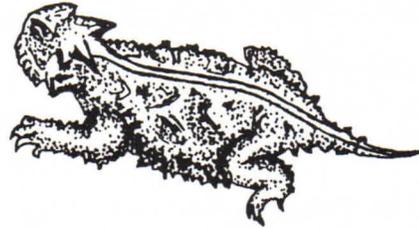


**KANSAS
HERPETOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**



KHS Newsletter, No. 50

December 1982

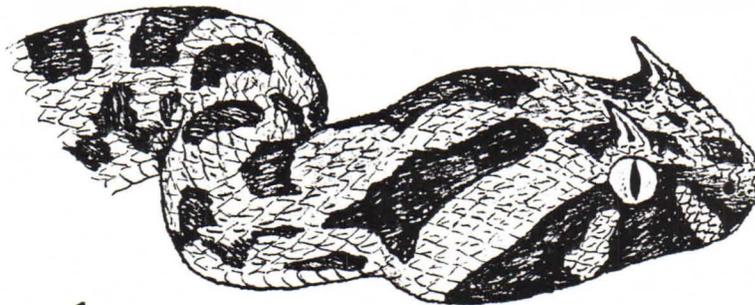
KHS MEMBERS NOTE

1983 KHS MEETING AND FIELD TRIP DATES

Listed below are the meeting dates and locations for the 1983 KHS field trips and the 10th ANNIVERSARY MEETING.

Please mark these on your calendar, and plan to attend as many as you can. More detailed information will appear in forthcoming KHS Newsletter issues.

1. Field Trip. 29 April - 1 May. Toronto Reservoir, Woodson County.
Host: John Fraser
(316) 378-3138.
2. Field Trip. 27-29 May. Meade County State Lake.
Host: Kelly J. Irwin
(913) 864-3573 or (913) 864-5587.
3. Field Trip. 16-18 September. Bourbon County State Lake.
Host: Larry Miller
(316) 845-2680.
4. 10th Anniversary Annual Meeting. 12-13 November.
University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, Lawrence.
Host: Joseph T. Collins
(913) 864-4920.



Marty Capron
1/82

1982 FALL FIELD TRIP HELD IN BUTLER COUNTY, KANSAS

The final field trip for the KHS during 1982 was held at the Butler County Fishing Lake located south of El Dorado, Kansas. There were about a dozen and a half members and friends at the meeting and campout.

The group spent some time exploring the cave near El Dorado the morning of the 18th of September. A northern water snake, some cricket frogs, leopard frogs, and bullfrogs were found near and in the damp cave.

Collecting was done in many areas of Butler and Cowley counties during the weekend. The amphibians and reptiles collected from each county include:

BUTLER COUNTY

Small-mouthed Salamander (Ambystoma texanum)

Blanchard's Cricket Frog (Acris crepitans blanchardi)

(continued next page)



One of the younger herpers from Emporia looks over some of the carvings on the cave walls during the trip to the cave during the fall KHS meeting in Butler County, Kansas. Photo by Larry Miller.

BUTLER COUNTY (continued)

Bullfrog (Rana catesbeiana)
Leopard Frog (Rana blairi)
Ornate Box Turtle (Terrapene ornata ornata)
Eastern Collared Lizard (Crotaphytus collaris collaris)
Great Plains Skink (Eumeces obsoletus)
Red Milk Snake (Lampropeltis triangulum sypila)
Flat-headed Snake (Tantilla gracilis)
Graham's Crayfish Snake (Regina grahami)
Northern Water Snake (Nerodia sipedon sipedon)
Red-sided Garter Snake (Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis)
Lined Snake (Tropidoclonion lineatum)

CROWLEY COUNTY

Ornate Box Turtle (Terrapene ornata ornata)
Eastern Collared Lizard (Crotaphytus collaris collaris)
Great Plains Skink (Eumeces obsoletus)
Six-lined Racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus)
Prairie Ringneck Snake (Diadophis punctatus arnyi)
Eastern Coachwhip (Masticophis flagellum flagellum)
Great Plains Rat Snake (Elaphe guttata emoryi)
Black Rat Snake (Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta)
Flat-headed Snake (Tantilla gracilis)

--Larry Miller
Caldwell, Kansas

* * * *

KHS 1982 FIELD TRIP FOR THE FALL

Unseasonably cool weather kept many herps and a lot of herpers "holed-up" during the September meeting/field trip of the KHS held at the Butler County State Lake September 17-19. A trickle of members arrived throughout Friday evening and hastily pitched camp in the face of strong winds and inky darkness made all the blacker by a low ceiling of clouds and temperatures dipping into the 40's.

1982 FALL FIELD TRIP (continued from page three)

Our caravan descending from the north encountered numerous Bufo woodhousei and even greater numbers of Rana blairi on the road despite these conditions. A barn owl, a racoon and four white-tail deer also braved the weather and appeared along the road during the course of our journey. We arrived at camp with little but bread and tomato sandwiches and tap water from a plastic jug under our belts and sank into a restless sleep, tormented by dreams of steaks, cookies, and beer.

Saturday morning dawned too early for some of us but the sky was clear and the beauty of a tallgrass prairie dawn (and the promise of breakfast at a local cafe) lured us from our lairs rested and ready to pilage the Flint Hills for herpetological treasures. After a hearty meal at the Latham cafe, we set about our separate excursions. One group elected to explore a cave south of El Dorado, another the hills to the south in Cowley County and still another the extensive eastern slope of the Flint Hills along the Butler County line overlooking Elk and Greenwood counties to the east. We opted for the latter. We found conditions dry upon these slopes and many of the rocks showed signs of earlier turning (without replacement to their original places) by collectors in the past months. Diadophis punctatus, Crotaphytus collaris and Eumeces obsoletus along with a lone Coluber constrictor were our only finds along this ravaged ridge.

We refilled our water jug and splurged for a candy bar and a pop at the service station in Beaumont, pausing to wax philosophical on politics, oil and the Social Security system with the proprietor, a character of a man who had spent much of his life working in Iran and North Africa. Back in Latham sometime later we again bolstered the local economy with a refill of gas and lunch at the cafe. Thus re-inspired, we struck out again for the limestone exposures, adding Tantilla gracilis, Terrapene ornata, Nerodia sipedon and a wayward Phrynosoma cornutum to the tally. Here we saw a variety of other wildlife including more deer, a marsh hawk carrying off some type of snake, large numbers of turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks and a rare prairie falcon. A brief survey of a marshy area in a pasture turned up an Ambystoma texanum and a stop at the Elk River yielded Rana catesbeiana and Acris crepitans. A DOR Pituophis melanoleucus sayi topped off the day's catch.

