



KANSAS
HERPETOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 37

JUNE 1980

KHS JULY MEETING: AQUATIC FIELD TRIP TO CHETOPA

The Kansas Herpetological Society will meet in the camping area at the eastern edge of the town of Chetopa (Labette County) on the third weekend of July (July 18-20). Due to the seasonably "warm" weather that can be expected in Kansas during July, we decided to make this field trip an aquatic one. So, bring your bathing suits, masks and snorkels, and SCUBA gear.

Although Chetopa is on the banks of the Neosho River, the water may be too high for safe swimming. However, this location is centrally located to a number of interesting aquatic areas that can be explored. First, it would very interesting to see if a breeding population of western cottonmouths (Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma) occurs in Kansas. Several years ago, a few specimens were taken on the Verdigris River. Since this time, there has been some question concerning the status of the western cottonmouth in the state. Therefore, it would be very interesting to search the banks of the Verdigris River between Coffeyville and Independence, in Montgomery County.

Another unique region that could be explored is Shoal Creek in Schermerhorn Park (Cherokee County). In addition to the several rare salamanders that can be found in the cave in this park (see KHS newsletter No. 36: "Hitchhike Herping in December"), there is a possibility of finding both the mudpuppy (Necturus maculosus) and the eastern hellbender (Cryptobranchus a. alleganiensis). The hellbender is known in Kansas from only two specimens. One was taken from the Neosho River in Labette County, and, the other is from the Spring River in Cherokee County. Therefore, it would be very interesting to find another hellbender from Kansas.

The July field trip promises to be very interesting. So, beat the heat - bring a bathing suit and other aquatic equipment.

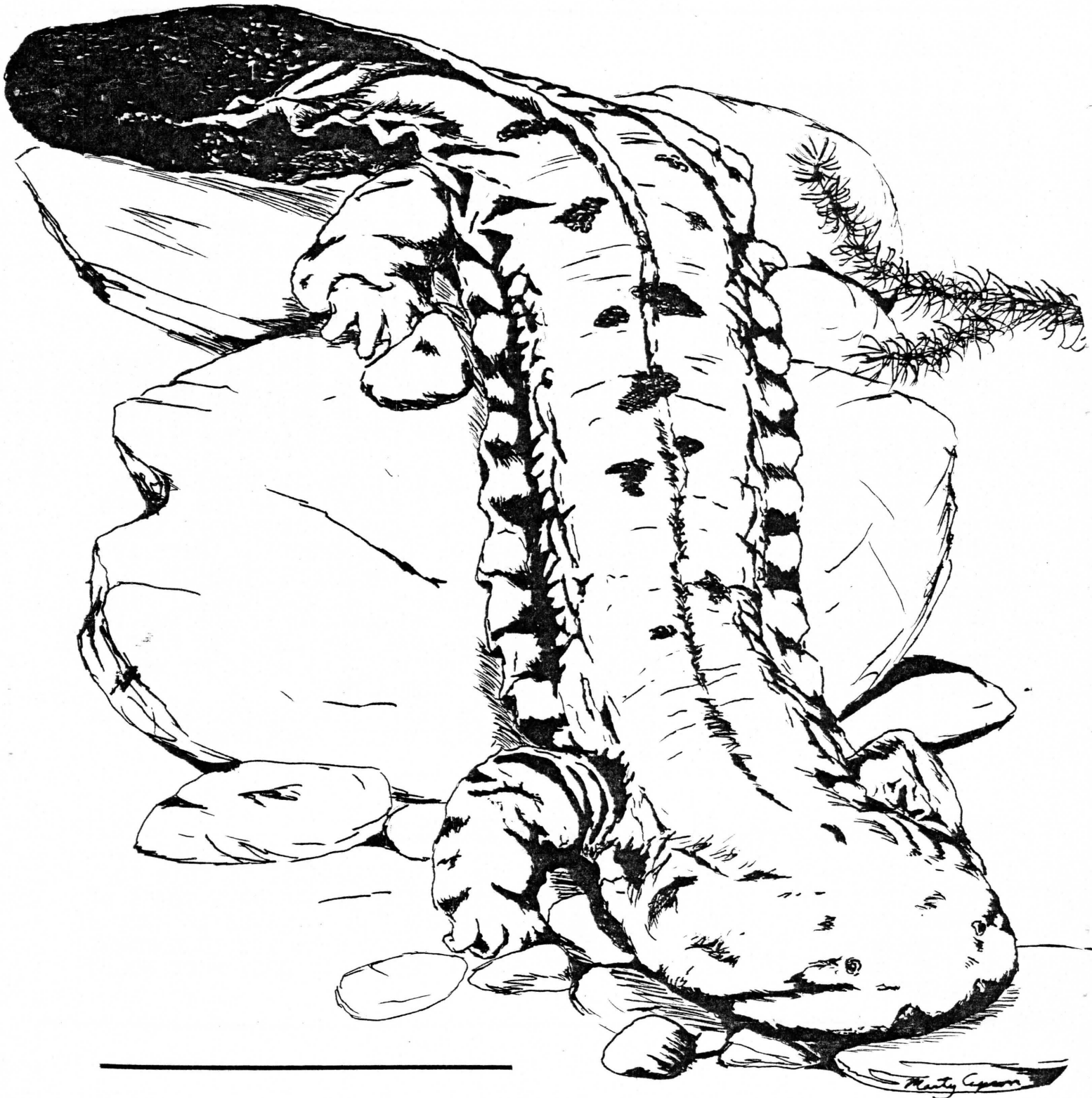
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KHS MEMBERS - WHAT CAN YOUR SOCIETY DO FOR YOU?

Since only a small percent of the KHS membership is able to attend the meetings, the newsletter is virtually the only means of communication and tangible benefit that the KHS provides to many of its members. Therefore, the KHS officers would like you to comment on the newsletter. What do you like most about it, and, what would you change?

Some KHS members live in areas where there has never been a KHS meeting. Would any of these members like to see meetings in their part of the state? Would anyone be willing to help organize a meeting in their area?

