloporus undulatus, Cnemidophorus sexlineatus, Pituophis melanoleucus sayi, Thamnophis sauritus, and Nerodia sipedon.

While returning to Lawrence, Chris Stammier, John Tollefson and Dan Hodges managed to collect a Nerodia sipedon in Geary County (county record).

---ROBERT F. CLARKE, Department of Biology, Emporia State University,  
Emporia, KS.



(Photo by Larry Miller)

#### SEVERAL KHS MEMBERS ATTEND MEETING ON PESTICIDE ABUSE

Thirty area residents, from Kansas and Oklahoma, were present in Arkansas City Sunday afternoon at a special meeting called to work out plans to do something about careless use of pesticides in the area.

The meeting was organized by Larry Miller, Science instructor of Caldwell, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Miller of South Haven, for Kansas; Mr. and Mrs. Austin Little of Newkirk, Oklahoma, for Oklahoma.

Towns represented included Caldwell, Arkansas City, South Haven, Hunnewell, Portland and Wichita in Kansas; Webb City, Kildare, Newkirk and Medford, in Oklahoma; Gering, Nebraska and Amarillo, Texas.

Mr. Miller showed slides to open the meeting. Open discussion followed, with participants talking about possible future action against the "massive and careless sprayings," and suggesting class action suits, individual law suits by those damaged, and massive letter writing campaigns to key government officials.

"A letter from every citizen upset with careless pesticide use, sent to the state governor would have an impact," Mr. Miller declared.

Many of those attending had viewed the special program, "Politics of Poison" that was aired on KAKE-TV August 7, which dealt with phenoxy herbicides, and told of the serious health problems caused by the chemicals. It was

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suggested persons write KAKE, Box 10, Wichita, and congratulate the TV station officials for showing the special.

Mr. and Mrs. Little pointed out that a neighbor's field had been sprayed for army worms during 1979, and their wheat averaged 49 bushels per acre. The Littles had refused to have their field sprayed, yet their wheat averaged 46 bushels of wheat per acre. With spraying costs ranging from \$4.00 to \$7.00 per acre of farmland, the Littles felt the difference in bushels hardly would pay for the spraying, let alone the danger to the area involved.

"There were over 400 spray planes spraying deadly chemicals such as endrin, toxaphene and parathion over the countryside in southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma during February and March, 1976," Mr. Miller pointed out. "The result was, '...the worse pesticide application disaster the nation has ever known,' according to the Kansas City Star in a March 28, 1976, copyrighted story," he added.

"The latest serious problems occurred during May and June, 1979. Some of the sprayers again were a threat to people and the rest of the environment, and once again the Star and the Wichita Eagle documented many cases of pesticide abuse and damage," he stated.

"A lot of people are getting fed up with the careless use of pesticides in this area, and attendance at the Sunday meeting showed that they want to make an effort to control future pesticide misuse and prevent future environmental damage," Mr. Miller declared.

Mr. Miller related the following stories told by area residents who were at the Sunday meeting:

Art Weekley of Portland talked about how a spray plane sprayed over a pond near his home during February, 1976 and killed fish, frogs, and other wild animals. He told how another plane sprayed a neighbor's field and killed trees and gardens - the neighbor has not even hired the plane to spray. Mr. Weekley also told how the chemical parathion was developed by the Germans during the war as a possible weapon and now this same deadly chemical is being sprayed over citizens of the United States by aerial sprayers. Parathion is so deadly that a few drops absorbed through the skin can kill a human.

Ron and Barbara Perrin of Hunnewell told how they had been sprayed by an aerial sprayer as they drove their car on a public road near the Wellington Lake in 1976. Ron now has permanent eye damage because of the spray. They have a civil suit against the sprayer, but so far they have collected nothing.

Gene Trott, also of Hunnewell, has been interested in the problem of careless spraying for quite some time. He has photographed many of the sprayers, and he talked about planes spraying in high wind, spraying over roads, and flying over towns.

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Elmer Buellesfelt lives north of South Haven. He told how planes often spray over the wrong land and how they have made turns over his home while spraying other fields.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Miller of rural South Haven told of the thousands of fish killed in their farm ponds when a sprayer sprayed a field near their home on a windy day during late February, 1976. They also had pets killed and trees damaged by other careless sprayers. The out-of-state sprayer who killed their fish did not even have a license to spray in Kansas at the time of the spraying.

