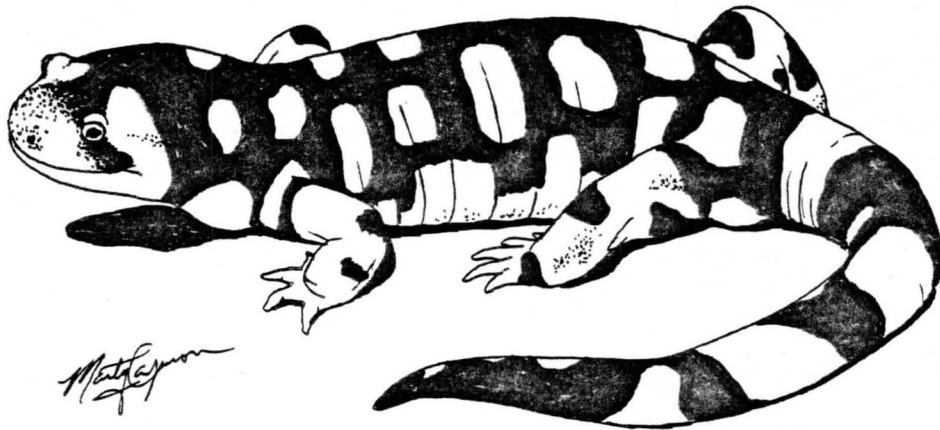


KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 54  
DECEMBER, 1983



1984 KHS DUES DUE, DO...

In this issue of the KHS Newsletter, you should find the nifty return-by-mail envelope for payment of your 1984 Kansas Herpetological Society dues. Since your dues are what finances this newsletter, prompt payment is appreciated. If you have already paid your 1984 dues, pass the envelope on to a friend who would like to join the Kansas Herpetological Society. Of all the Regional Herpetological Societies in the U.S., the KHS has some of the LOWEST membership rates.

If you are missing your dues envelope, or have lost it, the rates are still as follows:

Regular member (U.S.) \$4.00  
Non-U.S. member \$8.00  
Contributing member \$15.00

Make your checks or money orders payable to KHS.

Be sure that your CORRECT mailing address is printed neatly on the outside of the envelope. Send your money to:

Kansas Herpetological Society  
Museum of Natural History  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Who Are Those Herpetologists, Anyway?

If you are in the mood to expand your Christmas card list, here is a chance to get the names and addresses of over 2,000 professional and amateur herpetologists, plus lots of other neat stuff. The Silver Anniversary Membership Directory of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles has just been published and also contains a list of herpetological societies and organizations of the world (organized by country, each listing includes an address to write to and usually a list of publications), a brief history of the SSAR, and other useful information about the SSAR and its organization. Copies of this 55 page, soft-cover book may be ordered for \$4.00 complete from:

Dr. Douglas H. Taylor  
Department of Zoology  
Miami University  
Oxford, Ohio 45056

Make checks or money orders payable to SSAR.

### New Book Honors Henry S. Fitch

A new publication will be available this spring which contains articles on ecology, systematics, reproductive biology, behavior and biogeography by 24 different authors. This diverse group of scientists have all prepared their papers in tribute to KHS member Dr. Henry S. Fitch. Dr. Fitch is well known around the world for his exhaustive studies of many aspects of natural history, especially ecology.

The 200-page text contains a bibliography of Dr. Fitch's many publications, and sections on Reproductive Biology and Population Dynamics, Feeding and Behavior, and Systematics and Ecology. Of the 18 papers included, eight deal specifically with snakes, three with lizards, one with turtles, and two with frogs. The book has 75 figures and 89 tables. A special pre-publication price is in effect until 15 March 1984. This special price is only \$18.50 (plus 3.5% sales tax for Kansas residents). Please add 10% for shipping and handling. This volume may now be ordered as Special Publication No. 10, Vertebrate Ecology and Systematics, from:

Publications Secretary  
Museum of Natural History  
The University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

The book will be published in March of 1984.

### Follow the Leader

The Taj Mahal, alpine camping, pack ponies and porters, hiking, photography, 20,000-foot high peaks, subtropical habitats...if you have dreams like these and \$3450 lying around, has KHS member Dr. Robert Waltner ever got a deal for you. He will be leading a summer Himalayan trek in June and July of 1984. In addition to the regular tourist attractions of India, you will be introduced to the plants, animals, and people living between 2-14,000 feet in the west Himalayas. Robert Waltner was born and raised in India, speaks Hindi, and has conducted research in the Himalayas on agamid lizards.

For further information on this exciting opportunity to travel this diverse region of the world with an expert, contact:

Dr. Robert Waltner  
2216 E 51st St South  
Wichita, Kansas 67216

phone:  
(316) 684-0263 (day)  
(316) 524-3016 (night)

### Power to the Pythons

Unprecedented and unrelenting demand has forced the Institute for Herpetological Research into reprinting its ever popular PYTHON POWER t-shirts. These stunning shirts display a full-color silkscreen of a red-phase blood python, with the words "Python Power" surrounding it in black letters. All shirts come with openings for arms and necks. Since the proceeds from the sale of these garments will go to printing a new edition of the well-known Python and Boa Breeding Manual, the donation is tax-deductible. The shirts go for a mere \$12.00 (additional shirts just \$10.00 each) with \$1.50 first-class postage (\$0.75 for each additional shirt). Four or more shirts will be sent UPS for \$4.00 shipping. Specify size when ordering (S, M, L, XL)...that's the size of the shirt, not the size of your python. Order from:

Karen Schroeder, Secretary  
Institute for Herpetological Research  
213 Manly Court  
San Jose, California 95139

### "Snakes of South Vietnam" Reprinted

All right all you herpetobibliophiles out there, here is your chance to acquire a copy of A Field Guide to the Snakes of South Vietnam

if you missed it the first time around. Written by Simon Campden-Main, the original 1970 printing had 114 pages, one plate, and many text figures. It includes a key to species. A detailed review of this book may be found in Copeia 1971(2):376-377 for those of you contemplating purchase of it. It is available for \$9.95 from:

Herpetological Search Service and Exchange  
117 E Santa Barbara Rd.  
Lindenhurst, New York 11757

#### Workshop on Amphibian Larval Biology

A teaching workshop on Amphibian Larval Biology will be held in Norman, Oklahoma, at the 1984 joint meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Herpetologists' League, and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, at the University of Oklahoma July 30, 1984. The workshop is designed as a minicourse for the non-expert on these organisms; no prior experience in herpetology or systematics is presumed. Among the people who may be interested in this workshop are general biologists, graduate students in herpetology (outside of amphibian biologists), freshwater ecologists, developmental biologists and amateur herpetologists. The workshop will include the examination of museum specimens. A syllabus with annotated bibliography will be provided for all those who register. For more information contact:

Richard Wassersug  
Department of Anatomy  
Tupper Medical Building  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3H 4H7 CANADA

#### THE KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY...TEN YEARS TOGETHER

The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Kansas Herpetological Society was held in Lawrence, Kansas on 12-13 November 1983. The site of this historic gathering was the Museum of Natural History of the University of Kansas.