Your KHS officers want to hear your ideas. Please take a few minutes to express your thoughts to one of your 1980 officers. Their names and addresses appear on the inside front cover of this newsletter.



IMPORTANT NOTICE TO KHS MEMBERS

KHS records show that as of 26 May 1980, the Society had a total of 108 paid memberships for 1980. The records also show a total of 94 unpaid memberships for 1980. This means that 94 of the people that paid in 1979, have not paid their 1980 dues.

Article VII, Section 3 of the KHS BYLAWS requires the Secretary to drop a member from the role when dues are not paid within six months of the close of the membership year. This time period is rapidly closing. For your convenience, this issue of the newsletter contains a dues envelope. If your envelope has a red "X" on the flap, please enclose your dues for 1980. If it does not have the "X" give the envelope to a friend who may want to join. Thank you. Please do this as soon as possible.

--- Larry Miller, Secretary/Treasurer

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JOINT ANNUAL MEETING SSAR/HL TO BE HELD IN WISCONSIN IN AUGUST

The twenty-third annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR) and the twenty-eighth annual meeting of the Herpetologists League (HL) will be held jointly at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee from August 6-10, 1980. Three symposia are currently being organized for this event: SSAR Symposium on the Reproductive Biology and Conservation of Crocodilians (Bern W. Tryon, Chairman), Fourth Annual Regional Herpetological Societies Conference - Endangered Herptile Biology (John C. Murphy, Chairman), and, Fitchian Herpetology: The Descriptive Approach: A Symposium in Honor of Henry S. Fitch (Richard Seigel, Chairman).

Preregistration fee (if mailed by June 20): Student - \$10.00, Regular - \$17.50.

Registration fee at the door: Student - \$15.00, Regular -\$20.00

Checks can be mailed to:

Dr. Max A. Nickerson
Head, Vertebrate Division
Milwaukee Public Museum
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233

Each of the three symposia should be very informative and enjoyable. Focusing attention upon the reproductive biology and conservation of the crocodilians comes at a time when this attention is most needed to bring members of this group back from the brink of extinction. A similar focus is seen by the topic of the regional herpetological societies conference. Finally, a tribute is paid to Dr. Henry S. Fitch for his many years spent researching aspects of the natural history of numerous reptiles and amphibians. Other activities scheduled at the meetings include a photo and art exhibit, a poster session, and field trips.

KHS JOINS KABT ON BANKS OF CHIKASKIA FOR FIRST SPRING MEETING

Two dozen or so KHS members joined biology teachers, students, and a number of other interested persons for an enjoyable and educational weekend in the field the first weekend of May. The group, which numbered well over one hundred persons in all, met for the fourth straight year along the banks of the Chikaskia River in southern Sumner County, Kansas.

The 1980 CHIKASKIA RIVER WILDLIFE STUDY was organized by Gene Trott, Larry Miller, and Joseph T. Collins. It was a joint meeting with the KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF BIOLOGY TEACHERS and the KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY. More than twenty-five cities from a total of thirteen Kansas and three Oklahoma counties were represented during the three day adventure. Many of those attending were elementary and high school students from the Caldwell, Kansas area. It was the first KHS meeting for many of those in attendance.

Larry Miller, Gene Trott, Clyde Miller, and Zeda Miller were the first to arrive the afternoon of 2 May. It was a beautiful afternoon, and, after setting up camp, Clyde and Zeda Miller went fishing, while Gene and Larry decided to do some herp collecting. They observed only one reptile, however, and it managed to slip away in a clump of dry grass. Clyde Miller did collect a single specimen of Rana blairi while fishing.

Many campers started arriving by early evening. A lot of time was then spent getting organized and visiting with old and new friends. Freeman Dillard, the owner of the land the group was camping on, stopped by and offered to donate a \$5.00 prize to the person collecting the longest snake. Then, J.T. Collins arrived, and offered \$5.00 for the first county record collected during the meeting. With \$10.00 at stake, several herpers headed to the field with lots of enthusiasm!

The first animal to be collected after the cash offers was an adult prairie-lined racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis). This fast lizard was collected by Vikki Dillard, a second grade student from Caldwell, and, one of the youngest and most enthusiastic people at the meeting. No other reptiles were found Friday evening, but, after sundown the call of frogs and toads attracted several others, and the hunt was on.

Two more amphibians were added to the list before Saturday morning. Marla Dillard, a high school student from Caldwell, led a group that collected specimens of the Great Plains toad (Bufo cognatus) and Woodhouse's toad (Bufo w. woodhousei).

It was a cool night, but KHS members were among the first up Saturday morning. Some headed to a nearby cafe for a hot breakfast while others cooked their own in the wild. A highlight

of the early morning was the hot coffee served by Marla Dillard. Marla made a lot of friends real fast among the coffee-starved KHS and KABT members.

The first field trip started at 10:00 AM sharp Saturday morning and several dozen eager people lined up to head north along the west side of the river. Specimens of the northern prairie lizard (Sceloporus undulatus garmani) and the prairie ringneck snake (Diadophis punctatus arnyi) were observed by almost everyone during that trip. Lots of Blanchard's cricket frogs (Acris crepitans blanchardi) were also found along the river and along the edge of a wheat field.

KHS member Greg Skrdla found the first large snake of the day. It was a large black rat snake (Elaphe o. obsoleta), and he was sure that he would be \$5.00 richer that evening. Members of BSA Troop 320 came up with a western hognose (Heterodon nasicus), an eastern yellowbelly racer (Coluber constrictor flaviventris), and a LARGE bullsnake (Pituophis melanoleucus sayi). The bullsnake turned out to be the longest snake collected. Two other species observed during the morning field trip were the red-eared slider (Chrysemys scripta elegans) and the ornate box turtle (Terrapene o. ornata).

The group returned to camp about noon and quickly settled down for some rest and food. The KABT held an executive meeting at that time. Several people photographed some of the specimens.