"The list goes on and on. Most of the people at the meeting said they knew of many others who had suffered because of careless spraying of pesticides. They said many of these damaged were afraid to speak out. Pesticides are a big business and people who speak out are not very popular, one person pointed out to the group, Mr. Miller stated.

(Taken from The Caldwell Messenger, Thursday, August 16, 1979)

#### THE COPPERHEAD, OUR MOST "HARMLESS" VENOMOUS REPTILE

It was a lazy day in mid-June, orthopterans hummed monotonously from the surrounding oak-hickory forest as my older brother and I walked along a narrow Ozark back-road. Sun dappled our path as the road dipped from a ridge toward a "holler" down below. An exposed ridge of rock gave the road the general look of driving down a stair-case. We'd parked our car a safe distance from the main road and were scouting this local "short-cut" on foot, lest we blunder off a ledge and into the legendary Lost World (which I still think exists somewhere in Missouri's boonies!) with our car - an unpleasant happening I've often repeated on herping trips with my trusty autos.

But those were early times, early times indeed. The skinny kid in the wierd hat had not yet gained the infamy with automotive fiascos that later years brought. I was, however, about to set out on an equally perilous profession. My brother looked off a steep drop on the right hand side of the road and somehow managed to see a copperhead coiled there. It was the most perfect camouflage I'd ever seen. It was also the first wild poisonous snake I'd ever seen!

Now, in every book dealing ever so light with field-work on snakes I'd seen it written, in bold-type, capitol letters a million times: "LEAVE POISONOUS SNAKES STRICTLY ALONE! Do Not Attempt To Capture Them Unless You've Had Professional Coaching!" The words came back to me as I gazed intently upon the stout little pit viper coiled silently and so still before me. I looked back over seven years of snake-hunting I'd already logged at that time (I was thirteen). I'd caught plenty of bull snakes, black rats,

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water snakes and what-not but nothing poisonous. It was a big decision. Where was a would-be herpetologist stuck hopelessly in Oxford, Kansas, going to get "professional coaching"? The ONLY professional I even knew was Max Nickerson and it would be some four years yet until I went collecting with him. Then there was one other guy who handled poisonous snakes; but, he was hardly professional and definitely not a herpetologist. He caught Western Diamondback rattlers at the Okeene, Oklahoma snake-hunt each year - snakes which he later consumed. He fit the part - big and beer-bellied, clad in a grimmy undershirt, unshaven for a couple of days and sporting several large tattoos on arms as big around as my waist. His speech was punctuated with belches that smelled so strongly of "Old Mikwaukee" it sometimes staggered me in those tender days. This, in part, explains my aversion to cheap beer these days! Anyway, I'd read the books and studied the pictures - particularly those in the first edition of Conant's Field Guide - and I figured everyone had to start somewhere. Who'd taught Pope, Douglas March, Ditmars and the other greats? I didn't know, but I figured that in each of their careers there was a first; so there had to be one in mine.

With my trusty, virgin snake hook I cautiously pinned the snake, which fortunately didn't put up much of a fight, and I went about securing the proper head grip. It all went smoothly but while the little snake struggled, fangs erect and searching for a finger, I knew my knees were shaking. So it went, that first, great poisonous snake capture. It would receive critical scowls and words from smug experts but somewhere, way back in their early days, I knew they'd done it too. My mother - God bless her for being the understanding soul she is - would take it in stride.

She'd taught me how to catch harmless snakes in the first place! The snake was safe and sound in a minnow bucket and I was alive and well, excited perhaps, but intact. And if a man was going to start catching poisonous critters, I figured a copperhead was about the best place he could pick to start.

The next year a crew of more-or-less sane Oxford friends and I traveled a long distance to collect the mighty Western Diamondbacks for Max Allen's Zoo in Eldon, Missouri. A zoo which, as you might have guessed, was owned and directed by Max A. Nickerson. Luckily we used tongs and didn't have to resort to the old "pin-'em down-and-get-'em-by-the-head" method. Diamondbacks were a little tough to be playing those games with.