Events began at 12:00 noon on Saturday 12 November with the registration of well over 50 members and guests at Downs Auditorium in the museum. As usual, this meeting was free and open to the general public.

Dr. Philip S. Humphrey, the Director of the Museum of Natural History, delivered the welcoming remarks at 1:00 p.m., following an introduction by KHS President Joseph T. Collins. The first speaker was Louis Guillette, who dealt with aspects of the reproduction of the Kansas lizards Crotaphytus (Collared Lizards) and Eumeces (Skinks). The next talk was by Joseph T. Collins who reported on the distribution and abundance of the Spring Peeper, Hyla crucifer, in the southeastern part of the state.

Following this part of the program was the KHS General Business Meeting and election of officers. KHS Newsletter Editor John Simmons reported that 250 copies each had been printed of newsletters 51, 52 and 53, at a cost of \$562.61 (including mailing expenses). In addition, \$38.81 was spent for dues envelopes, \$130.59 for office expenses (mailing labels, staples, etc.) and \$38.86 on miscellaneous other expenses, leaving a balance of \$387.36 in the KHS treasury.

The officers of the Kansas Herpetological Society for 1984 will be as follows:

PRESIDENT -- John Fraser  
PRESIDENT-ELECT -- Louis Guillette  
PAST-PRESIDENT -- Joseph Collins  
SECRETARY/TREASURER -- Larry Miller  
EDITOR -- John Simmons

Following the election of officers, the group gathered for the traditional mass photographic encounter session, this year on the stage of the auditorium owing to the inclement weather raging outside.

Peter Gray was the next speaker, reporting on Strecker's Chorus Frog, Pseudacris streckeri, in southern Kansas. He was followed by the main speaker of the meeting, the famed Curator of Herpetology at the Dallas Zoo in Dallas, Texas, the inestimable James "Bufo" Murphy. He spoke on husbandry of reptiles in zoos, illustrating the lecture with a multitude of color slides of herps. Murphy discussed the captive breeding of an impressive array of reptiles, including such unusual forms as an albino rattlesnake which has scales growing backwards over half the body.

The afternoon ended with the traditional "Bring your best color slides" slide show. Participants were Byron Berger, Brad May, Ray Loraine, Joseph Collins, Paul Martin, Jeff Burkhart, and Matt Rand.

Exciting, fun-filled KHS activities resumed full force at 7:00 p.m. in the Big Eight Room of the Kansas Union with a beer social and auction. An eager crowd found many, many great bargains among the donated items. Auctioneering duties were superbly handled by Kelly Irwin and Joseph Collins. The auction netted \$264 for the depleted KHS treasury.

Sunday morning, 13 November, a slightly bleary-eyed crowd again arrived at the Museum of Natural History, this time to hear Jeffery T. Burkhart speaking on the Green Toad, Bufo debilis, and its occurrence in western Kansas. He was followed by the always entertaining Kelly J. Irwin who discussed the Alligator Snapping Turtle, Macroclemys temmincki, and by Raymond K. Loraine describing the status of the Cave Salamander, Eurycea lucifuga, in southeastern Kansas. The next speaker

was Larry Miller, who covered the Red-Spotted Toad, Bufo punctatus, in Barber County.

The crowd was then treated to a rare tour of the research area of the Division of Herpetology of the Museum of Natural History, led by Ray Loraine.

Returning again to the auditorium, the next event was an extravaganza of color slides set to music covering the first ten years of KHS meetings, field trips, and assorted members activities. The majority of the color slides used in this production were taken by Larry Miller, Gene Trott, and Joseph Collins. Additional photographs were supplied by Linda Ford and John Simmons, and the entire show was produced by Irving Street for Barking Frog Productions.

The last speaker was John E. Simmons who presented slides of a wide variety of wildlife of the Llanos of Venezuela, especially the turtles (Podocnemis vogli) and caimans (Caiman crocodilus). The photographs were all taken by the late Scott J. Maness, a naturalist who worked in the llanos for several years.

Following some concluding remarks by Joseph T. Collins and John Fraser, the meeting came to an end. This was certainly one of the most successful KHS events ever, made possible by the efforts of many different people. The Kansas Herpetological Society extends its thanks to the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas; Joseph T. Collins, Ray Loraine, John Simmons, Kelly Irwin, and Larry Miller; Audio/Visual Services of the University of Kansas; and Barking Frog Productions.

#### BOURBON COUNTY FIELD TRIP WELL ATTENDED AND SUCCESSFUL

The weekend of 16-18 September 1983 was the Fall KHS Field Trip, and it was a successful adventure for those who attended. Members and their families began arriving the evening of the 16th at the camping area located at Bourbon State Fishing Lake.

The first evening was spent visiting, setting up camp, and collecting near the lake. One of the first animals found was a brightly colored Copperhead. It was collected by Kelly Irwin.

The KHS members were joined by several members of the Emporia Chapter of the Audubon Society on Saturday. Much of Saturday was spent turning rocks and road hunting. Members spread out over much of the Allen-Bourbon County area, as well as traveling to Neosho County, parts of Crawford County, and Cherokee County.

No herps were collected in Crawford County, but several cave salamanders were observed by Larry Miller and Ronnie Morris when they visited Schermerhorn Cave in southeast Cherokee County.

The amphibians and reptiles collected in Allen, Bourbon, and Neosho counties were as follows:

#### ALLEN COUNTY, KANSAS

Common Snapping Turtle, Chelydra serpentina serpentina  
Ornate Box Turtle, Terrapene ornata ornata

Eastern Collared Lizard, Crotaphytus collaris collaris  
Western Slender Glass Lizard, Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus

Flathead Snake, Tantilla gracilis  
Red-sided Garter Snake, Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis  
Diamondback Water Snake, Nerodia rhombifera rhombifera

BOURBON COUNTY, KANSAS

Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Acris crepitans blanchardi  
Gray Treefrog, Hyla chrysoscelis-Hyla versicolor complex  
Plains Leopard Frog, Rana blairi  
Bullfrog, Rana catesbeiana

Common Snapping Turtle, Chelydra serpentina serpentina  
Three-toed Box Turtle, Terrapene carolina triunguis  
Ornate Box Turtle, Terrapene ornata ornata  
Western Painted Turtle, Chrysemys picta belli

Eastern Collared Lizard, Crotaphytus collaris collaris  
Five-lined Skink, Eumeces fasciatus  
Great Plains Skink, Eumeces obsoletus  
Prairie-lined Racerunner, Cnemidophorus sexlineatus  
Western Slender Glass Lizard, Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus

Flathead Snake, Tantilla gracilis  
Yellow Bellied Racer, Coluber constrictor constrictor  
Bullsnake, Pituophis melanoleucus sayi  
Prairie King Snake, Lampropeltis calligaster calligaster  
Common King Snake, Lampropeltis getulus  
Red-sided Garter Snake, Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis  
Texas Brown Snake, Storeria dekayi texana  
Northern Water Snake, Nerodia sipedon sipedon  
Copperhead, Agkistrodon contortrix

NEOSHO COUNTY, KANSAS

Eastern Collared Lizard, Crotaphytus collaris collaris  
Ornate Box Turtle, Terrapene ornata ornata  
Massasauga, Sistrurus catenatus

--Larry Miller  
524 North Osage Street  
Caldwell, Kansas 67022

Copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix) from Bourbon County, Kansas.  
Photo by Ronnie Morris.