At 2:00 PM a caravan comprising seventeen cars, all loaded with enthusiastic biologists, drove to an area southwest of Caldwell on the Kansas-Oklahoma state line. There they found a large area to explore. There was much red soil and lots of rocks. Two KHS members, Greg Skrdla and Rob Wencel, headed east to explore a rock outcrop right on the state line. They hoped to find a milk snake (Lampropeltis triangulum), but had no luck. They did, however, collect a few interesting herps, including, a western painted turtle (Chrysemys picta belli) and a Great Plains narrowmouth toad (Gastrophryne olivacea).

The majority of the group headed west. Trent Houlden, a sixth grade student from Caldwell, quickly found a spotted chorus frog (Pseudacris clarki), and, Rhonda Oathout, another sixth grader, found the first Phrynosoma cornutum (Texas horned lizard) of the afternoon. Eastern earless lizards (Holbrooki maculata perspicua) were everywhere. And before the afternoon was over, almost everyone had observed and collected earless lizards. Most were released. The next animal found was a nasty blotched water snake (Merodia erythrogaster transversa). It was spotted by Holly Warner, a fourth grader from Caldwell, and then collected by Bill Taylor, an OHS member from Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Many of the herpers gave up after an hour of rock turning in the hot sun, but a few continued searching for new finds. After turning several dozen (maybe several hundred) rocks, the group headed by J.T. Collins and Larry Miller found yet another good collecting site. Collins then turned a rock and found the first county record, a plains blackhead snake (Tantilla n. nigriceps). Several younger members of the group then started looking in the same area, but no other snakes of that species were found. Lori Crampton and Karla Ward, sixth grade students, did find many small, black toad tadpoles. The only other animal collected before the group headed back to camp was a lined snake (Tropidoclonion lineatum). It was collected by Stan Roth, a biology teacher at Lawrence High School. When the group made it back to camp, most were ready for some rest and relaxation. The only new species added were the bullfrog (Rana catesbeiana) and the midland smooth softshell turtle (Trionyx m. muticus).

Not every herpetologist collected in Sumner County during the River Study. Marty Capron, Kelly Irwin, and Hank Guarisco were three KHS members that travelled to Harper and Barber Counties to look for herps all day Saturday. They found only two herps in Barber County: a prairie-lined racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis) and a northern prairie lizard (Sceloporus undulatus garmani). They did much better in Harper County, however. A total of eight yellow mud turtles (Kinosternon f. flavescens), several red-eared sliders (Chrysemys scripta elegans), and an ornate box turtle were found in the vicinity of standing water in roadside ditches. Although much of the surrounding land was cultivated, a small section of the road was bordered by pasture land containing numerous rodent burrows. Along this road they found several DOR western massasaugas (Sistrurus catenatus tergeminus), a live massasauga, a DOR eastern hognose (Heterodon platyrhinos), a DOR Kansas glossy snake (Arizona e. elegans), and a western hognose (H. nasicus). Stopping at a stream, Marty found a small snapping turtle (Chelydra s. serpentina), which was a county record. A pair of bullsnakes were found under tin in a nearby field. Other herps that were seen during the day include: cricket frogs (Acris crepitans), bullfrogs, a Texas horned lizard (Phrynosoma cornutum), and an unidentified garter snake (Thamnophis sp.).

Richard L. Lardie and Gary E. Lardie headed across the state line to do some collecting in Oklahoma. Richard and Gary travelled through Grant and Kay Counties in Oklahoma, and observed and/or collected the following species: Blanchard's cricket frog, bullfrogs, plains leopard frog (Rana blairi), yellow mud turtle, red-eared slider, snapping turtle, prairie-lined racerunner, and the northern water snake (Nerodia s. sipedon).

Many people headed for home Saturday night, but some settled down for another peaceful evening along the banks of the Chikaskia.

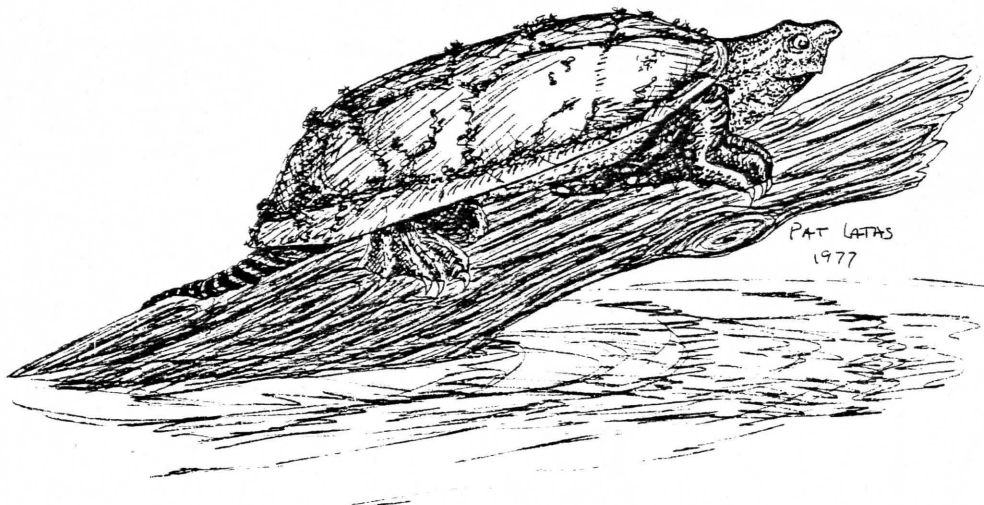
The group awoke to the smell of pancakes. Norma Dillard was cooking breakfast, and she attracted several persons to that site for breakfast. After breakfast, Boy Scout Troop 320 held a short religious service and then everyone started the clean-up.

The only other herps added to the list Sunday morning were a red-sided garter snake (Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis) and a tiger salamander (Ambystoma tigrinum). A few people headed to Cowley County to visit the Chaplin Nature Center at the invitation of the Wichita Audubon Society, which operates the center.

It had been an enjoyable weekend and it would not have been possible without the cooperation of several land owners and staff that attended. Many wildlife organizations were represented and it was a great time for members of different groups to visit and express some of their views.