Breakfast Sunday morning at the Latham cafe gave everyone a chance to exchange reports on how they did afield. Masticophis flagellum, Elaphe obsoleta and a juvenile Lampropeltis triangulum were added to the list. Hoping that the light rain that had been falling since before sun-up would bring out more herps we broke camp and decided to make a leisurely return trip, collecting along the way. The first exposure of rock we stopped at was a good one with three subadult Elaphe guttata and a scarred and stump-tailed Thamnophis proximus added to our species list. After more adventures with road-food and herpetologist cuisine and still more rock flipping we added only Thamnophis sirtalis to the crew and threw in our snake-hooks for the trip.

County records secured included Thamnophis proximus, Elaphe guttata

1982 FALL FIELD TRIP (continued from page four)

and Lampropeltis triangulum (all records for Butler County), and Tantilla gracilis (Elk County).

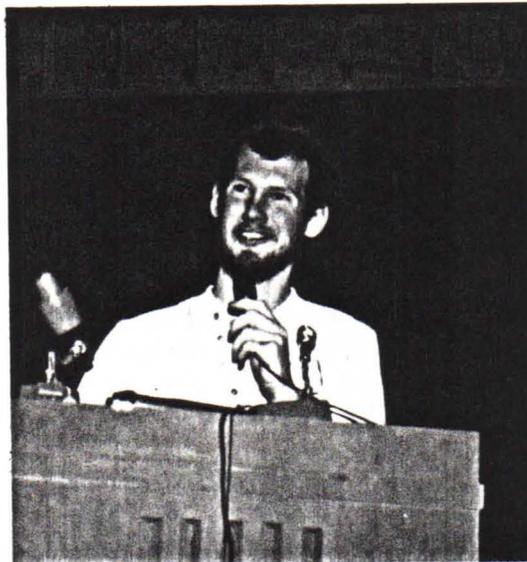
--Martin Capron, Kelly Irwin,
and John Tollefson
Lawrence, Kansas

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THE NINTH ANNUAL KHS MEETING HELD IN LAWRENCE, KANSAS

Over 50 KHS Members and Guests participated in the two-day extravaganza 13-14 November 1982 that was the Ninth Annual meeting of the Kansas Herpetological Society. Held at the Museum of Natural History of the University of Kansas, the meeting was a resounding success for all concerned.

Four featured speakers were sandwiched in between coffee breaks on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, along with a business meeting and a splendid social and auction Saturday night.



KHS President John Tollefson gleefully announces the start of the name tag reading contest at the Ninth Annual KHS meeting. Photo by Larry Miller.

NINTH ANNUAL KHS MEETING REPORT (continued)

The meeting was called to order by KHS President John Tollefson at 1:00 pm in Downs Auditorium in the Museum of Natural History. The first speaker was Joyce Harmon from the Kansas Fish and Game Commission. The title of her presentation, "Fish and Game Education Programs" was a trap for the unwary. Rather than the expected recitation of program offerings, Ms. Harmon had the assembled masses participate in the learning activities she has developed. Seeing the Turtle Two-Step performed live on stage certainly is a more meaningful learning experience than merely hearing about it later. Joyce has a wide range of programs and materials available for teaching about wildlife, especially reptiles and amphibians, ranging from films and filmstrips to teaching kits with enough copies of herp books to serve an entire classroom.

The next item on the agenda was the Business Meeting and election of officers. The Kansas Herpetological Society Executive Council for 1983 will consist of:

President.....Joseph T. Collins
President-Elect.....John Fraser
Past-President.....John Tollefson
Secretary/Treasurer.....Rose Etta Kurtz
Newsletter Editor.....John E. Simmons

Following a much-needed coffee break and stirring group photo session (why were we posed under an inscription on a building which reads "He who findith wisdom findith life"?), the next speaker was John Simmons from the University of Kansas. His presentation was entitled "The Andes, the Amazon, and the Disappearing Forest". After showing some examples of the diversity of herps found in the Amazon region, he gave us the depressing news that it is all fast disappearing as human activities cut and clear the forest away. The loss of the Amazon forest will have far-ranging effects including alteration of global climate.

The 10-Best Slide Show was interesting as usual, with a variety of creatures shown. Participants included Joseph T. Collins, Kelly Irwin, Thomas Berger, John Simmons, Ray Loraine, John Fraser, and David Barker. We then adjourned for a coffee break, followed by a dinner break.

The social got underway at 7:30 pm in the Trail Room of the Kansas Union next door to the museum. Over a keg of Herper's Helper, the participants merrily bid their way through another successful KHS auction, raising approximately \$275 to replenish depleted Society coffers.

John Tollefson called us to order again Sunday morning at 9:30 am to hear an excellant presentation by David Barker of the Dallas Zoo on "Rattlesnake Round-ups". These events are held in many places each spring and summer, centering in Texas and Oklahoma. Dave explained how, despite their claims to be performing educational and civic functions, they really fall short on both counts. Dave also pointed out that the sponsoring organizations who put on the hunt usually only intend to raise money for

NINTH ANNUAL KHS MEETING REPORT (continued)

worthy causes, and most of the participants are unaware of how fraudulent and cruel the hunts are. Even the professionals who manage the hunt usually remain unconvinced of the damage they are doing to the rattlesnakes and thus to the environment where the snakes are gassed and collected.

Due to a prolonged coffee break before the meeting started, the next coffee break was severely shortened. It was followed by a very interesting presentation by Jonathan Campbell of the University of Kansas on "Snakes of the genus Bothrops". Using a wealth of color slides, Jon explained how these Neotropical pit vipers have adapted to a much wider range of habitats than our North American pit vipers. Among the Bothrops are found species which are heavy-bodied ground dwellers, limber, green arboreal varieties, and most everything in between. They live in most habitats from lowland forests and grasslands up through the mist-laden cloud forests on the shoulders of volcanoes.