#### HERPETOLOGICAL COLLECTING IN SUMNER COUNTY KANSAS

On 15 May 1983 my father, Max Crampton, and I went reptile hunting in Sections 15 and 16, Township 35 S, Range 3 W, ca. 2 km SW of Caldwell, Kansas. The land is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dave Williams. We caught several lizards and snakes during the 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. time period.

Once we arrived, we started looking. We weren't there ten minutes when my dad discovered a Prairie-lined Racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis) but it was too fast and got away. After a while, I lifted a rock which had another one under it. It just layed there, so I picked him up and put him in my jar.

A little later on we came to a large rock. My dad lifted it and there was a Blackhead Snake (Tantilla nigriceps) and a Prairie-lined Racerunner. We put them in the jar and kept them.

As we walked northward we saw a piece of tin. We lifted it and came up with a Southern Prairie Skink (Eumeces septentrionalis obtusirostris) but it's tail came off after we caught it.



A little later we caught two Eastern Earless Lizards (Holbrookia maculata perspicua) and a Coachwhip (Masticophis flagellum).

--Linc Crampton  
Rt. 2  
Caldwell, Kansas 67022

KHS BRINGS YOU NEWS OF THE WORLD AND BEYOND

Prey, Predator Switch Roles

Everyone knows that toads eat flies. But scientists mucking around a small Arizona pond find that some flies reverse the scenerio by eating toads first.

Scientists at Cornell University say they've found the first evidence of a reversal in the usual toad-eats-fly pattern.

Larvae of large horseflies found in the mud of an Arizona pond set a unique trap for passing toads and manage to get some of the toads who would have later gotten them, according to a report to be published today in Science magazine.

Drs. Thomas Eisner and Daniel Aneshansley of Cornell, and graduate student Stephen Nowicki, said they decided to investigate the unusual phenomenon because no evidence of such a role reversal has been published before.

Nowicki said in a telephone interview that he and Eisner stumbled upon the role reversal in August 1982 while filming a naturalist documentary near Portal, a town in Cochise County.

They saw thousands of young spadefoot toads, formally called Scaphiopus multiplicatus, emerging from a pond and congregating on the muddy shores.

Rodger Jackman of South Devon, England, a cameraman for the British Broadcasting Co., first noticed that some of the small toads appeared trapped in the mud, and were dead or dying, Nowicki said.

"When we attempted to pull fresh carcasses from the mud with forceps," said the report, "we always felt a counterpull, which persisted until almost the moment of extrication of the toads. The predator remained concealed below the surface and seemed capable of quick evasive burrowing."

Digging into the mud, the scientists found the large, grublike larvae of the horsefly Tabanus punctifer. Both the larva and the toads, which had just emerged as adults from their tadpole stage, were about the same size -- roughly three-quarters of an inch long.

The researchers found that the larvae bury themselves in mud with only their mouths exposed. When an unsuspecting insect or small toad comes by, a larva anchors itself into the prey with two, large tooth-like mandibles and kill by draining out body fluids.

Nowicki said victims can't pull away because the larvae expand their bodies and become firmly affixed to the mud.

--Lawrence Journal-World, 30 October 1983  
(submitted by John E. Simmons, Lawrence, Kansas)

### Sheriff Searches for Missing 14-Foot King Cobra

Elbert, Colo. -- Sheriff George Yarnell says he killed a lot of rattlesnakes when he was a kid. He also says a 14-foot king cobra is not "your run-of-the-mill" poisonous snake.

Yarnell and deputies recently went to the rural ranch of Jerry L. Colyer, 28, and his wife, Pamela, 40. They found the bodies of the couple, presumed dead about two weeks, in a car parked atop a hill not far from the ranch house. A hose ran from the car's exhaust to the interior.

In the car was a note that said, "The king is loose."

"We knew they kept some snakes at their home as a hobby, so we went over there," Yarnell said.

They found 20 snakes, most of them poisonous, and several lizards, a tarantula and a European fire-bellied toad. The snakes included several species of python, a boa constrictor, a coral snake, an African puff adder and four rattlesnakes.

But they did not find a 14-foot king cobra and they did not search.

"I might be dumb, but I'm not stupid," Yarnell said yesterday.

"That thing can strike two-thirds of its length, about nine feet. That's a long ways. So you don't just barge into a room looking for it. We're being pretty careful."

Snake experts from the Denver Zoo and the University of Colorado searched some of the ranch buildings Tuesday and resumed the search yesterday. Yarnell said a supply of cobra antivenin was stocked, just in case.

"I grew up in eastern Colorado and killed a lot of rattlesnakes when I was a kid," the sheriff said. "But this isn't your run-of-the-mill snake."

--University Daily Kansan, 13 October 1983

### Cobra Found After Owners' Suicides

Elbert, Colo. -- King Tut, a 14-foot king cobra loose for a week on a ranch near the eastern Colorado town of Elbert, has been found alive and well under a bed.

"Gentleman, we have a king cobra," reptile expert Bob Elshire announced calmly to his two assistants upon the snake's discovery.

The snake's owners, Jerry L. Colyer, 28, and his wife, Pamela, 40, were found dead from carbon monoxide poisoning in their parked car on Oct. 6.

On the day of the double suicide, Mrs. Colyer, who raised snakes in her bedroom, left a note that said, "The king is loose."

Elshire discovered the cobra in the bedroom.

--University Daily Kansan, 17 October 1983

## Two-Headed Snake Has Split Personality

Miami -- A two-headed water snake has become the reigning reptile at the Miami Serpentarium, munching six goldfish at a time with both heads, although it sometimes seems confused as to whether its pair is better than one.

The West Virginia reptile, appropriately named Hatfield and McCoy, has been furnished with a house and private swimming pool in its new Florida home.

The serpentarium bought the striped "siamese snake" for \$50 from a teen-ager who discovered the 6-inch-long wriggler three years ago while sunbathing beside Campbell's Creek, near Charleston, W.Va.

Now, say reptile keepers, Hatfield and McCoy catches food with both mouths and "he's doing just great."

"He's been eating goldfish for three years this month," said Bill Haast, director of the serpentarium, a tourist attraction and venom production center. "He's almost 3 feet long now."