Larry Miller, 524 North Osage Street, Caldwell, Ks. 67022

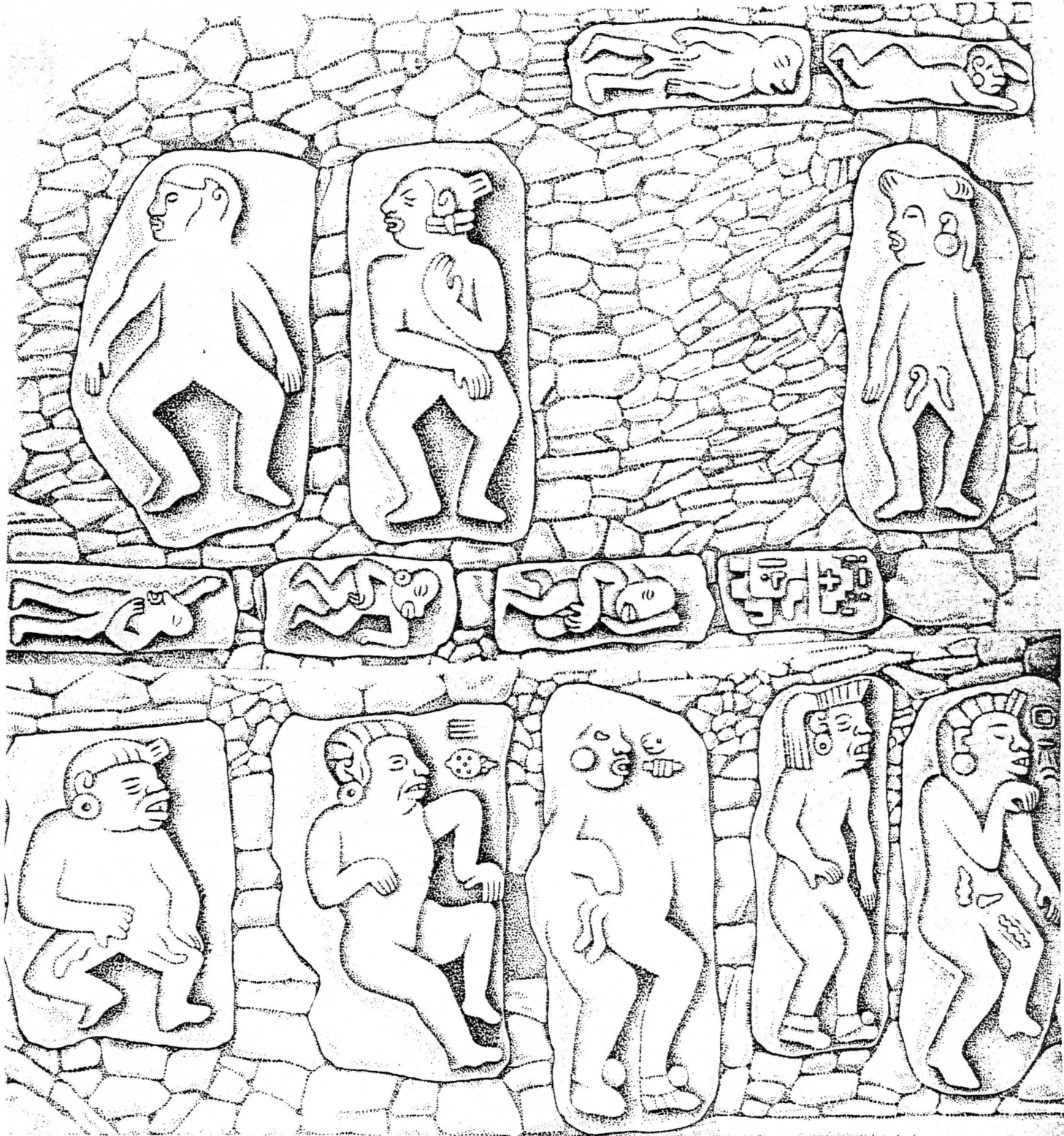
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THE NEW EVOLUTION

MAN arose from LIZARDS; not from APES. As proof, note the copies of figures (on the following page) from Mayan ruins in Mexico (the apparent location of origin; not Africa, as previously supposed). In these representations, you can see clearly the hemipenes, a definitive characteristic of the Squamata. I take this to indicate straight-line evolution; not convergence.

(Figure taken from Scientific American, Feb. 1980)



GALLERY OF THE CAPTIVES at Building L in the Main Plaza of Monte Albán had this appearance when it was discovered under later

levels of construction in 1931. The alternating courses of vertical and horizontal representations of sacrificed prisoners may once have in-

--- Robert F. Clarke, Emporia State University, Emporia, Ks.

KHS FIELD TRIP TO COMANCHE AND KIOWA COUNTIES

Sixteen KHS members and friends braved \$1.25 per gallon gasoline prices to gather at Lake Coldwater in Comanche County over the Memorial Day weekend (May 23-26) for several days of profitable herp collecting and observing. A campsite on the west side of the lake offered a shady, secluded spot. The weather during the previous week (a lot of rain) made conditions ideal for both reptiles and amphibians to be active. While driving along U.S. highway 160 between Medicine Lodge (Barber Co.) and Coldwater (Comanche Co.), several DOR western massasaugas (Sistrurus catenatus tergeminus), a DOR Texas brown snake (Storeria dekayi texana), and six plains spadefoot toads (Scaphiopus bombifrons) were observed.

Saturday morning most KHS members travelled north to rangeland near the town of Belvedere in Kiowa County. An intensive morning of rock turning uncovered sixteen different species of herps, five of which were new county records. Some people also found a few very large puffball mushrooms (Calvatia sp.) which were a welcomed addition to the evening meal. Tom Lucier of Dodge City Community College, captured eleven species of fish while seining the Medicine River. Seven of these were new county records for Kiowa County.