"Wow, I could-a had a V-8!!!" laments KHS Member Ray Loraine at the Saturday Night Special social. Nasty rumors that Ray is a draught-resister are hereby proved untrue. Photo by Larry Miller.

NINTH ANNUAL KHS MEETING REPORT (continued)



Orienting toward the sun for more efficient thermoregulation, a group of hearty KHS Ninth Annual Meeting participants sacrifice a portion of a coffee break to pose for those who didn't come to Lawrence. Photo by Larry Miller.

In addition to the scheduled speakers, there were two other presentations for the participants to enjoy. In the auditorium was a herpetological miscellany photographed by John Simmons (and others) ranging from egg incubation to some rare photos of the collecting of Galapagos tortoises in 1915. In the reception area was the beautifully photographed slide show of the Snakes of Kansas, by Joseph T. Collins.

All in all, it was an exciting and stimulating annual meeting, rewarding for all of the participants. KHS wishes to thank the above mentioned speakers for helping to make the meeting a success, plus J.T. Collins,

NINTH ANNUAL KHS MEETING REPORT (continued)

Rose Etta Kurtz, Ray Loraine, Kelly Irwin, Barking Frog Productions, the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, the Office of University Relations, and the Campus Audio-Visual Center.

--Irving Street
KHS Special Correspondent

* * * *

GROUP'S LOVE FOR SNAKES SURPASSES STRONG STIGMA

Many people do not like snakes - they cannot be trained, they are not fun to pet and their bite can be downright nasty. But to members of the Kansas Herpetological Society, snakes are beautiful.

Joseph Collins, the new president of KHS, said the group currently supported conservation and research on amphibians and reptiles, scientifically known as herps.

Eric Rundquist, a Lawrence resident who helped start the group while he was a student in 1974, said, "Ever since I was five, I was fascinated by reptiles. Sure, there is a definite stigma regarding snakes, but still we must get the word out."

That reason, among others, is why KHS was created, he said.

"We all have our phobias," Rundquist said. "I don't like spiders, but I give them leeway - I don't bother them and they don't bother me."

Rundquist made the comments while he watched a beer social and auction that were part of the KHS' ninth annual statewide meeting in Lawrence this weekend.

John Tollefson, outgoing KHS president, said the auction raised \$275 through the sale of donated books, cages, T-shirts and other herp-related items.

David Barker, a professional herpetologist for the Dallas Zoo, said he learned a lot about herpetology from groups like KHS while he was growing up.

"Groups like this one have a very good land ethic, a very good conservation ethic," he said. "People tend to overlook the value of amphibians and reptiles.

"The time is coming when all sorts of animals will be faced with

GROUP'S LOVE FOR SNAKES SURPASSES (continued)

extinction. We need the kind of information they can provide when we start looking at where we're going to put dams and where we're going to have forests."

Barker said the groups provided valuable demographic information by collecting, photographing and cataloging the various species of herps before releasing the animals.

Rundquist said KHS and other groups that study reptiles had determined valuable techniques for saving endangered species of herps.

"Ten years ago herps wouldn't breed in captivity," he said. "Now we have the techniques available to make it happen."

"When other species start to be endangered, we will have the techniques to save them."

--University Daily Kansan, November 18, 1982, page 10.

* * * *

RETIRED PROF CONTINUES SOLITARY STUDY OF NATURE

The lean man in plain work clothes emerged from a rundown shed in the timber northeast of Lawrence. In his hands he carried a gallon jar half-filled with a copperhead snake and her newborn litter of five.

As the man gently removed the dazed mother snake, her shiny gray offspring stared through the glass at the earth and sunshine.

He scooted the mother snake into a cardboard packing barrel. "I've been bitten several times by copperheads, and once by a rattler," he said.

"That was rather painful."

But for Henry Fitch, handling poisonous reptiles is a routine task he performs as the superintendent and resident naturalist at the University of Kansas Natural History Reservation.

Fitch, professor emeritus of systematics and ecology, and one of the world's leading experts on copperheads, has over 100 snake traps set in the rocks and hills of the reservation, a 590-acre wooded tract one mile north of the Lawrence Municipal Airport.

After capturing the snakes, Fitch measures them and records their age, markings, sex and other data, before marking them for their return to the

PROF CONTINUES SOLITARY (continued)

wild. He said he had trapped full-grown snakes which he had marked eight years before as babies.

Since 1958, Fitch has lived with his wife on the reservation, which was set aside in that year to provide a refuge for native plants and animals and a location where they could be studied.

But as might be expected, after 34 years of study the unassuming naturalist's expertise is not limited to snakes. Over the years, Fitch has conducted and observed all manner of research projects at the preserve, ranging from tracking turtles equipped with radio transmitters to capturing, identifying and banding various types of birds.

In years past, biology classes have come to the compound to study organic growth, Fitch said, however, the reservation was not as active lately because the University had obtained other preserves in the area.

"It seems the reservation has continuing usefulness as a place for classwork and a place for research. I certainly hope this project won't end with me, but that someone will be able to continue to live here, to study and to watch over the reservation," Fitch said.

Fitch said he was glad the University allowed him to continue living on the site after his retirement in 1980, and said he hoped the reservation would be maintained for future naturalists.

But regardless of his retirement, Fitch goes on with his solitary study of nature.

Hiking through the woods on a recent afternoon, the naturalist pointed out small wire traps he used to capture mole-like relatives of the arctic lemming, pausing to scoop a small brown toad from the undergrowth.

Fitch occasionally peered under a discarded piece of tin, searching for a water snake or copperhead. Pacing along the trail as the autumn sun filtered through the trees, Fitch talked of the changes he had seen across his years of study.

"Some of those species common years ago have completely disappeared, and some are much less common than even 20 years ago," he said.

Changes in the ground cover over the years were responsible for the demise of the six-lined race runner lizard and other animals, he said.

The compound, open to the public for birdwatching and day hikes, was originally half-open fields and meadows, he said. But now, almost entirely tree-covered, the compound does not provide a natural habitat for the race runner and other small vertebrates.

Yet the process of transformation from grasslands to mature forest has been interesting to observe, Fitch said.

PROF CONTINUES SOLITARY (continued)

"In the autumn the leaves of the different species of trees on the hillsides turn various shades, making it easy to identify general areas where certain types are growing," he said.