Hatfield and McCoy, named after West Virginia's infamous feuding clans, lives in "a very fancy little home with its own swimming pool and plants," said Nancy Harrell of the serpentarium, who carried the snake from the Mountain State to Miami in a cold-cream jar.

Hatfield and McCoy is a voracious eater, munching six goldfish at a time with both heads in action, said Ms. Harrell. "It's like two individuals, and it just depends on who wants to go for the fish."

Haast said the snake seems confused as to whether two heads are truly better than one.

"The left one, I would say, is dominant. If he lies relaxed, the left head lies more in line with the vertebrae. But both tongues come out. And if you cover one head, the other one can see.

"They have a problem sometimes, though, if he's crawling, because they might want to go different ways. You can see a kind of vibration being set up, as if there's a tug of war going on."

But both heads are somewhat bashful, Ms. Harrell said.

"When he was very young, he was very shy. Still is," she said. "He doesn't like to eat in front of people."

--Lawrence Journal-World, 13 September 1983  
(submitted by B. Wood, Gnomewood, Kansas)

## KU Museum Book Looks At Florida

A new book from the Kansas University Museum of Natural History discusses the history of environmental degradation in southern Florida and its effect on native amphibians and reptiles.

"The Ecological Impact of Man on the South Florida Herpetofauna" was written by Larry David Wilson of the department of intercurricular studies at Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Fla., and Louis Porras of the department of herpetology at Hogle Zoological Gardens, Salt Lake City, Utah.

The authors document and verify the introduction and establishment of 25 alien amphibians and reptiles into the southern portion of the

state, and discredit rumors of introduced species previously thought to occur in southern Florida.

It is available from the publications secretary of the Museum of Natural History.

--Lawrence Journal-World, 5 September 1983

### BOOK REVIEWS

Smith, Hobard M. and Edmund D. Brodie, Jr. 1982. Reptiles of North America, A Guide to Field Identification Golden Press, Western Publishing Co. 240 pp, color illustrations, \$6.95 paper, \$9.95 hardbound.

So there's no doubt later, this is a "rave" review. On a scale of one to ten, I give this book a 9.5. The only negative thing I can say about it is that a few (very few) taxa were not illustrated (Anarbylus, and Anniella pulchra nigra). Sidestepping metaphysics, let's just call 9.5 a perfect book.

The text is clear and adult. We get descriptions of scales, habits and habitats (even elevations) that are absent from many field guides. The general discussion of reptilian biology, unusual in being placed at the back of the book, is clear and concise, and it says just enough for a field observer.

The book is also an excellent introductory book for the young novice, providing a stepping stone to deeper appreciation of herpetofauna. Five natural history museums are cited as sources of further information, with the University of Kansas first on the list. The bibliography includes general and introductory works.

Perhaps the clarity of the text is to be expected, Dr. Smith having worked on an earlier Golden Press book on reptiles and amphibians. It certainly follows the clear authority of his Handbook of the Lizards (1946, Comstock).

The illustrations were done by David Dennis, and bear a remarkable similarity to those of Robert Stebbins. Dennis's talent preserves the artistic beauty of reptiles as living entities, and we eagerly await any further work he may publish. Only the drawing of Klauberina didn't look quite right to me, but many of his illustrations (pages 83, 91, 139, 151, 155 and more) look like high-quality photographs. These illustrations will leave little question of identity when compared with live specimens.

The book is printed on high quality paper, with color on virtually every page. Range maps are in color, eliminating the confusion of crossed cross-hatching and the like. Considering the problem most field guides pose (illustrations one page, descriptions another...no, wrong description, try again...oh, no, the wind...) this book is a breath of cool refreshing air, a FIELD guide, not a reference to use back at the car, no unclear or poorly focused pictures. Everything pertinent to a

given creature on the same page. Indeed, this is THE field guide. Buy it. Enjoy it. Look at the pictures, then take it with you when you go herping. Then buy a second copy to leave at home for the sheer beauty of the book.

Now, if we can get this same team to do a field guide to the reptiles of Mexico...

--Robert G. Sprackland  
P.O. Box 202  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Freiberg, Marcos. 1982. The Snakes of South America. TFH Publications, Neptune, N.J. 189 pages, numerous black-and-white and color photographs, \$12.95

This is a book guaranteed to confuse all. As one of the TFH editors explained to me in 1976 (while I was seeing how my TFH book was doing), there was simply nothing that dealt with South American snakes, and since many of the pets came from there, and Dr. Freiberg just happened to have this manuscript (sort of) with loads of photos, why not publish a book? This same thinking could conceivably bring us such exciting future titles as The Lizards of Scotland.

The strong point this book has (and one a true serpent devotee would use to justify the purchase price) is the variety of snakes depicted in color that I find nowhere else in print. The numerous coral and false coral snakes are beautifully presented. Most of the color prints are good, though many are out of focus, or poorly illuminated. For those familiar with TFH books, rest assured that the bulk of the photos are new, not to be found in their other serpent volumes.

But then we come to the text. Nothing new. Once more we are told that snakes can be traced to the Cretaceous, are derived from lizards, have elastic jaws, etc. Enough! Americans going south to seek snakes will in all likelihood go well equipped with lore concerning reptilian biology. Thus, the whole introductory section becomes superfluous.

After a cursory review of indigenous families, the author presents a key to South American snake genera, reminding the readers that "many genera described from this continent are poorly known and based on doubtfully significant characters." After the 22-page key follows a 38-page checklist, condensed from Peters and Orejas-Miranda's 1970 Catalogue of the Neotropical Squamata. The author states that "an effort has been made to add some of the new species and subspecies described since 1970...but surely many have been missed" (page 85). As such, it is not much of a revision, and thus limited in usefulness to taxonomic researchers.

Finally, chapter five addresses the snakes themselves, their biology. Fifty species are discussed, emphasizing the most familiar species. Again, for those seeking new information, forget it. We are going to learn yet more about the boa constrictor, anaconda, coral

snake, and bushmaster. In fact, most of the 50 descriptions are so brief as to be comical. One example:

Liophis anomalus

[common names and size given] Habits: This timid species feeds on frogs, toads, worms, insects, and spiders.

Liophis jaegeri

[as above]

Habits: Similar to the previous species.

I was left feeling less than enlightened on distinguishing Liophis anomalus from Liophis jaegeri.

The 13-page bibliography is adequate to allow further delving into South America's herpetofauna, and in fact seems rather complete.

As I stated earlier, this book is confusing. There is no mention of snakes as pets, and TFH is the primary publisher of pet books. It is obviously not aimed at the beginner, for whom keys and checklists of species are even more of a bore than it is for the researcher who must endure such things. And while the photos are enjoyable, it is not primarily a picture book. I'm not sure WHO the audience is for this, though there does seem to be a little something for everyone.