The following is a list of county records taken on this field trip:

Kiowa County: prairie skink (Eumeces septentrionalis)
 ground snake (Sonora episcopa)
 plains blackhead snake (Tantilla nigriceps)
 lined snake (Tropidoclonion lineatum)

Cowley County: gray treefrog (Hyla versicolor)

Harper County: Graham's crayfish snake (Regina grahami)

Comanche County: brown snake (Storeria dekayi)

A total of thirty-six different species of herps were observed over the weekend. In addition to those mentioned above, this includes:

barred tiger salamander (Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium)

Great Plains toad (Bufo cognatus)

Woodhouse's Toad (Bufo w. woodhousei)

red-spotted toad (Bufo punctatus)

spotted chorus frog (Pseudacris clarki)

western chorus frog (Pseudacris t. triseriata)

bullfrog (Rana catesbeiana)

plains leopard frog (Rana blairi)

yellow mud turtle (Kinosternon f. flavescens)

ornate box turtle (Terrapene o. ornata)

western painted turtle (Chrysemys picta belli)

red-eared slider (Chrysemys scripta elegans)

eastern collared lizard (Crotaphytus c. collaris)

northern prairie lizard (Sceloporus undulatus garmani)

Texas horned lizard (Phrynosoma cornutum)

Great Plains skink (Eumeces obsoletus)

prairie-lined racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis)

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- eastern hognose snake (Heterodon platyrhinos)
 - plains hognose snake (Heterodon n. nasicus)
 - eastern yellowbelly racer (Coluber constrictor flaviventris)
 - western coachwhip (Masticophis flagellum testaceus)
 - Great Plains rat snake (Elaphe guttata emoryi)
 - black rat snake (Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta)
 - bullsnake (Pituophis melanoleucus sayi)
 - western ribbon snake (Thamnophis proximus proximus)
 - prairie kingsnake (Lampropeltis c. calligaster)
 - speckled kingsnake (Lampropeltis getulus holbrooki)
 - northern water snake (Nerodia sipedon)
 - blotched water snake (Nerodia erythrogaster transversa)
 - prairie rattlesnake (Crotalus v. viridis)

---Jeff Burkhart, Biology Dept., St. Mary of the Plains College
Dodge City, KS 67801

KHS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MINUTES: MAY 24, 1980

- Officers present: Kelly Irwin, Larry Miller, Hank Guarisco,
Peter Gray, Jeff Burkhart
- Officers absent: none
- Guests present: KHS member Marty Capron

It was decided that the executive council would elicit responses from the KHS membership concerning the society in general, and the newsletter in particular. (See note in this issue, pp.1-2).

Lively discussion resulted concerning KHS involvement in appropriate issues, such as conservation efforts. It was decided that the KHS should take certain postures when the welfare of the amphibians and reptiles of Kansas are concerned. Further involvement of a broader scope was alluded to, but no recommendations were made.

Larry Miller reported that the society now has a balance of \$462.22 (as of 23 May 1980). Miller also expressed concern about the postal service. It appears that several members have not received their newsletters. If this situation is widespread, it could be very detrimental to the KHS. Therefore, if any member didn't get their newsletter, or, knows someone that didn't receive theirs, please notify the editor.

The autumn meeting of the KHS will be held in the northeastern part of the state on September 12-14.

----Larry Miller, Secretary/Treasurer

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SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS HELP TEACH ABOUT HERPETOLOGY

The week of 16-22 March 1980 was National Wildlife Week, and, five of the sixth grade students at Caldwell Elementary School in Caldwell, Kansas used the week to learn more about herpetology. They spent the first part of the week doing independent research on specific animals, and, then they put their newly gained knowledge to good use by teaching a short class to the second grade students in the same town.

Trent Houlden chose the amphibians and presented a lesson about the different species found around Caldwell. Lori Crampton told the class about reptiles in general, while, Jenny Newland later told them about lizards. Craig White told about the different kinds of turtles, and, Karla Ward told about the most popular subject - SNAKES! The group's presentation took about forty minutes.

The Caldwell second graders are not in the same building as the sixth grade, so some of them had never seen the live specimens also used in the program. For a few of the second graders, it was their first chance to see a live bullsnake. Many had never felt a live snake and almost all were thrilled by the chance to touch one. They discovered for themselves how cool and dry the animal felt.

The sixth graders learned a lot working on their assignment, and, even though they were quite nervous acting as teachers, they did a super job. Of course, it was a good experience for the younger second graders too. Hopefully, everyone learned a little more about herpetology that week.

Larry Miller, 524 North Osage St., Caldwell, KS 67022

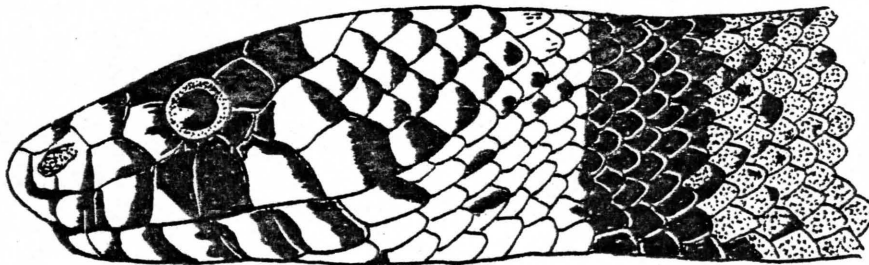
NEW COUNTY RECORDS OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

During 1979, there have been forty-eight new county records and five new maximum size records of reptiles and amphibians in Kansas. These records have recently been published by Joseph T. Collins in the State Biological Survey Technical Publication No.9, New Records of the Fauna and Flora of Kansas for 1979. This free publication is available to state residents by writing to the State Biological Survey of Kansas, 2045 Avenue A, Campus West, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Here is an opportunity to update the distribution records in your field guide. Records for previous years have also been published by the Biological Survey, and, may still be available.

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JOSEPH T. COLLINS, NEW RESEARCH ASSOCIATE OF DALLAS ZOO

Joseph T. Collins, vertebrate zoologist at the KU Museum of Natural History, has been appointed as a research associate of the Dallas Zoo, effective immediately. During the last four years, Collins has collaborated with members of the Dallas Zoo staff on numerous research projects, and, has visited Texas several times each year to photograph living animals. In addition, Collins was recently appointed consultant in herpetology to Kansas Fish and Game magazine, issued six times a year by the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission. He has written several articles on amphibians and reptiles for that magazine.