The moral of all this, if in fact, there is a moral to it, is this: It's a tricky business, a dangerous business. Few are the people who work with venomous reptiles that haven't been bitten. (Snake-bite statistics clearly show that far too many bites are received by (both professionals and amateurs) handling or attempting to capture the snakes. I like to think of myself as a little above "amateur" at least. I don't drink Old Mikwaukee or have any tattoos anyway! If it has to be done - and I won't argue or debate the "whether-or-not" issue - it should always be done carefully, with the utmost caution, and only with the proper equipment. Ionides may have grabbed

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Gaboon Vipers without even pinning them down, but not me; not that you'd catch me picking up a Gaboon Viper if I did have it pinned down! Trying to pin down and pick-up a venomous snake without the proper tools is asking for trouble. Pop bottles, brooms, ones own feet (with or without protective boots), or ordinary sticks do not make good snake-catching equipment; though I've heard or seen all of these used at various times. At this time I suppose some of you are asking yourselves, "Yeah, but does he practice what he preaches?" I am forced to confess the motive behind my writing this tale. About a week before writing this (early August '79), I was walking through the Ozark woodlands in the same general setting that set the scene for a copperhead and I meeting for the first time, and came upon a fair-sized, gravid female of that species. Seven years after that first fateful encounter, after catching an array of different rattlers, after an expedition with experts to Costa Rica after "fer de lance", even after some time I'd spent caring for a collection of mambas, cobras and the like at the zoo in Eldon, Mo., I made a mistake. Yes, my friends, after all of that, I proved the age old theory that everyone - and I mean everyone - makes mistakes. I attempted to capture that copperhead, I suppose with a certain amount of false-immunity that one gradually builds up after working with so many snakes. I think that anyone who does anything dangerous needs to keep a continuous respect for the subject of his work. Over-confidence is what I'm talking about. You tend to get over-confident, at least I did, though I would never have admitted it. I also tried to capture the said copperhead with a stick I found lying there in the woods - definitely not the way to do it. In one split second, when I thought I had the snake pinned down securely (but didn't), the snake angrily planted a pair of fangs in the top of my left index finger! Needless to say, I lived. One either lives and learns or just plain dies in this business. I learned. I learned how not-to-do-it. I learned that despite what you've heard about copperhead bites not being serious or very bad - it is exceedingly painful, unpleasant and expensive! I also learned the Antivenin gives me hives! I was very fortunate in that I was treated by the very knowledgable and capable staff of the Lake of the Ozarks Clinic. The doctor in charge had luckily (or unluckily depending on how you look at it) cared for over sixty other snake-bite victims and was well aware of the venom's properties and effects and also that of the antivenin. I fear that the herpetologist (if he is lucky enough to be bitten), in many areas is faced with a staff of medical people who have had little first-hand knowledge of snake-bites. I am indebted to the folks who treated my bite considering that they definitely knew what they were doing.

Anyway, snake-bite, including that of what I think is the under-rated copperhead, is a serious matter - always. And it is always a possibility for those associated with live, venomous reptiles. No matter how good you think you are, or how well you think you know the snake in question - a certain amount of respect and a lot of caution will prolong your life and protect your health in the business.