In the woods, Fitch paused to observe a spider skittering up its web with an insect tucked in its mouth. The professor recalled how he and a student once discovered a species of the tarantula family, naming the new variety themselves.

Other inhabitants of the compound include white-tailed deer, skunks, opossums, raccoons, hawks, and coyotes, as well as a variety of smaller amphibians and mammals.

I don't often see coyotes, but I hear them at night," Fitch said.

The naturalist said one of the most exciting things he ever saw was a white-tailed deer during the 1940s, when deer had become virtually extinct in Kansas.

--University Daily Kansan

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A LETTER FROM THE FIELD

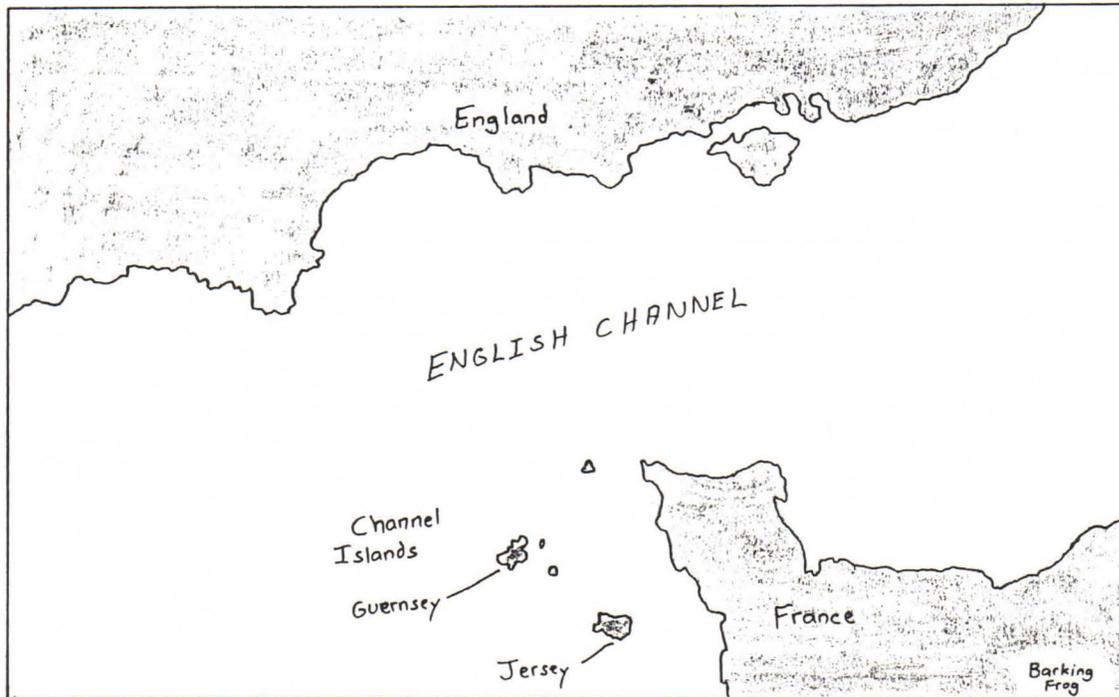
The following has been extracted from a letter from KHS Member and former KHS Newsletter Editor Hank Guarisco. Hank is now participating in a special program at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust in the Channel Islands, U.K.

"After spending a wonderful week in Atlanta, Georgia . . . I boarded a plane bound for London on the evening of 30 Sept. After a flight of 7 hours (+5 hours time change) I got a plane to Jersey. It was a wonderful sight, green fields with specks of houses, rows of trees, and Jersey cows. The sunlight filtered through the trees which bordered the narrow streets and filled the scene with life. The streets are narrow and lined with old stone walls. The extensive greenery produces an image of a quasi-symbiotic association between man-made structures and the natural environment. There appears to be a collective consciousness of the people in recognizing their relationship with the land. Before any agricultural land (including all privately owned land) can be converted to other uses, the proposed change must pass a committee of the local government.

"The (Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust) zoo is absolutely fantastic!

LETTER FROM THE FIELD (continued)

There is an outdoor enclosure for gorillas 1/2 acre in size. Just opposite the central part is a group of climbing ropes and swings for children so the apes can be entertained watching the human's feeble attempts at acrobatics."



"The place is a living 'idyll'. I have never seen better looking animals and such clean conditions. The large Round Island gecko (Phelsuma guentheri) and the Round Island skink (Leiopisma telfairii) have been bred many times yielding hundreds of individuals. Success has also been achieved with Epicrates. Quenten Bloxaur, Curator of Reptiles at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, recently informed me (that) the Round Island boa (Casarea dussumieri) has also been bred successfully - it lays eggs. Quenten has just returned from Round Island and collected data and marked 58 individuals. He says the goats have been eliminated, but the rabbits still continue to kill all seedling palm trees.

". . . things are really progressing here. They are building or converting additional buildings for associated uses (e.g.) darkroom, film cutting room and a room for preserved collections. They recognize the value of the rare specimens they have, and most will be sent to the British Museum, but they also want to start a preserved collection here in Jersey."

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Hank has promised us more reports in the future about the Jersey Wildlife

LETTER FROM THE FIELD (continued)

Preservation Trust. For those of you interested to read more about the organization and the Round Island reptile breeding program, look for the following in your local library:

Durrell, Gerald. 1977. Golden Bats and Pink Pigeons. Simon and Schuster, New York. 190 pages.

(An absorbing account of the author's experiences collecting rare animals in Mauritius and on Round Island for breeding stock in Jersey. Includes photographs of the Round Island boa, skink, gecko, and their habitats.)

Durrell, Gerald. Menagerie Manor. Simon and Schuster, New York.

Durrell, Gerald M. and L.M. Durrell. 1980. Breeding Mascarene wildlife in captivity. *International Zoo Yearbook* 20:2-119.

Guarisco, H. 1982. The Round Island boa - plight of an endangered species. *KHS Newsletter* (49):6-7.