Marty Capron

PETITION TO THE KANSAS FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Purpose: To consider designation of five species of amphibians as endangered or threatened in Kansas under the provisions of Kansas House Bill 2007.

In 1978, the Legislative/Conservation Committee of the Kansas Herpetological Society (KHS) prepared a report on the status of eight species of Kansas amphibians and reptiles which it believed were in jeopardy for various reasons. This report was submitted as a recommendation to the Kansas Fish and Game Commission. On 23 August 1979 Kansas Fish and Game responded to the KHS recommendations and did not recommend any of the eight species for endangered or threatened status.

I preface this petition by stating that I did agree with Kansas Fish and Game that four of the eight species proposed by the KHS did not merit endangered or threatened status, and I so informed them by letter at that time. New evidence indicates that one of those four should now be considered for protection.

Thus, in my opinion, five species of amphibians do merit designation as endangered or threatened. My evidence for this

includes that presented by the KHS committee in 1978, new evidence, and the rebuttal of statements made in the Kansas Fish and Game Commission recommendations. I should point out that the Fish and Game recommendations relied (in part) on statements regarding the status of these five species in neighboring states. This evidence is irrelevant to evaluation of the endangered or threatened status of any species in Kansas. Kansas HB 2007 was intended to address the status of species in Kansas, and does not and cannot apply outside the state's boundaries. Keeping that qualification in mind, it is obvious that four of the following species are in danger of being eliminated in Kansas and the fifth may need assistance.

Recommendations for Endangered Status

1. Northern Spring Peeper (Hyla crucifer crucifer).

The status of this small frog in Missouri and Oklahoma is irrelevant. It is not a low density species. The 1978 KHS report documented its former existence in Linn and Miami counties (it has probably been eliminated there) and its then current existence in two small ponds in Cherokee County. Since that time it has been discovered in two additional small ponds in Cherokee County (a total of about 8 individuals). However, one of the two original ponds in Cherokee County was destroyed at the whim of the landowner. Thus, three small ponds currently harbor the total known populations in Kansas. As the Kansas Fish and Game recommendations state, there is no evidence of population decline. Instead, there is evidence of total (pond) population elimination, a far more serious situation. I recommend immediate designation as an endangered species. This frog cannot survive anticipated industrialization and human population growth in Cherokee County without protection. It should also be noted that "farm" ponds are suboptimal habitat for this frog, which probably accounts for its current low numbers. It inhabited natural ponds until they were destroyed in Cherokee County.

2. Strecker's Chorus Frog (Pseudacris streckeri streckeri).

The status of this species in Oklahoma is irrelevant. One population (possibly relictual) from two small adjacent ponds is known in Harper County. This frog is not a low density species. Since its recent discovery, no additional populations have been discovered in Kansas. The two small ponds inhabited by this species in Kansas are in extreme danger in that they can be eliminated at the whim of the landowner. This frog needs immediate designation as an endangered species.

3. Eastern Narrowmouth Frog (Gastrophryne carolinensis).

I originally agreed with the Fish and Game recommendations not to list this frog, since no specimens had been found in Kansas for nearly three decades, and since this species was known from the state based on two specimens from Cherokee County. However, I recently discovered a third specimen in the collection at Fort Hays State University which was taken in 1972 near Lawton in Cherokee County. This more recent specimen indicates that the frog is probably living in Cherokee County. It is not a low density species, and deserves immediate designation as an endangered species. As with the northern spring peeper, the eastern narrowmouth frog will not survive expanded industrialization and human population growth in Cherokee County without protection.

4. Northern Green Frog (Rana clamitans melanota).

The status of this frog in Missouri and Oklahoma is irrelevant. This frog no longer occurs (if it ever did occur) in Miami County. It is known only from one very small oxbow backwater along Shoal Creek in Cherokee County. This habitat is on private land, and can easily be destroyed at the whim of the landowner. This is not a low density species, and can easily be distinguished from the related (and common) bullfrog. This frog will not survive projected industrialization and human population growth in Cherokee County without protection. I recommend that it be designated as an endangered species.

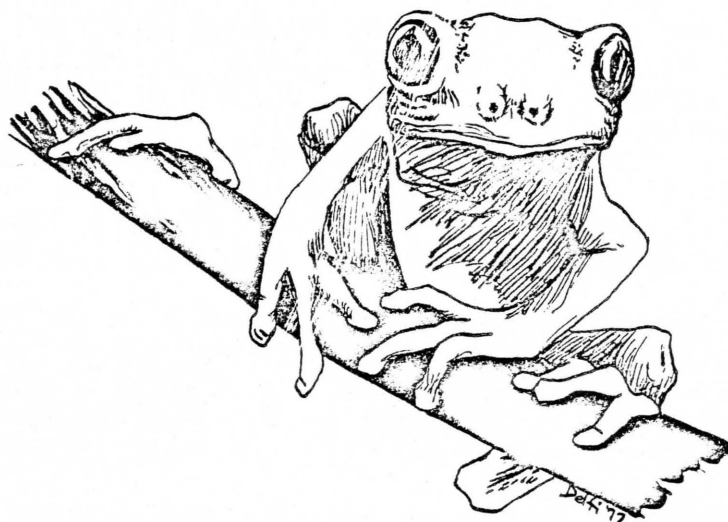
5. Western Green Toad (Bufo debilis insidiosus).

The status of this toad in Oklahoma is irrelevant. Attempts to determine the size of Kansas populations of this species is difficult, for the reasons stated in the Fish and Game recommendations. However, other factors, such as the lowering water table in western Kansas, probably have or will contribute to the decline of this species in the state. It breeds in intermittent streams and rivers, not ponds. I recommend that this species be designated as threatened in Kansas.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph T. Collins, Vertebrate Zoologist, University of Kansas,
Secretary, Society for the Study of Amphibians and
Reptiles, Consultant in Herpetology, Kansas Fish and
Game magazine

9 May 1980



EFFORT STARTED TO BOLSTER STATE'S NONGAME PROGRAM

An effort to bolster the state's nongame wildlife program is under way.