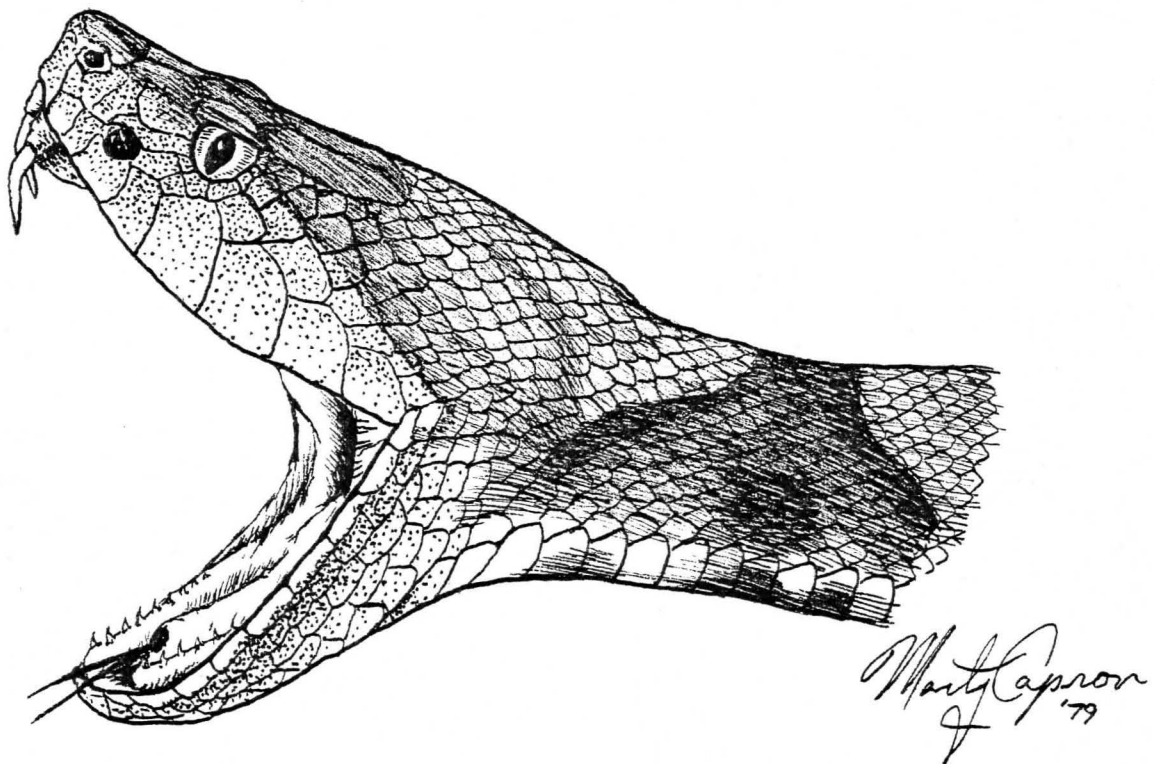
Undaunted by all of these happenings, except for the temporary inability to use my left hand, I returned to the scene of the crime. Properly equipped for a copperhead-encounter this time, I found the snake coiled at the base of the same log where I'd ran afoul the first time. She was a gravid female with

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an understandable reason to be pugnacious. And though I knew it was all my own fault, I somehow felt revenged when I captured - with the healthy aid of a 34" snake-stick between me and her - what had to be the same snake that had bitten me.

---MARTY CAPRON, Box 542, Oxford, KS 67119



Business end of Osage Copperhead as seen, felt and drawn by the author.

After receiving the preceding paper, I began to wonder how many of our members have had similar encounters with venomous snakes. If the bite was minor, it may not have required medical attention, and therefore, may not have been recorded. In any event, it would be very interesting to discover how many KHS members have been bitten, the species involved, and, the circumstances surrounding the incident. Therefore, I ask you to complete the following survey and mail it to the address given below at your earliest convenience.

Hank Guarisco, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045



Remember, please respond even if you haven't been bitten, because this is the only way we can determine incidence of venomous snake bite in our society. The results will be published in the next newsletter.

☐ I have been bitten by a venomous reptile one occasion ☐ more than once ☐

☐ I have not been bitten by a venomous reptile.

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Complete the following if you have ever been bitten

1) bite occurred

☐ within the state of Kansas  
☐ other state or country \_\_\_\_\_

2) ☐ species involved:

☐ Copperhead  
☐ Timber Rattler  
☐ Prairie Rattler  
☐ W. Diamondback Rattler  
☐ W. Massassauga  
☐ other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

3) Activity engaged in at time of bite:

☐ attempting to capture  
☐ manipulating captive specimen  
☐ in the field  
☐ at home  
☐ unknowingly contacting venomous reptile  
☐ while collecting herps  
☐ while engaged in unrelated activity  
☐ other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

4) Area of body bitten:

☐ Leg ☐ Foot ☐  
☐ Arm ☐ Hand ☐ or finger ☐  
☐ trunk of body: (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

5) Severity of bite:

☐ No adverse reaction, or very mild  
(i.e., symptoms gone within 12 hrs.)  
☐ symptoms (e.g.) pain, swelling lasting  
12 to 72 hours.  
☐ symptoms lasting between 3 and 7 days.  
☐ symptoms lasting 1 and 3 weeks.  
☐ symptoms lasting over 3 weeks.

6) treatment received:

a) ☐ no first-aid  
☐ first aid:  
☐ suction and/or incision  
☐ constricting band  
☐ other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
b) ☐ no professional medical  
attention.  
☐ professional medical  
attention received  
☐ antivenon  
☐ transfusion  
☐ surgery  
☐ other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

7) outcome of bite:

☐ complete recovery  
☐ partial loss of sensation  
and/or movement of bitten  
region.  
☐ almost total loss of sensation  
and/or movement of bitten  
region.  
☐ physical loss of part or all  
of bitten region.