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HAPPY HIBERNATION

Now that another season of collecting has come to a close, its a good time to prepare for next year. Its time to haul out all of your collecting gear and repair that ripped snake bag, or replace that burned-out bulb in your headlamp. Maybe its time to make new collecting bags to replace all those which were "borrowed" by another herper, but have yet to be returned. It might be a good time to clean and repair a tent or purchase a new sleeping bag. To make sure you are prepared for next season, sit down and make yourself a list of everything you might need in the field. This will help you to remember those little items which might be overlooked. This is the time of year when on a cold winters night its nice to sit at home with maps spread round and plan future trips to new areas as well as old, it seems you can always find some new and exciting places, even close to home. Maybe you felt pretty worn out after your first day last spring, well, maybe its time to start a physical conditioning program to keep you in shape so that first day spent turning large rocks won't be felt the next. These are just a few thoughts for those herpers who go crazy in the winter for lack of anything to do on those long and cold nights.

--Kelly J. Irwin
Topeka, Kansas

1982 MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY AND THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ZOOLOGISTS

Meeting plans this year include 13 symposia in addition to contributed papers and etc. Of interest to KHS members is an all-day symposium on Phylogenetic Relationships of the Lizard Families, consisting of about 15 different papers. The meeting will be held 27-30 December at the Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky. The lizard symposium will be on 29 December, 1982.

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THIRD GRADERS LEARN ABOUT AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES



Denise Brown (left) and Mary Morris (right) look over an adult bullsnake after they finished their third grade unit dealing with amphibians and reptiles at Caldwell Elementary School in Caldwell, Kansas. Photo by Larry Miller. Story on page 16.

THIRD GRADERS LEARN (continued)

One of the first science units that the third graders in Caldwell, Kansas worked on this school year dealt with amphibians and reptiles. The students learned the difference between amphibians and reptiles, as well as the common names of several of the native species. They kept snakes, turtles, frogs, salamanders, and a lizard in their room during the week of study. Many color slides, prints, magazines, and other materials were also used.

The third grade teacher, Sharon Jantz, said the students really enjoyed the unit. They worked real hard and learned a lot of new things while reading and observing. The snakes seemed to be about everyone's favorite animals.

--Larry Miller, Sixth Grade Teacher
Caldwell Elementary School
Caldwell, Kansas 67022

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KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING, FOLKS...

Your editors wish to take this opportunity to remind you once again that this newsletter depends on YOU, the members, for fresh, original material. Or any other material, for that matter. Please send us your articles, stories, drawings, photographs, ideas, tips, news, and large sums of money in small bills. We are also interested in newspaper articles related to amphibians and reptiles from any newspaper you happen to read. Please include the name of the newspaper and the date when sending clippings.

The deadlines for the four issues of the KHS Newsletter for 1983 are:

- Issue No. 51.....February 15 (March 1983 issue)
- Issue No. 52.....May 20 (June 1983 issue)
- Issue No. 53.....August 20 (September 1983 issue)
- Issue No. 54.....November 15 (December 1983 issue)

Send your contributions to: John E. Simmons
KHS Newsletter
Museum of Natural History
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

TAKE IT FROM THE WIZARD . . . SOME FOLK WISDOM FROM THE LAND OF OZ

A selection of Kansas tradition taken from Folklore from Kansas:

"A plentiful crop of rats is an indication of war."

"If you should be bitten by a poisonous snake, put an onion on the bite, and it will clear up right away."

"If a turtle bites you, it will not let loose until it thunders."

"If a pregnant woman looks at a snake, the baby will be marked."

"Turn a frog over on its back; this will bring rain."

"Kill a snake by spitting tobacco juice into its mouth." A good trick if you can do it.

"A hair that has been put into a rain barrel will turn into a tadpole."

"If a snake should bite you, make a slit where the snake has bitten, and suck it. Chew tobacco while sucking so as not to get poisoned."

"When the head of a turtle has been severed, the body will turn toward water."

"If you throw something that you have handled down close to a rattlesnake, it will stay there for a long time watching the object."

"If toads have made warts on your hands, play with frogs, and the warts will leave." No instructions are given for getting rid of warts on frogs...

"...if a dog were bitten by a rattlesnake and if it were fed a large quantity of butter, it would recover from its poisonous bite."

"Snakes lying on their backs in the middle of the road are signs of rain." Also can be signs of heavy traffic.

"Apply a chicken's heart to a snakebite, so that it will pump the blood out."

"When snakes leave the creek, there is going to be a flood."

"Snakes come out in the springtime after the first thunderstorm."

"If you drop a white hair from a horse's tail into a pond of water during any month, it will turn into a hair snake."

"All animals begin to talk at midnight on New Year's Eve."

The items in this book were selected from over 17,000 file cards completed by field collectors of folklore between 1956 and 1963. The book

TAKE IT FROM THE WIZARD (continued)

has the items arranged according to subject category. Folklore from Kansas was written by William E. Koch. Copyright 1980, The Regents Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. xvii + 467 pages.

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HERPER HELPERS: REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

This month's Herper Helper will delve into an aspect of herpetological husbandry: stress. Stress and its effects on captive amphibians and reptiles are perhaps the most important factors in the maintenance of these animals. Unfortunately, stress is also one of the more subtle and imprecise factors in the field. In the paragraphs to follow, we hope to offer some tips on how to recognize and combat the effects of this syndrome.

For starters, perhaps we should try to come to an operational understanding of what stress is. The explanation that follows may be a bit nebulous but bear with me. The health and welfare of your captives may depend on how well you recognize and deal with their stresses. First of all, understand that, no matter if your animal is captive-bred and born, it is still, for all intents and purposes, a wild animal. All its genetic and behavioral arrays are geared towards survival in a generally hostile environment. It is not adapted to life in captivity in any way. The mere fact that your turtle or snake is not toodling along in its native habitat is a stress on the beast. Having to deal with the sight, sound, touch, and odor of a natural enemy (you, the human) on a daily and continuing basis are several other major stresses. Consider yourself being restrained in some container and provided with ad libitum food, water, sanitation services, sleeping facilities, a mate, and privacy but in daily contact and under the care of a benevolent tiger. You may know that the tiger intends you no harm but every time you come into contact with your tiger keeper, your heart rate increases, as does breathing rate. Adrenal glands pump out more of their secretions, blood pressure rises, metabolism increases. Your stomach and lower gastrointestinal tract suffer more upsets than normal. You suffer more colds than usual and you have sleeping disturbances. You beat up your mate. You just don't like where you are and at under the conditions that you must endure. That, folks, is an approximation of what your charges are going through. That is stress. It is debilitating and serious. It is your most important consideration in captive herp husbandry.