Emporia State biology professor Dr. Robert Clarke, who is working in conjunction with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, heads a group of interested individuals and clubs that want to see more management programs for nongame wildlife species in Kansas. Ultimately, the group hopes to get legislation passed that would allow Kansans to contribute money to the state's nongame program through a tax refund checkoff system.

The bill is expected to be introduced in the next session of the state legislature, Clarke said.

The tax refund checkoff system is patterned after a Colorado checkoff system that has worked very well the past two years. In its first year, the Colorado nongame coffers received \$350,000. In 1979, Colorado taxpayers chipped in more than \$500,000 for nongame species.

Clarke said the proposed legislation would allow Kansas taxpayers who are scheduled to receive a state refund to donate amounts of \$1, \$5, \$10 or a write-in amount to the nongame program, which includes threatened and endangered species.

The state's nongame wildlife program is administered by the Fish and Game Commission. The agency was charged with that responsibility in 1975 by the state legislature. But no funds were assigned by the legislature to Fish and Game to operate the program. So for the past four years, money generated from the sale

of hunting and fishing licenses, which is Fish and Game's major source of income, has paid for the modest program.

Last year about 35,000 sportsmen's dollars were channeled into the nongame account, said Marvin Schwilling of Emporia, who is the nongame project leader for Fish and Game. He is the only full-time employee assigned to the nongame program.

"The aim of the bill is to generate money to be utilized by Fish and Game to enhance and to work for the betterment of nongame species," Clarke said. "Traditionally, Fish and Game has worked with sport fish and game species for sportsmen."

"If we could get \$100,000 (from a checkoff system,) let's say, there are federal programs that we can get \$4 to go with our \$1. That money is available. Colorado has used its money as seed money."

At an organizational meeting held in Emporia in early December, Clarke said about 80 persons, representing about 50 wildlife and garden societies, showed support for the checkoff system. He and Schwilling said that a citizens advisory committee would probably be established to work with Fish and Game should the checkoff system bill be passed.

"We'd like to see all facets of Kansans represented on that ad hoc committee," Clarke said.

Currently the state's nongame wildlife program consists of taking surveys and monitoring the state's threatened and endangered species and providing information to a host of requests about the state's nongame, Schwilling said. About \$6,000 was put into contracts to hire persons outside of Fish and Game to study the population density and distribution of five species on either the threatened or endangered list - prairie falcon, black-footed ferret, two kinds of mussels and a salamander, Schwilling said.

In addition to Schwilling's salary, other funds go for surveys of prairie dog villages (which may also harbor black-footed ferrets), monitor whooping cranes during migration, determine the status of eagles wintering in Kansas and "answer the unbelievable amount of requests for information on nongame species," Schwilling said.

"The way it is now, it's just a brushfire program. The information requests limit what can be done in the field," Schwilling said.

Should a donation checkoff system evolve in Kansas, Schwilling said a list of goals, based on \$100,000 in contributions, has been prepared for the nongame program operation. Included among the goals are: funds to contract outside professionals to investigate threatened and endangered species; nongame research on species that have uncertain status information; instigate an urban wildlife program based on habitat development; expand activities for nongame management on new Fish and Game land acquisitions; improve current nongame management on land already owned

by Fish and Game; and prepare publications and other information on the state's nongame, threatened and endangered species.

Similar donation checkoff systems were approved by Illinois and Nebraska legislators but were vetoed by the governors of those states, Clarke said.

Endangered, Threatened Species in Kansas

Mammals: (endangered) black-footed ferret, gray bat

Birds: (endangered) Peregrine falcon, whooping crane, Eskimo curlew, bald eagle.

(threatened) Prairie falcon, least tern

Fish: (endangered) Neosho madtom, pallid sturgeon, sicklefin chub
(threatened) blue sucker, Arkansas darter, Topeka shiner

Amphibian/Reptile: (endangered) central newt, grotto salamander, gray-bellied salamander, cave salamander
(threatened) alligator snapping turtle, northern crawfish frog

Invertebrates: (endangered) Small amphibious snail (*Pomatiopsis lapidaria*), warty-backed mussel, heel-splitter mussel, fat pocketbook pearly mussel
(threatened) riffle beetle

--- (taken from the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, January 6, 1980)

ENDANGERED AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF MISSOURI

On the evening of April 2, a fascinating lecture and slide presentation dealing with the endangered herpetofauna of Missouri was delivered by Tom R. Johnson, the state herpetologist of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Johnson, a former caretaker of the Topeka Zoo and the St. Louis Zoo, is known for his recent publication, The Amphibians of Missouri. This informative work includes a thorough synopsis of the biology of each amphibian found in Missouri, as well as current state distribution records. This publication is available from the Museum of Natural History Gift Shop, University of Kansas, Lawrence, at a cost of \$5.00 per copy.

The fauna of Missouri, like the fauna of most sections of the globe, is suffering from the effects of human encroachment. Currently, a total of twelve species of amphibians are rare or endangered in Missouri. The clearing of native forests and prairies, and, the construction of dams have effectively altered or destroyed many habitats. The latter activity has been especially

detrimental to the many natural springs and caves found throughout the Ozarkian Plateau region.

One endangered amphibian, the neotenic Oklahoma salamander (Eurycea tynnerensis), is found in cold, clear streams in the extreme southwestern corner of the state. Being neotenic, the adults possess external gills, and, lead a totally aquatic existence. During dry periods, the water level in these streams may actually be lower than the surface of the gravel stream bed. During such times, the salamanders migrate into the wet gravel.

The four-toed salamander (Hemidactylum scutatum) is another relatively rare amphibian, being restricted to woodland bogs and mossy areas along spring fed streams. Since most mosses require acidic soil, suitable habitat for this salamander in Missouri is limited to regions having a precambrian rock substrate. One such region is the St. Francis Mountains. Females lay a clutch of about thirty eggs in a clump of moss next to a stream. When they hatch, the larvae drop into the water.