Over the past several years, TFH has published numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations in illustrated book form, these dealing with fishes (TFH is Tropical Fish Hobbyist, for those of you who may have forgotten that glass containers can hold water as well as snakes...) and apparently successfully enough to stay on the in-print lists. Perhaps Snakes of South America is a foray into the herpetological realm of similar stature. If so, let us hope they find a way to integrate text and photos a bit better. Perhaps they just couldn't get access to the photos unless they published the text.

Hey, I happen to have some GREAT photos of the toads of Ocean County, New Jersey...

--Robert George Sprackland  
P.O. Box 202  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

RECENT LITERATURE OF INTEREST

Dry Times

Gibbons, J.W., J.L. Greene, and J.D. Congdon. 1983. Drought-related responses of aquatic turtle populations. *Journal of Herpetology* 17(3):242-246.

Times of drought are extremely disruptive to animal populations, especially periods of prolonged and severe drought, yet we don't know a lot about just how different species react during these times of duress. Long-term studies being conducted in South Carolina provided the authors of this research paper the opportunity to see how populations of aquatic turtles reacted to drought conditions in 1980-1981.

They observed, trapped, captured or recaptured 6003 turtles of five common species: Pond Slider (Pseudemys scripta), Cooter (Pseudemys floridana), Chicken Turtle (Deirochelys reticularia), Mud Turtle (Kinosternon subrubrum), and the Stinkpot (Sternotherus odoratus).

The five species reacted differently to the drought conditions. The two Pseudemys emigrated in greater numbers than usual and females laid fewer eggs. Sternotherus and Deirochelys did not desert their aquatic habitat, but did lay fewer eggs. Things did not seem to change at all for Kinosternon, the most terrestrial of the species studied. The authors discuss in some detail the ecological differences in the reactions of the five species of turtles considered.

#### A Class Act

White, J. and D.L. Marcellini. 1983. HERFlab: a herpetology learning center. *Herpetological Review* 14(3):62-65.

This article describes an intriguing new "family classroom" in the Reptile House of the New York Zoological Park, where zoo visitors can go to learn about herpetology. The materials available cover all age groups. There is a library, simple games and puzzles, exhibits, and activity boxes. The activity boxes teach about live animals, bones, eggs, territoriality, reptile keepers, and so forth.

#### Dancing With Mr. D

Gillingham, J.C., C.C. Carpenter, and J.B. Murphy. 1983. Courtship, male combat and dominance in the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, Crotalus atrox. *Journal of Herpetology* 17(3):265-270.

Courtship of Diamondbacks was first reported in 1929, and most of the papers since then have been relatively brief. This paper, however, is based on observations made from 1974-1979 on captive animals, including analysis of some 16 mm and super-8 mm movie film of the events.

The researchers found that courtship was always initiated by the male, who would approach the female with rapid tongue flicks. The general pattern was then one of tail-whipping or tail-waving by the female, after which the male put his chin on the female's back while engaged in head-jerking movements. This culminated in the male looping his body over the female's and placing his tail under the female's tail, leading to copulation. The copulating snakes moved very little, and remained joined for 21-28 hours.

Combat also began with tongue flicking by the approaching male, but then both males would raise their heads 30-50 cm and sway back and forth, until one snake hooked his neck around his opponent and attempted

to force his head to the ground. Eventually, one of the battling serpents would give up and crawl away.

The authors compare their observations to those by others, and there are some drawings of various phases of courtship.

--Irving Street  
Barking Frog Productions  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

### FAN FARE

It was just a year ago when I first went to the Kansas State Fair in lovely downtown Hutchinson to represent the Museum of Natural History of the University of Kansas. After the heat, the crowds, an overdose of corndogs, a thousand repetitions of the same questions from the unwashed masses, I vowed never to return. The other stalwart representative that weekend, KHS member Rose Etta Kurtz, had tried to warn me of the vast number of rather interesting inquiries we would encounter there, she being the veteran of many such a State Fair weekend. The results of our entirely unscientific poll of people who stopped by the booth appeared in KHS Newsletter No. 49:17-17. Despite my best intentions, I again found myself at the State Fair this year, along with Rose Etta, the snakes, and the crowds. In the interest of the perpetuation of Kansas reptile-lore trivia, we offer the following supplement to that previous article, some observations from Kansas State Fair 1983.

This year, for the record, we chose to take along an Eastern Hognose Snake (Heterodon platyrhinos), and a Bullsnake (Pituophis melanoleucus sayi) for people to touch (how would you like to be touched by 2,000 sweaty people who smelled like cotton candy?), with a Diamondback Water Snake (Nerodia rhombifera rhombifera) and a Western Ribbon Snake (Thamnophis proximus) for viewing pleasure.

What we learned this year may be summed up as follows:

1. People still thought that the Garter Snake was a "Gardner Snake". Perhaps the word garter is going to disappear from our vocabulary, or maybe Thamnophis really is good for your tomatoes.
2. Several people listened politely to my explanations about Cottonmouth Water Moccasins vs. Water Snakes in Kansas, examined the snake and the offered photographs, and walked away totally unconvinced.
3. A few people asked what the paper towels in the snake's cages were for.
4. Snakes were reported to feel like rocks, corn-on-the-cob, to feel soft, knobby, like rubber, like the bottom of a rug, and "like D.J. without fur" (our condolences to D.J. about the loss of the fur).



5. There were several questions about the reputed interbreeding between rattlesnakes and bullsnakes.
6. The only bullsnake-swallows-egg story this year involved a marble egg which, we were assured, became pitted over the years from the stomach acids of various bullsnakes that swallowed and then regurgitated it. They knew it was swallowed and regurgitated frequently because it kept disappearing and turning up in another part of the barn.
7. Many people wanted value judgements to justify nature ("Those water snakes, are they good for anything?")
8. And lastly, some of our favorite (among the printable) quotes and conversations of the weekend:
  - (looking at a photograph of a salamander) "That ain't no snake, thats, uh, uh, uh..." (walks away).
  - (looking at Hognose snake) "That looks like one of those snub-nose rattlesnakes they got down in Oklahoma. They got rattlesnakes with no rattles."
  - (looking at snake skeleton) "I thought they gummed their prey to death. I didn't know they had any teeth."
  - "I blew the tail off a Diamondback, took me 15 trys to line up the car right..." I suggested that he might think about that next time he was killing mice in his hay barn. He was not amused.
  - One individual told us their mother-in-law was attacked by a gardner snake which wrapped itself around her ankle right there on the front porch. It proceeded to bite her on her big toe, and that caused her to go into a daze. The dazed state was so bad that they had to give her a penicillin shot. Did she get better then? No, came the reply, "she's still in a daze".
  - (looking at a photograph of a salamander) "What kind of snake is this?"  
 "It isn't a snake, its a salamander."  
 "Yuck. I hate salamanders."

We were somewhat suprised at the variety of questions and comments this year that had not been voiced previously. After last year, I thought we had heard it all. We were also pleased that a number of people stopped by to tell us they saw our exhibit last year, and enjoyed seeing the snakes and chatting with us again. As happened last year, a lot of the people who stopped by recognized the ecological and even economic importance of snakes.