NOTE: If you have been bitten by a  
venomous reptile on more than one  
occasion, please write appropriate  
phrases from sections 1 through 7  
that describe the second incident  
below:

COMMENTS:





SNAKE LETTER WASN'T HEALTHY; BIOLOGIST FIRED

(Journal World 12 October 1979)

Washington (AP) Kenneth Dodd says he's been fired from his job as a government biologist because of the "snake" letter he wrote to the owner of a restaurant favored by Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus.

Dodd said he has received notice that he overstepped his bounds when, on official Interior Department stationery, he asked the owner of Dominique's Restaurant to stop serving rattlesnake meat because the type rattlesnake being served was rapidly approaching extinction."

Andrus, learning of the letter, apologized to restaurant owner Dominique Dermo while lunching at the restaurant the day after the incident was reported in a gossip column. He followed up with a letter of his own, saying that he knew of no law preventing the serving of rattlesnakes.

Dodd commented, "Andrus doesn't like rattlesnakes. I offended Secretary Andrus because (Dominique's) is his favorite restaurant."

Interior officials had no comment on the matter.

Dodd is a 29-year-old scientist specializing in reptiles at the Interior Department's Office of Endangered Species. He said he plans to appeal because "even if it is against the rules, most people would get a simple slap on the wrist or a reprimand. It's been blown all out of proportion. I was just doing my job. It's the damnest thing I've ever seen."

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES CONCERNING THE LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE

Service and State personnel are continuing their efforts to improve the nesting success of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) on Cape Island, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina. Loggerheads on the island, which is considered one of the most important nesting beaches for the species, have been suffering from raccoon predation (see May 1979 BULLETIN) and, during the last 10 to 12 months, serious beach erosion. The cause of the accelerated erosion is uncertain, but it has resulted in near elimination of nesting beach in some areas. Because of the high erosion rate, many nests are subject to being washed away before the eggs can hatch.

Service personnel plan to transplant about 500 nests to an area safe from erosion and provided them with a wire cover to protect them from raccoons as well. About 300 nests have been moved so far.

(Taken from Endangered Species Technical Bulletin, July 1979, Vol. IV, No. 7)

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### A TOAD'S EPIDERMAL IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Several years ago, two researchers discovered that toads (genus Bufo) possess what amounts to an extensive irrigation system covering a large portion of their body surfaces. The upper epidermis is thrown into a series of raised tubercles somewhat reminiscent of a relief map of the Rocky Mountain region. To the east of these peaks lies the vast Mississippi River drainage system which eventually deposits its blue cargo into the Gulf of Mexico. The toad's anastomosing channels, however, serve to transport water against gravity. Water flows from the damp substrate into the furrows on the ventral surface of the toad. It then flows up the sides of the body and onto the dorsal region. Although the exact mechanism is not fully understood, the process is believed to be a physical one, somewhat similar to capillary action. One series of experiments consisted of placing two groups of toads onto a wet substrate under a heat lamp. A ring of vacuum grease was applied around the sides of the toads in one group, while those belonging to the control group were not so treated. The grease prevented water from flowing onto the dorsal surface. By the end of the experiment, the greased toads had higher surface temperatures than those of the control group. The former also showed signs of desiccation. Therefore, Lillywhite and Licht concluded that this flow of water is indeed one effective means that members of the genus Bufo utilize for thermoregulation and the control of water loss.

Lillywhite, H. B. and P. Licht

1974. Movement of water over toad skin: functional role of epidermal sculpturing. *Copeia* 1974(1):165-171.

---HANK GUARISCO, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.



(Photo by Larry Miller)

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## TWO CROCODILES PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED STATUS

(Endangered Species Technical Bulletin, Aug, 1979, Vol. IV(8):4)

After a status review of two crocodilian species, the Service has issued a proposed rulemaking to list, as Endangered, the American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus) outside of Florida, and the saltwater or estuarine crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) exclusive of the Papua New Guinea population (F.R. 7/24/79). Both species were found to be suffering from serious habitat losses throughout their ranges and have been subject to extensive poaching for their hides.