An extremely rare amphibian in Missouri is the wood frog (Rana sylvatica). In fact, until several years ago, this species was last reported from the state in 1906 or 1907. Recently, a population was found in a private pond near St. Louis.

There are several reptiles that are rare in Missouri because there is a very limited amount of suitable habitat. The Great Plains skink (Eumeces obsoletus) and the western hognose (Heterodon nasicus) are commonly found in the Kansas plains, but, are rarely seen in Missouri. This is also true of the yellow mud turtle (Kinosternon flavescens flavescens).

The Mississippi Lowlands in the southeastern corner of Missouri was at one time a vast cypress swamp. Much of the region has been converted to agricultural land, or, has been drastically altered by lumbering operations. In spite of these activities, some members of the unique herpetofauna associated with the cypress swamp are still present. Included in this list are: the mole salamander (Ambystoma talpoideum), the green treefrog (Hyla cinerea), the three-toed amphiuma (Amphiuma tridactylum), the alligator snapping turtle (Macrochelys temminckii), and the green water snake (Nerodia cyclopion). To prevent the eradication of these species from the state, efforts should be made to preserve the cypress swamp habitat.

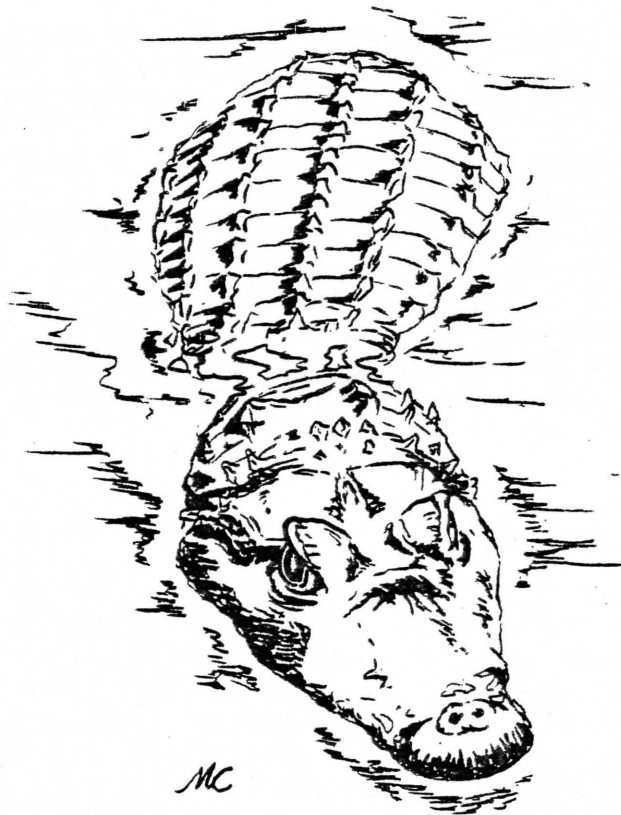
Two turtles that are rare in Missouri, are considered to be rare throughout their ranges. These are the Illinois mud turtle (Kinosternon flavescens spooneri) and Blanding's turtle (Emydoidea blandingi). The smooth green snake (Opheodrys vernalis) is also uncommon in Missouri, having been last encountered in the 1960's.

The Western Massasauga (Sistrurus catenatus tergeminus) is found in marshy areas, and, only two populations currently survive in Missouri.

The current status of the relatively rare herpetofauna of Missouri reflects the continuous, intensifying struggle between these animals and man over land use. Proper management is essential in preventing their ultimate demise.

--- Hank Guarisco, Museum of Natural History, Lawrence, Ks.

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JUMBO STOPS FOR A TORTOISE

MELBOURNE - A Qantas jumbo jet stopped in its tracks after landing at Sydney Airport yesterday when the captain spotted a tortoise on the tarmac in front of the plane's wheels.

Captain M. Kimmedy, applied the brakes and called for an airport car to collect the tortoise.

"We ask your indulgence for a small delay," Capt. Kimmedy said over the intercom.

"We are not joking when we say we're being held up by a tortoise - sitting right in our path."

"We'd rather wait a few moments for a car to come than run over him."

The tortoise on a white tarmac guiding line, was gathered up and carried to safety.

---(taken from the Advertiser, November 12, 1979)

NEW PUBLICATION

The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute announces the availability of Contribution No. 87, "A Life History Study of the Gray-banded Kingsnake, Lampropeltis mexicana alterna, in Texas" by Dennis J. Miller.

This 55 pp. report includes 5 photos, 11 distribution maps, and 5 tables and charts. Topics covered include morphology, geographic distribution, definition of habitat, behavior, food, reproduction, mortality, husbandry, and the status of the Gray-banded Kingsnake as a non-game protected species.

Soft-bound copies are available at a cost of \$5.00 each (Texas residents include 5% tax) from: The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Box 1334, Alpine, Texas 79830. Include 50¢ for postage and handling.

SEA TURTLE STAMPS ISSUED

The General Post Office of the Republic of Maldives, a group of coral islands in the Indian Ocean, has issued a series of stamps depicting seven species of sea turtles found in their waters. Of the seven species, six are on the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. They are: leatherback sea turtle (Dermochelys coriacea), hawksbill sea turtle (Eretmochelys imbricata), loggerhead sea turtle (Caretta caretta), Olive Ridley sea turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea), Kemp's Ridley sea turtle (Lepidochelys kempii), and green sea turtle (Chelonia mydas). The flatback sea turtle (Chelonia depressa), which is not on the U.S. List, but is protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), also appears on a stamp.

Designed by Maxim Shamir and printed by the House of Questa, England, the stamps cost 10/93 rupees per set and 4/00 rupees for a souvenir sheet. A first-day cover envelope was issued along with this set and is available for 1.00 rupees. (Exchange rate: \$1.00 equals 3.93 rupees). Mail full payment by bank draft or International Money Order to Postmaster, General Post Office, Male, Republic of Maldives.

---(taken from Endangered Species Technical Bulletin, 5(3), Mar. 1980)