The Museum of Natural History intends to keep showing a few snakes each year at the Kansas State Fair. The exhibit never fails to draw a crowd, and people are so fascinated by snakes, we have an unusual opportunity to talk to them about reptiles, and hopefully enlighten some of the visitors. It is amazing how many people have touched scaly, slimy, smelly fish, but won't touch a clean, dry snake. Rose Etta and I also think that the questions and comments at the exhibit tell us a lot about the way many people in the state view reptiles and amphibians, which should be considered in attempts to educate the public about them.

By the way, after getting through the entire weekend, while we were packing up, of course the water snake bit me.

--John E. Simmons  
Museum of Natural History  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

### A TRIP TO THE "TRANS-PECOS"

I left my home in Fredonia, Kansas on 10 May 1983 on what would be a ten day visit to the rugged terrain of Southwestern Texas. Departing Fredonia on K-96 heading west, I stopped in the Flint Hills of extreme western Greenwood County and lifted many of the flat limestone rocks along the edge of the highway. I observed many of the common herps of our state there, these being the following: Common Kingsnake (Lampropeltis getulus) Prairie Ringneck Snake (Diadophis punctatus arnyi), Flathead Snake (Tantilla gracilis), Great Plains Skink (Eumeces obsoletus), Prairie-lined Racerunner (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis), and Eastern Collared Lizard (Crotaphytus collaris collaris).

Leaving this area, I proceeded to Newton. Having made plans well ahead for this trip, Brad Anderson and I had decided to use his 1978 Mazda GLC car for this adventure. We decided to share expenses equally.

The next morning, 11 May 1983, Brad and I left as the clock read 6:23 a.m. in downtown Newton, and headed south. Once we got on I-35 at Wichita, time seemed to be moving well. Crossing the Oklahoma/Texas state line at 12:12 p.m., we stopped in Gainesville. Continuing south, we passed around Fort Worth at 1:30 p.m. on I-820, heading west on I-20 to Abilene.

We went to visit a friend of Brad's in Abilene, Don Williams. We delivered 100 live mice and saw his impressive collection of live reptiles. After a good talk with Don, we left his house at 6:30 p.m. and proceeded south on US-277 towards our destination. Arriving at San Angelo, we finally noticed the gas guage was nearly on empty, and realized we would have to go into the city for fuel. Reluctantly, we headed into the middle of town in search of a Texaco or Phillips 66 station. After passing by two closed Texaco stations and not seeing a Phillips 66 sign anywhere, it became quite clear that we had lost at least 45 minutes of driving time touring this "enchanted city". We finally bought gas at a convenience store, and trekking further south turned off US-277 and on to TX-189 at 10:30 p.m. At 10:45 p.m. we saw our first Texas herp, a DOR Western Coachwhip (Masticophis flagellum testaceus). Continuing south and west, we turned on to TX-163 at 11:05 p.m., heading towards Juno and Comstock more slowly. At 11:20 p.m. a juvenile Western Diamondback (Crotalus atrox) appeared in front of our headlights, just south of Mayfield. At 12:20 a.m., another Western Diamondback was observed, this one 3-4 feet in length.

We arrived in Comstock around 12:45 a.m. and turned west on US-90 towards Langtry. At 1:00 a.m. another juvenile Western Diamondback was seen just before we reached Langtry. We pulled into Langtry at 1:30

a.m. Though tired, we decided to tough it out and drive around in hopes of observing some more of the local herpetofauna making nocturnal moves. At 2:00 a.m. we found a DOR Black-necked Garter Snake (Thamnophis cyrtopsis) 3 miles W of Langtry on US-90. Back in Langtry at 3:00 a.m. we went directly to a small trailer we had rented and immediately fell into a corpse-like sleep, after more than 20 hours of driving, consuming vast amounts of fast foods and filled with great anticipation.

On Thursday, 12 May, I awoke and noticed my watch read 11:05 a.m. Shortly after noon, we drove over to Seminole Canyon State Park and paid \$2.00 each to use the shower facilities. Leaving the park, we went to Comstock and ate at a small cafe on the west side of town. Back in Langtry at 4:00 p.m., the air temperature at Chamberlin's Service Station read 98 degrees F, so it was back to the trailer to catch a couple of hours of rest. We left Langtry at 7:00 p.m. and began driving north, up the Pandale dirt road. At 8:00 p.m. a juvenile (12 inch long) Western Diamondback was spotted, crossing the dirt slowly. A DOR adult Regal Ringneck Snake (Diadophis punctatus regalis) was found 1.5 miles east of Langtry on the side of US-90 at 9:00 p.m. Air temperature had dropped to 82 F. A juvenile Western Diamondback was seen 2.5 miles east of Langtry at 12:30 a.m. As we pulled in to the trailer, it was 3:00 a.m. and the air temperature was at 78 F.

On Friday, 13 May, the mercury at noon was already 95 F. Around 1:15 p.m., while driving on US-90, Brad spotted a Central Texas Whipsnake (Masticophis taeniatus ornatus) between Comstock and Del Rio. After stopping and briefly admiring the streamlined appearance of the whipsnake, we watched as it moved rapidly through the prickly pears, ocotillo and yuccas in the immediate area. Later in the afternoon we found a DOR Mountain Patchnosed Snake (Salvadora grahamiae grahamiae) 12-14 inches long, between Comstock and Del Rio at 4:30 p.m.

Back at the trailer in Langtry, we sat in our reclining lawn chairs and basked contentedly as the Texas sun began to drop in the west. We left at 8:00 p.m. and proceeded to Comstock to cruise TX-163 (better known to most Southwest herpers as the "Juno Road") in hopes of observing something different. At 8:45 p.m. we saw and ran over the first snake of the night, a 2.5 foot Black-necked Garter Snake (Thamnophis cyrtopsis) about 14 miles north of Comstock. Briefly looking at this custom made DOR, Brad's foot became much lighter on the accelerator, and we continued north at 15-20 mph. At 9:40 p.m. we came across a sensational find, a juvenile (12 inch long) Trans-Pecos Copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix pictigaster) laying peacefully on the highway. After admiring its coloration and pattern, we moved slowly onward and a short distance ahead encountered a pair of headlights moving at or near our speed. The car stopped at the edge of the highway and we readily became acquainted with David Doherty and his wife, Houston residents, both just doing like us, driving in hopes of observing the herpetofauna of the area. David revealed to us that they had just seen one DOR and two live Mottled Rock Rattlesnakes (Crotalus lepidus lepidus) one adult and two juveniles, just minutes before meeting us. These were found 10-15 miles north of Comstock between 9:30 and 9:55 p.m. After several minutes of discussion, we went our separate directions and at 10:15 p.m. another set of slow moving headlights approached from the south and stopped beside us. Driving was Brian Hubbs of Panorama City, California. Brian reported that he had thus far seen no live or DOR snakes of any form, but had only arrived at this

portion of the Juno Road in the last 15 minutes. After an enjoyable, yet brief talk we set out on our separate routes. Suddenly, a very light colored slithering body appeared several yards in front of us. We jumped out quickly and identified this serpent as a juvenile Trans-Pecos Rat Snake (Elaphe subocularis). The time was 10:40 p.m., and we continued on anxiously. Yet another body appeared on the road at 11:00 p.m., this being a 10 inch DOR Mountain Patchnosed Snake. Five minutes later, a four foot long DOR Western Coachwhip was in front of the lights, and 15 minutes later we both reached near orgasmic peak as a 3.5 foot Baird's Rat Snake (Elaphe obsoleta bairdi) was found contentedly reclining on the pavement. Brad emitted some non-English shrieks and yells of delight as we admired the beauty of this rare snake. This greatly strengthened our will to continue driving.