All populations of saltwater crocodiles and American crocodiles (except in Florida) were previously proposed as Endangered under the Similarity of Appearance clause of the Endangered Species Act (F.R. 4/6/77). No final action has been taken on that proposal. The Florida population of American crocodile is already listed as Endangered (F.R. 9/25/75) and Critical Habitat designated (F.R. 9/24/76). The exclusion of the Papua New Guinea population of saltwater crocodiles from the current proposal resulted from that government's assurance that strict controls are placed on crocodile farming within the country and the species is not being jeopardized by this activity.

This rule would provide additional protection to both species, which are already listed on the appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, by further restricting commercial trade in their parts and products.

Both species have felt the impacts of human encroachment. Increasing human populations in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America have resulted in a loss of much available habitat for the American crocodile. The same holds true for the saltwater crocodile in some Southeast Asian countries. However, the major factor in the decline of both species is hunting for hides which are valuable in the production of fashionable leather goods. In some countries, where these species are not protected, populations have been virtually eliminated because of hunting. There have also been reported incidents of killings arising from fear, especially involving saltwater crocodiles in areas where the species has a reputation as a man-eater.

Comments on this proposed rule should be submitted by October 26, 1979 to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

## ALLIGATOR RECLASSIFIED IN NINE PARISHES

(Endangered Species Technical Bulletin, July 1979, Vol. IV, No. 7)

The American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) has been reclassified under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 in nine Louisiana parishes (F.R. 6/25/79). These alligators, previously classified as Threatened, have been reclassified to the less restrictive status under the Act, Threatened by Similarity of Appearance. The parishes affected by the final rulemaking are as follows: Iberia, St. Mary,

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Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany.

This action increases from 3 to 12 the number of parishes from which alligators may be lawfully taken under controlled harvest. Controlled taking in accordance with Louisiana State law has been allowed in three additional parishes; Cameron, Calcasieu, and Vermillion, where the species is also classified as Threatened by Similarity of Appearance.

Reclassification to the less restrictive category indicates that the alligator is no longer likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future, and that no harm will be done to the species by controlled harvest in those areas where it is so classified. However, other Southeastern alligator populations remain classified either as Endangered or Threatened. For instance, alligators in the remaining Louisiana coastal parishes, remain classified as Threatened and Endangered, respectively.

Since individuals from the three listed alligator populations are indistinguishable, some restrictions on commercial activities involving specimens taken from the 12 parishes are still necessary. Management procedures developed by the State of Louisiana assist law enforcement in relieving look-alike problems which pose an additional threat to the species. (See 44 F.R.-31586-31587, May 31, 1979, for a discussion of the Louisiana State alligator regulations.)

The Service received a total of 23 written comments on the proposal, most of which were in favor of reclassification in all or a part of the proposed area. The Governor of Louisiana, while strongly supporting the reclassification in the nine parishes as proposed, requested that the Service reconsider its position on the other parishes requesting delisting. Policy Juries of several parishes not included in the affected nine individually requested delisting in their areas. The Defenders of Wildlife and the Fund for Animals submitted joint comments opposing the reclassification on the grounds of inadequate enforceability and the potential harm to endangered crocodilians throughout the world should alligator hides enter the commercial market. None of the commentators offered additional biological data. Comments submitted during the reopened comment period, May 10-June 5, 1979, were also considered in the final decision to reclassify alligators in the nine parishes.

In partial fulfillment of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 1978, public hearings on the proposed reclassification were held at Morgan City, Louisiana and Tallahassee, Florida. The hearings were attended by approximately 200 persons and 15 persons, respectively. None present at either meeting voiced opposition to the proposal, most spoke in favor of it, and many recommended reclassification in additional parishes. No additional biological data were presented, however.