Now for some advice on how to recognize and reduce the effects of this illness (you can never completely eliminate it). First of all, become as knowledgeable as you can about what your animal does in its native environs. For instance, what is its natural diet? Is it an active or sedentary creature? What is its preferred activity temperature? Humidity tolerance? Nocturnal or

diurnal? Visually or olfactorily oriented? Evolutionarily primitive or advanced? It should be an ongoing process. Become as intimately aware of your charge's daily and seasonal routines as you can. I do not know anyone in herp husbandry that knows every thing that there is to know about their animals (Joe Laszlo at the San Antonio Zoo will tell you he does but that's another article in itself).

Now that you have acquired a fairly in-depth knowledge of your critter's basic biology, attempt to recreate a reasonable facsimile of its environmental needs. Minimally, this should include a spacious cage (too much room is far better than too little. The fact that a 6-ft. boa can exist in a 20-gallon aquarium does not mean that it should), normal temperature (75^o-85^o F, depending on the species), and at least one hiding spot. Do not overfeed. Clean all fecal material out of the unit as soon as possible. Most important, reduce contact (visual, olfactory, tactile, auditory) between your animal and you as much as possible. Reptiles and amphibians are not cute, cuddly creatures and do not appreciate petting, tickling, or attempts at play and should not be subjected to same. Leave them alone.

One of the surest indicators of stress in a reptile is chronic and persistent respiratory infection (usually called pneumonia or colds by enthusiasts although it is rarely either). Depressed appetite may also be an indication. The vast majority of illnesses in captive herps are stress-related. If you have an animal with any sort of chronic illness, re-examine the environment of your captive and how you are interacting with it and correct any irregularities in its and your routine. A stable environment is what you are trying to create and maintain.

Stress in amphibians is infinitely more difficult to diagnose. With metachromic (ability to change color) animals, such as frogs, nocturnal coloration displayed diurnally may be an indication. An animal that refuses to hide during its normal resting period may also be stressed. These are also indications of other disease. Always assume, however, that your animals are stressed due to external factors and attempt to correct those factors as quickly as possible. Amphibian illnesses and stresses kill far more quickly than reptilian diseases. Stability is the key once again.

In summary, stress is the number one problem in herp husbandry. It cannot be eliminated but it can be reduced. Become intimately familiar with your animals and be constantly alert to their needs and rhythms. Always seek to improve their environment. You are completely and totally responsible for the lives of these delicate creatures and that is a serious responsibility.

--Eric Rundquist
Lawrence, Kansas

MORE HERP T-SHIRTS SOON TO BE AVAILABLE

Interest in (and orders for) the KHS T-Shirt with the design of the tree frog was very good. A total of seventy-three shirts were printed, and after all the bills were paid, \$24.00 was left for the KHS.

A number of people have now shown an interest in another shirt with a drawing of a tiger salamander. At this time, Delfi Messenger of the famous Sedgwick County Zoo is working on the drawing to be used on the new shirts. I plan to have a sample shirt printed sometime after the first of the year. The new shirts will be ordered before next spring, so they will be delivered for the 1983 field trips.

Anyone who would like to receive order blanks once a price has been determined should send their name and address to me, and I will send them information on the shirts sometime in February 1983. They can then order if they like. As before, all profits will go to the KHS, a truly worthy cause you must admit.

Write to: Larry Miller
524 North Osage Street
Caldwell, Kansas 67022

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HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTERS

The Kansas Herpetological Society editorial office regularly exchanges newsletters with numerous other regional herpetological societies. This way, your loyal and dedicated editors can keep you informed of the news and activities of other groups like ours. In the past, we have printed occasional excerpts from other publications which we thought would be of interest to our readers. This time, however, we have decided to reprint the entire latest issue of the newsletter from the Regional Herpetological Society in Regional, Wisconsin, for your enlightenment.

Regional Herpetological Society News

Vol. 5, Number 17 ***** Septmeber 1982 ***** Late Edition

NEXT MEETING ALL SET

The next meeting of RHS is all set and we hope a lot of people will be there as we had a lot of good time the last one when many showed up.

The speaker will be Dan McMann of the Regional Chapter of the Pet Suppliers International Fraternity who will speak on stupid restrictions on wildlife and how he can get you an anaconda anyway. Many RHS members know Dan really well especially those of us who work in the shop with him over at Mel's Pall Mall and know how much he has done for herpetological education in the Regional area. BE THERE OR ELSE.

As usually the meeting will be held at the Rec Center on Hwy 34 on the south side of Regional City at 7:30 on the first Thursday of the month that falls on a day that can be divided by a prime number.

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LAST FIELD TRIP A GREAT SUCCESS

The last field trip was a great success. We saw a lot of neat stuff and caught some really big snakes and lizards. Most were under rocks, but some weren't. It has been suggested that in the future everybody coming to the field trips will have to wear a seatbelt so we don't have any repeats of that incident we will not have to mention further to any of you who were there and those of you who were not probably have heard about it all ready so we won't say any more about it. If you didn't come to this you missed a good field trip out in the field and I am sure you will want to come to all of the next ones.

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED AGAIN

We finally finished counting all of the ballots and the new officers for 1983 are going to be:

President.....Dan McMann
Vice Pres.....Sheila McMann
Secretary.....Wilfredo Benitez
Treasurer.....Ralph McMann

Congratulations to all of the new officers on their election, and thanks to all 12 members who sent their ballots back on time.

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NEWS TO US

RHS member Roger Woodchip recently got a great big new boa. The new snake is an Riodonda boa which he hopes to mate with his Colombian Redtail. We'll be looking out for the little boattes, Rog.

Charges have been dismissed against RHS member LaVerne Etude for insufficient evidence, and the police even gave her back the snake^s, Tiny and Puffy-face, she uses in her act, so she will be appearing back at La Lounge next week. Way to go, LaVerne.

Gentry McMann says he has a reptile pet that needs a good home. If anyone has a place where they can keep a 22 foot Nile Crocodile for the winter, please contact Gent at 532-9789 after 6 pm. Gentry says it is a very nice animal, captive bred, and does well on a diet of sardines and small children.