At 12 midnight, a 13 inch long Texas Night Snake (Hypsiglena torquata jani) was seen moving slowly across the asphalt. Another very light figure was spotted up the road and was found to be a 12-14 inch long Trans-Pecos Rat Snake, at 12:20 a.m. Everything seemed to be moving, and at 1:30 a.m. a new snake appeared, a 5-6 inch long Western Hook-nosed Snake (Gyalopion canum). Our last snake for the night on Juno Road was a 14 inch Western Diamondback, 8 miles north of Comstock.

Leaving Comstock headed slowly west, we made a right turn on to TX-1024 (Pandale paved road) and proceeded northwest slowly. After covering the first 3 miles, we turned around and started back. A brilliant tri-colored Texas Long-nosed Snake (Rhinocheilus lecontei tessellatus) was seen moving just 1 mile from US-90 at 2:25 a.m. Continuing towards Langtry, the final snake for the night was observed, another Western Diamondback on US-90 at 2:35 a.m. We kept driving around the Langtry area until 3:30 a.m. Both of us agreed that this Friday the 13th had been very lucky and most enjoyable for us. The air temperature was 89 F at sunset, and down to 82 F when we parked the Mazda.

Saturday 14 May began at 12:00 noon for Brad and I as a partly cloudy day, with a temperature of 85 F. While Brad drove to several nearby areas to examine cactus, Brian Hubbs and I drove down to the cliffs at the south edge of Langtry overlooking the Rio Grande. We followed a primitive trail at an angle down the cliffs and then into dense willows, canes and countless other plant forms. Finally, we reached the river bank and looked across at the Mexico side. Time for a cool dip was at hand. Brian even had a surf board for this festive occasion. The river had a fairly strong current, so Brian did not attempt to paddle the surf board more than half way across the river. It looked as though the river was approximately 150 yards wide where we were. Before we left, I took the board over to the Mexican side and crawled up on the bank on what appeared to be a beaver slide. I didn't sit there too long though, as thoughts of some other creature, such as an alligator, coming out of this mysterious path going through a dense stand of bamboo up the bank crossed my mind.

That evening, we elected to again drive only the Juno Road, having a strong incentive from the night before. Leaving Comstock at 8:30 p.m., with the air temperature already down to 75 F, we were both uncertain about observing much. We were right in this assessment, as we saw only one snake all evening, a 4 foot long DOR Central Texas Whipsnake at 9:00 p.m. With the air temperature running a steady 10 or more degrees cooler than the night before, nothing seemed to be moving.

We were back at the trailer at 12:00 a.m. when it was down to 68 F.

Sunday 15 May, we were up at 9:30 a.m. and decided that it was time to venture into Mexico to enjoy our daylight hours. We had originally decided to just walk across the border instead of trying to drive. After some discussion with Brad when we arrived in Del Rio, I convinced him that the traffic situation in Mexico was adaptable as far as I was concerned. He reluctantly gave me the wheel of the Mazda, which I eagerly took. Immediately after crossing the very narrow International Bridge, we found ourselves in downtown Ciudad Acuna. After parking and visiting many of the countless stores, I finally purchased a hand-woven multi-colored blanket. The 60-70 year-old Mexican woman in this particular store was no different than 99% of merchants in this area, in that any price for almost anything was negotiable. Back at the car, we decided that since we were already this far, we would visit one of the most famous sections of Ciudad Acuna, the mile-long string of numerous bars known as "Boys Town". Upon arrival at the first string of bars on both sides of this east-west road, we were just beginning to find out why most individuals either walked in or rode in on horse and buggy style taxis. The street was a maze of protruding rocks and chuckholes up to two feet deep and 3-5 feet in diameter, but we survived. I zig-zagged the Mazda very slowly and deliberately to the east end of this street, turned around, and cautiously drove us out (Brad praying for survival of his car at times, though) of Ciudad Acuna to the U.S. Customs check station, where we then were thoroughly searched by customs agents.

Returning to Langtry, we began driving up the Pandale dirt at 8:00 p.m. We concentrated on driving six miles each direction from Langtry and backtracking. This evening was also very cool (75 F) and seeing no activity the first 1.5 hours, not even a millipede or gecko, I armed myself with Brad's 200,000 candlepower Q-Beam spotlight. I had operated the spotlight for almost one minute, shining the roadside and a rock cut, when I saw a flash of a silver-grey-orange type snake resting horizontally. I was bewildered and only managed to say "Whoa!" to Brad. He asked me what it was, but unable to speak any intelligible English, I set the spotlight down and illuminated the cut weakly with my flashlight, but could not see the body any longer. I frantically grabbed the spotlight again and found the snake still motionless. I jumped out of the car and walked over with my flashlight to the cut and positively identified it as a 15 inch "light phase" Gray-banded Kingsnake (Lampropeltis mexicana alterna), a beautiful inhabitant of the Trans-Pecos region and the first one I had ever seen in its natural habitat. We admired the sub-adult snake and looked at our watches: 9:30 p.m., with an air temperature of 75 F. A little cool, but obviously not for this snake. We continued driving, but did not see another reptile the rest of the night. We were back at the trailer at 12:45 a.m. Brad was bushed, as was I, but I left alone and drove around, observing a few bats in flight and an occasional ring-tail cat on several different rock cuts, and retired back to the trailer at 1:15 a.m.

Monday came quickly, and another very avid herper and long-time friend of ours, John Hollister of San Antonio, met us at the trailer to rival us in blazing the local roads. We set out at 8:50 p.m., eastbound on US-90, while Hollister left westbound on US-90. The air was cooling down fast (80 F at 9:00 p.m. and dropping) and we saw no activity the

first 2 hours. Finally, at 11:00 p.m., 3 miles east of Langtry, on the north side of US-90, we observed a two foot long Great Plains Rat Snake (Elaphe guttata emoryi) moving on a rock cut. At 12:00 midnight, a DOR Western Coachwhip was found four miles west of Langtry. We arrived at the trailer to find John Hollister already retired from driving. He had quit at 11:30 p.m. and had observed the DOR Coachwhip west of town and not a thing else. Outside, the mercury read 76 F at 12:15 a.m.