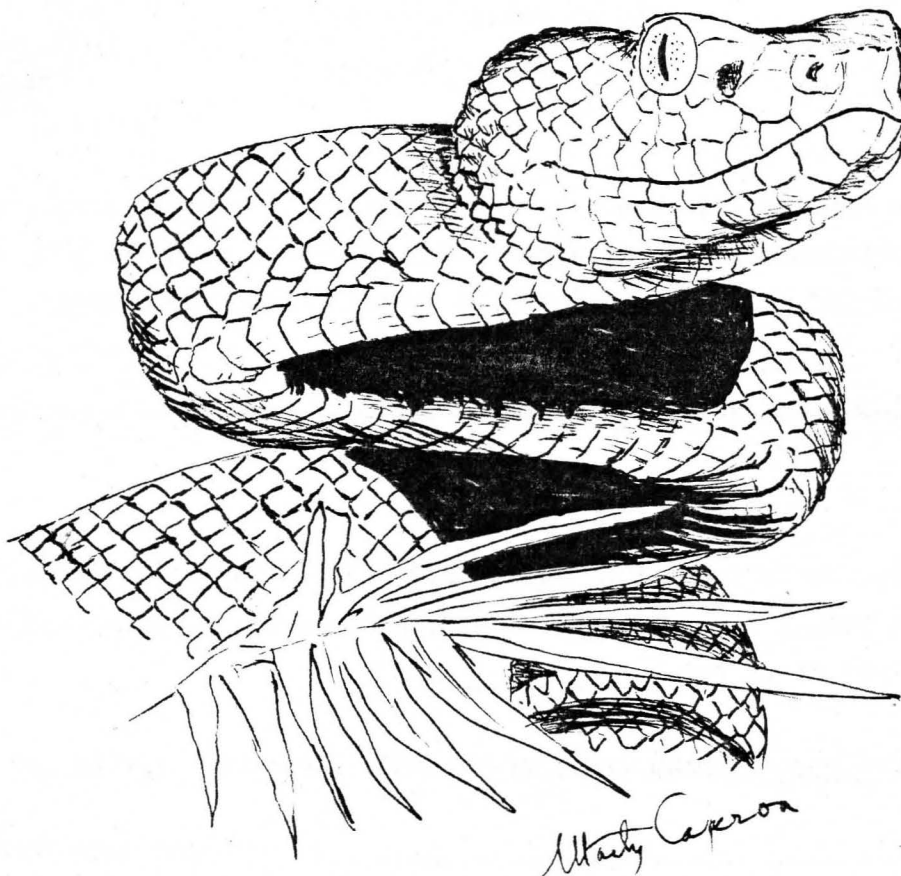
Simultaneously, with the Service's proposal to reclassify alligators in the above nine parishes (F.R. 10/2/78), the Service also proposed to amend the special rules which apply to American alligators and published a notice

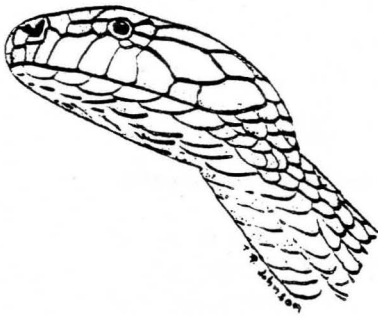
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of review on the status of the alligator in all other parishes within Louisiana. After careful review of the comments on the proposed special rules by the Service's Division of Law Enforcement, the Service decided to repropose special rules for the American alligator in all other parishes within Louisiana. After careful review of the comments on the proposed special rules by the Service's Division of Law Enforcement, the Service decided to repropose special rules for the American alligator. These proposed rules were published in the Federal Register on July 18, 1979.

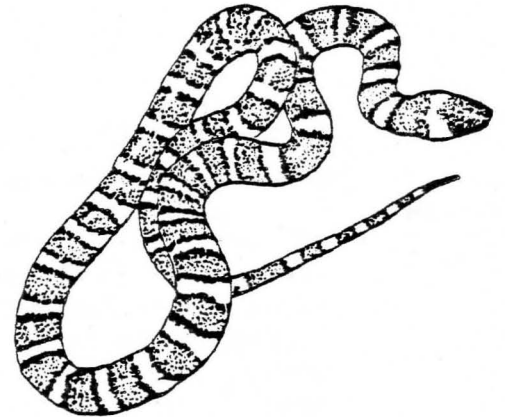
The Service will continue to review the status of the American alligator throughout the State of Louisiana. Biological evidence, however, does not support reclassification of alligators in additional parishes at this time. Should alligator numbers increase significantly, becoming a serious nuisance or exceeding the carrying capacity of their habitat, appropriate measures can then be implemented.





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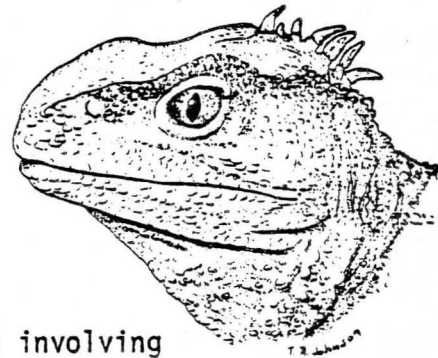
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