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NEW BOOK OF INTEREST TO RHS MEMBERS

I read a really neat book about snakes last week which every member will want to read. There is lots of good stuff in it. I can't remember the name, but it is on the new book shelf at the library. Look for it.



CLASSIFIED ADS**

FOR SALE: Mice and rats, healthy, good
 erp food. Rats 50¢, mice 25¢, variety
 new fall colors. Catch and carry.
 ed McMann, 764-4476

FOR SALE: Cage for 22-foot long Nile
 crocodile. Screen vents and glass top.
 includes water bowl. Gentry McMann.
 Box 95, Regional, Wisconsin.

FOR SALE: Tuatara. Real cute babies,
 ptive born. Philadelphia Reptile
 earing House Box 56. Pa.

ANTED: Affectionate, warm, outgoing
 ndsome experienced man looking for wo-
 n or equivalent with interest in herps,
 orseback riding, John LeCarre novels and
 iving very fast on dirt roads. All
 plys confidential. P.O. Box 7b,
 gional, Wis.

FOR SALE: Firmount Snake Shedder. New
 vice to help rid yer snakes of those
 ubborn sheds. Amphibian adapter avail.
 or \$3 extra. Send \$45 plus \$2.50 post.
 d handl. to Firmount, 3232 Marine Way,
 gional, Wis.

REPTILES SOON TO DISAPPEAR

would like to remind you that it is
 ready getting kind of cold and soon
 uprobably won't see a lot of reptiles

(cont'd) and amphibians around because
 they will go away, so you better get out
 there and do your herping now before
 winter really does get here.

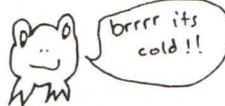


PHOTO HINTS

Taking pictures is always a problem, but the
 nice folks over at McMann Photos have been
 nice enough to offer us the following hints:

1. Super glue is good stuff to keep your
 animals still while trying to take their pict-
 ure. It usually comes off with the first
 shed.
2. To give your turtles a more lifelike
 color pattern, try going over their shells
 with glossy nail polish before time to photo
 them.
3. If your camera can't get in close
 enough to take a really close picture of your
 animals, try putting more than one of them
 in the picture.
4. Natural backgrounds are best. Natural
 backgrounds can be made from plaster of
 Paris, plastic flowers, styrofoam or dirt.
5. Be sure to have your film processed by
 experts like the people over at McMann Photos
 right here in Regional, Wisconsin. They
 will give you really professional results
 at a bargain price. 10% discount offered
 to all RHS members who bring in their snakes
 with their order.

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REGIONAL HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the RHS is open to anyone with
 an interest in reptiles, with herps, or with
 \$10 in check or money order. Members receive
 a newsletter and some other stuff and get to
 have donuts at the meetings:

- _____ \$ 10 Regular member
- _____ \$ 25 Contributing member
- _____ \$ 50 Sustaining member
- _____ \$100 Lifetime Member
- _____ \$500 Special McMann Lifer's Club

Send check or money order to RHS now.

In Part I of this exciting series, the subject of what equipment to get was discussed. As you undoubtedly have been sitting around since the last newsletter with your new vinyl camera bag full of untouched boxes of lenses and film, it is time to begin to utilize your investment.

1. Get to Know the Equipment (Even if you already do)

If you felt you already knew how to take the kind of photos that satisfy you, you would not be reading this, so try a "back to square one" approach, even if your camera is one you have owned and used for some time. Start as if you knew nothing about it, and read the instruction manual through completely from cover to cover. Do you know how to use all the features on your camera, how to compensate for exposure meter disfunction, how to over-ride the automatic settings, and what to do if the film breaks?

Next, without film in the camera, practice all its functions, using the automatic exposure system, setting it by hand, trying all the shutter speeds including time lapse and bulb settings, imagine setting up for flash photography. Be sure you can do all of it without referring to the guidebook, and that way when you have film in the camera you can fully concentrate on your goal, obtaining good pictures.

Now its time for the first roll of film. Especially with a new camera, it is best first to shoot some black-and-white film for experimental purposes (unless you are better funded than the average photographer) as it is much cheaper than shooting color. You want to check out both the functioning of your equipment and your knowledge of it, so plan to shoot with all your lenses at a variety of settings. Practice focusing on things far away and close up. To prepare yourself for photographing herps, you want to concentrate on the close up capabilities you have. There are two main problems in close up photography, (a) filling the frame with the object, which will be discussed later, and (b) depth of field.

When you focus on some point, there is a range just in front of and just behind of that point where things will appear in focus. This is the depth of field. Unfortunately, it is not a constant, but varies with the distance from the subject and light. The farther away you have focused, the greater the depth of field. You can point your camera on a nice, bright day at a panoramic street scene and have everything in focus from just a few feet away to the horizon. By contrast, when you focus in on something as close as you can get with your 50 mm lens (usually about 1.5 feet), you may have trouble getting the entire object in focus. The depth of field has another variable, light. This brings up the mystery of the f-stop. The f-stop refers to the aperture, or size of the opening letting light into your camera. The larger the f-number (16, 22, etc) the smaller the hole, thus less light gets in. The higher number the f-stop, the greater the depth of field. In general, this means you want to try and photograph with as much light as possible to get the most in focus, but there are times when you use the f-stop intentionally to narrow the depth of field to avoid cluttering the background

HERPER HELPERS: PHOTOGRAPHY (continued)

of a shot with stuff you don't want in focus. The f-stop and the shutter speed must be in balance, as both regulate the amount of light reaching the film. When shooting at higher speeds, you have to use larger apertures (the lower numbered f-stops). The ratio usually works out that each time you double shutter speed (30/sec, 60/sec, 125/sec) you use the next lower f-stop (f-8, f-5.6, f-4, for example).