Tuesday, 17 May, John left at 1:00 p.m. to show us a canyon west of Langtry which had an abundant population of Copperheads. After stopping momentarily at this canyon, we drove on in to Sanderson to have lunch. After eating, we said our goodbyes to Hollister as he took off into the West, destined for Tucson, Arizona. Brad then suggested that we tough it out and drive the "Bend" for the night, to which I agreed, as I was anxious to see it. Upon entering Big Bend National Park at 5:30 p.m., we slowly drove westward across the park, admiring the rugged Chisos Mountains to the south and Christmas Mountains to the north. Leaving the park at 7:15 p.m., we stopped at a small grocery store in Study Butte and indulged in the available junk food.

We proceeded WNW on this scenic route. We found a DOR Mountain Patch-nosed Snake just northwest of Lajitas at 9:30 p.m. We covered 10 more miles and began backtracking. At 11:00 p.m., a 12 inch long Trans-Pecos Rat Snake was spotted crossing the road nine miles east of Lajitas. This snake looked typical in pattern and coloration, but Brad informed me that we were within four miles of the ghost town of Terlingua, where the "blonde phase" of Elaphe subocularis has been found. Arriving at Study Butte, we turned back on to TX-118 and began a steady approach for Alpine, 79 miles to the north. We arrived in Alpine around 1:30 a.m.. Having seen no herps, we proceeded on US-90 in the direction of the trailer in Langtry, 140 miles to the east. Between Sanderson and Dryden, we found two DOR snakes, a juvenile Western Diamondback and a juvenile Texas Long-nosed Snake (Rhinocheilus lecontei tessellatus). Our last find was a three foot Western Diamondback sitting contentedly on the paved shoulder, seven miles west of Pumpville. We arrived at the trailer at 4:25 a.m., satisfied with our excursion through The Bend.

Wednesday, 18 May, we traveled north up Juno Road at 8:45 p.m. Finding one DOR juvenile Western Diamondback at 9:30 p.m., we saw no other reptiles the remainder of the night. We attributed this again to a temperature of 82 F at sunset and 68 F when we quit at 1:45 a.m.

Thursday morning, 19 May, after a hearty breakfast of poparts, coke, and milk, it was time to begin the 900 mile journey back to our homes in the Sunflower State. We took our last look at the trailer we had lived in and at the town that the late Judge Roy Bean had named Langtry as we left at 9:45 a.m. We crossed the Texas/Oklahoma state line at 7:30 p.m., and pulled into Moore, Oklahoma at 10:00 p.m. We phoned up a friend, Stuart Tennyson, and then went over to his home to spend the next 2 hours relating our adventure in Texas, as well as having an enjoyable discussion about Lampropeltis triangulum and mexicana in general.

Leaving Moore at 12:05 a.m., we blazed north on I-35, finally pulling into Newton at 3:45 a.m. Sleep came with no problem.

Recalling some of the events that had taken place during the last week, we concluded that air temperatures were a very crucial factor (in the spring) in being able to road cruise in the Chihuahuan desert and

expect to observe many reptiles in a single night.

I settled expenses with Brad, and we agreed that this past week would be a piece of history for us both that we would always remember and relish. Giving Brad my last thanks and goodbye, I left Newton and 12:00 noon and pulled into my driveway in Fredonia at 2:35 p.m.

--John Fraser  
119 N 15th St.  
Fredonia, Kansas 66736

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Esteemed Editor,

In the KHS Newsletter No. 51, p. 10, I have seen (thanks to a colleague from Western Germany) a book review of our book, Mit Gespaltener Zunge by Mr. Sprackland... My thanks for the friendly review... This book is available in an English version under the title Snakes-Biology, Behavior and Relationship to Man from Exeter Books (Simon & Schuster, New York) distributed by Bookthrift (ISBN 0-89673-110-3).

Sincerely yours,  
Dipl.-Biol. F.J. Obst  
Staatliches Museum für Tierkunde  
Dresden  
Deutsche Demokratische Republik

Esteemed Editor,

Now that the dust has settled upon the doings of the KHS annual meeting and we herpers have again settled into a comatose sort of stupor for another winter, I felt the urge, only briefly, to make one last contribution before the next issue of the newsletter.

In my continuing efforts to examine more closely snakebite statistics in Kansas and in the KHS in particular, I find that snakebites were up in 1983. About 10 occurred within the state that I know of, three-quarters of which were by rattlesnakes. Various accounts describe some of these as "Prairie Rattlers" but were probably massasaugas as the bites occurred well outside of known Crotalus viridis distribution. Two more KHS members suffered from the mistake that "everyone makes." One by a copperhead, the other a massasauga. More people were surprised by the punch that such seemingly inconsequential serpents pack.

The incidence of snakebite being up didn't surprise me, however. During four days on one 6 or 7 acre area, during absolutely perfect weather, we found 88 venomous snakes! Most were copperheads but a large number of Timber Rattlesnakes also showed up, enough to make me very cautious about poking hands beneath rocks. There is something


reassuring about these figures, reassuring in that there are still so many of these marvelous critters out there, frightening in that we all still must realize that we are only human and as such we make mistakes. Reassuring in that apparently no one has died yet this year of snakebite in Kansas.

Well, anyhow, that's the way it is. My tip of the mug to the newsletter staff and to the entire KHS membership is definitely due, it's been a year well done.

Best Wishes,  
 Martin Capron  
 Oxford, Kansas 67119


**SOMETHING WILD!**  
 By Robert F. Clarke, Ph.D.

*Western*  
**HOGNOSE SNAKE**  
*Heterodon nasicus*




THE NAME COMES FROM THE UPTURNED SNOUT, WHICH HELPS IN SECURING ITS FAVORITE PREY- TOADS - THAT ARE USUALLY UNDER COVER IN THE DAYTIME, WHEN THE SNAKE IS ACTIVE.


WHEN STARTLED, THIS ENTIRELY HARMLESS SNAKE ACTS LIKE A COBRA, SPREADING ITS "HOOD" AND STRIKING (BUT WITH THE MOUTH CLOSED!)




IF THE BLUFF FAILS, THE SNAKE "PLAYS DEAD"




THE USUAL HABITAT IS SOFT OR SANDY SOIL



TOADS INFLATE THEMSELVES WITH AIR TO AVOID BEING EATEN - BUT THE HOGNOSE SNAKE HAS A PAIR OF EXTRA-LONG TEETH IN THE REAR OF THE JAW THAT GIVES THE TOAD A "PUNCTURE."



"PUFF ADDER"



MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THIS SNAKE IS POISONOUS - IT IS NOT! SOME EVEN THINK THAT THE BREATH IS VENOMOUS!

A contribution from the Nongame Wildlife Improvement Program  
 Kansas Fish & Game Commission