For purposes of testing your equipment, attach whatever you got for taking pictures of herps (the macro lens, teleconverter, or whatever). Now, line up some small objects which are easy to focus on, such as dominoes or matchboxes, in a staggered line running at a right angle across the field of view of your camera. Using your light meter, select the lowest (smallest numbered) f-stop you can photograph the scene with (don't worry much about speed here, as dominoes rarely try to slink out of the picture), and focus on the center part of the line-up. Take the picture, and without moving the camera, advance one f-stop, changing to the next slower shutter speed as per your light meter or camera instruction book (which you have, of course, by now memorized). Continue until you have shot the scene, focused always in the center, at every f-stop on the camera. When you see the printed pictures lined up in order, you should have a dramatic representation of depth of field. As the f-number gets higher, more dominoes will be in focus (unless you used matchbooks) in front and back of the point where you focused the camera. Most camera lenses have a scale on them showing approximately what range of distance will be in focus at each f-stop, too.

During your test shots, especially with a new camera, write down the settings used for each picture as you take it. You will not remember them later, and having them written down will help you figure out a lot of things you might be doing wrong. When you get that first roll back, sit down with the pictures and analyze it. Did the shots turn out as you expected? What should you have done differently? Were you able to focus sharply on the objects you photographed? Once you feel confident to handle your equipment, it is time to proceed to taking your first herp picture.

2. Know Your Film

Assuming that you are now switching to color film (color slides at that), make sure you know your film. Look at the information that came inside the box of film, and it will tell you what the suggested manual settings are for those times when you don't have a light meter. Read over these, as they will give you a good feeling for what your film can do. You have probably purchased daylight film (film balanced for natural sunlight, fluorescent light, or electronic flash), but if you plan to photograph indoors under incandescent light, your pictures will have a reddish-yellow tint unless you use tungsten balanced film. Load it up, set the proper ASA (film speed) on your meter, and set up your first shot.

3. Setting Up the Picture

There are a lot of things to do before you get the animal out, so be patient.

HERPER HELPERS: PHOTOGRAPHY (continued)

A. Background. Forget about solid color, bland backgrounds that used to be used unless you have something special in mind. What you want is a naturalistic background, which means you don't have to knock yourself out getting the animal on biologically accurate habitat, but rather the animal should be posed on non-distracting natural materials of an appropriate nature (don't pose a Cope's Grey Treefrog on a prickly pear, for example). Remember to fit the color of your animal to the background. Water snakes will look good on light limestone rocks, but will hardly show up at all on dark tree bark. Make sure your naturalistic background is large enough that the animal can move around a bit on it and you can still get a good shot without getting unwanted stuff showing in the photo.

Place something of about the same size as your intended subject on the background, and focus your camera so that you FILL THE FRAME with it. Remember, with an SLR, what you see is what you get. If your subject only takes up a quarter of the frame, then when you project the slide at the next KHS meeting, everyone will see three-quarters of your swell background and only one-quarter of your subject.

Next comes light. If you are out of doors, take a meter reading before you put in the animal so you can take care of camera settings in advance. With an electronic flash, follow the instructions with your unit. Now, another word about f-stops. Assuming that you have some latitude in your selection of f-stops, try to use a middle-range f-stop, as the optics of the lens will be at their best in this area. Depending on the behavior of your animal and the steadiness of your hand holding the camera, you may have to adjust the f-stop with shutter speed. About 30/sec is as low as most people can hold a camera steady, and when you strap on a heavy macro lens it will be even harder to hold still. Using electronic flash, you set your camera at a speed around 60/sec to 100/sec, depending on the make, but the flash of light itself acts as a much faster shutter speed. With a flash, you don't have to worry much about animal movement.

One more word about exposure. Light meters can be cheated easily, especially through-the-lens metering systems. Cameras and light meters are set up for an "average" of 18% of the light falling on a subject being reflected back to the camera. However, very dark backgrounds or very light backgrounds will reflect less or more than this 18%, thus fooling the light meter. One way around this is to always bracket your shots, shooting at the f-stop metered for plus one above it and one below it without changing the shutter speed. This is why you want to be able to override the automatic features of your camera. If you want to use an extremely light or dark background, you might try taking your reading by putting an 18% Gray Card (sold at most photo stores) on your background in place of your subject.

4. Taking the Picture

Now comes the hard part (you thought this was the easy part, didn't you?). You are all set with the proper lighting, camera is all ready, out comes the

HERPER HELPERS: PHOTOGRAPHY (continued)

creature. Some beasts will sit still and pose relatively easily (such as frogs), others immediately wiggle and scamper off the background (snakes and lizards). Some sit still but won't pose (turtles). This is where all that patience you have been practicing up on comes in. There are a few tricks you can try with varying degrees of expected success:

A. Pose the animal gently and hope it stays still long enough to take the picture. A friend is handy to have around at this stage, as you can be ready to snap the award winning picture immediately as your friend poses the creature. Then, when the wee little monster leaps off the background for the 28th time, you can turn and scream obscenities at your friend, which is slightly more rational than screaming at the animal, which you will do sooner or later.

B. Cupped-hand technique. Cover the animal with your hand, allow it to calm down, then gently lift your hand away. Often you can even carefully lift a sagging head back into good photographic position if you move slowly. Most animals (usually except the one you are trying to take a picture of) will pose this way for a few seconds after they are uncovered.

C. Stress Works Wonders. Repeatedly posing the animal over and over again usually results in it giving up and holding still for you eventually. However, since they tire quickly, herps will also become stressed quickly, and must be rested. When the creature sags limply and closes its eyes, it is time to give it and you a rest.

D. Some people keep their cool by keeping their animals cool in the refrigerator a while before photographing them. I am against this for two reasons. One is that when cool, you don't always get the animal looking its best. My other objection to this technique is that it is cruel and dangerous for the subject to be cooled and warmed rapidly, or kept cool for a long period of time.

E. Some extremely flighty animals, like lizards, may be coaxed into posing by giving them no other alternative. Carefully tie a soft string to one leg on the opposite side of the body from the camera, and have someone hold it down out of sight so the animal can't leave the background. Be careful that you do not harm the animal with this procedure.

Framing the picture: look carefully through the viewfinder, remember, this is what you will get. Is the angle right? Have you eliminated unwanted shadows? Is there anything in the viewfinder that shouldn't be?

As mentioned above, bracket your shots to include one f-stop above and one below your main setting, and write these down. When you get your pictures back, sit down with the list of exposure data and go over them all carefully, see what you should do differently on your next roll. Don't expect perfect results right away, there is a lot to good specimen photography which is not easily explained, but only comes through experience.

NEXT APPEARANCE OF THIS COLUMN: Processing Your Film and Caring for the Product