KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 56

JUNE, 1984

ANNOUNCEMENTS

8th Annual International Herpetological Symposium on Captive Propagation and Husbandry

The Columbus Zoo in Columbus, Ohio, will host the 8th Annual International Herpetological Symposium on Captive Propagation and Husbandry from 17 to 21 July 1984. The week will include presentations of papers, demonstrations of diagnostic veterinary techniques, workshops, zoo tours, displays of herpetological art, photographs, crafts, and books, and several social functions. Registration is $60 ($25 if you present a paper), and includes a copy of the 1984 Proceedings of the symposium. For further information contact:

International Herpetological Symposium
Zoological Consortium, Inc.
13019 Catoctin Furnace Road
Thurmont, Maryland 21788

New Old Turtle Book Available

The book Tortoises, Terrapins and Turtles, is generally regarded as the finest atlas of turtle illustrations ever produced, drawn by the famous nineteenth century artists James de Carle Sowerby and Edward Lear. The short text is by John Edward Gray. Originally published in London in 1872, the book was reprinted by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles in 1970 but sold out some years ago. The new reprint includes an extensive introduction by Ernest E. Williams, of Harvard University, detailing the history of the book and its authors and artists, and equating the scientific names to current nomenclature.

The atlas includes 61 black-and-white plates of turtles, depicting species from all parts of the world. The book measures 8.5 by 11 inches and is clothbound. Copies may be purchased for $20.00 from the SSAR Publictions Secretary, Douglas H. Taylor, Department of Zoology, Miami University, Oxford Ohio 45056. The price includes postage in the USA.

Rattlesnake Bounty Battle

The Wisconsin Herpetological Society has been working for several years to prevent the passage of legislation which would allow local Wisconsin governments to impose a bounty on the timber rattlesnake. So far, we have been successful. However, we feel we may not be able to prevent the passage of this legislation much longer unless we can offer an acceptable alternative solution. Therefore, we are requesting that you, and other herpetological organizations, include the following announcement in your newsletter:

> A small but vocal minority in rural western Wisconsin, and their legislators, have been trying to get a bill passed which would put a bounty on the Timber Rattlesnake. This is the eighth consecutive year that the bill was introduced, and it narrowly missed being passed.
>
> There are three isolated localities in Wisconsin where rattlesnakes are frequently found around human habitation. This is due to the fact that these three small towns were built at the bases of steep bluffs that contain rattlesnake dens.
>
> The Wisconsin Herpetological Society (WHS) has always been in opposition to this bill, but because there is a good chance of this bill being passed in the future, we would like to find a solution to the problem of local nuisance rattlesnake populations, that would not affect non-target populations, as a way of avoiding passage of a bounty bill.
>
> If anyone has any information on how other states or regions effectively deal with problem venomous snakes or other wildlife, we would like to hear about it. We would also like documented information on bounty system abuse. Contact:
>
> Adrian Czajka
> 7118 W Cody Cr.
> Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53223

Volunteers Needed for Caribbean Herpetological Study

Fourteen miles off the coast of Belize (British Honduras) along the coral barrier reef lies a small uninhabited 1-2 acre island known as Wee Wee Caye. Buttonwood, mangroves and coconuts are the principle vegetation types on this tiny island. As far as we know there are no mammals and very few transient birds on the island. The island is, however, covered with boa constrictors of all sizes. We would like some volunteers to help us this summer collect, mark, release, photograph and study this large population of snakes. It is not uncommon to locate 10 or more snakes within 20 minutes. Zoological Research Institute is interested in finding out how such a small island can support such a large population of snakes.

Also in the southern part of Belize lies a belt of very dense tropical rain forest, which herpetologically speaking is virtually

unknown. Every time we have visited this area we have turned up new species and range extensions. ZRI is interested in cataloging and photographing herps from this area for future publication and we need your help. Conservation is of prime importance and no large collections are to be made.

International Zoological Expeditions will be conducting this study for the Zoological Research Institute.

Prerequisites: anyone in good physical health who has an interest in the study of reptiles and amphibians

Costs: approximate costs for vehicles, boats, lodges, hotels, gas, meals, etc. will be about $550.00 per volunteer. Since space will be limited a $200.00 non refundable deposit is necessary. We will coordinate your flight arrangements.

Dates: there will be two sessions, August 7 to 16, and August 16 to 27. It will be possible to join both sessions.

If Interested: please contact IZE, 210 Washington Street, Sherborn, MA 01770 (617)655-1461 as soon as possible.

The Bacterial Diseases of Reptiles

The Institute for Herpetological Research is pleased to announce that its new publication, The Bacterial Diseases of Reptiles, will be available in May 1984. Over 100 pages in length, this book contains the most advanced and up-to-date information on the epidemiology, identification, diagnosis and treatment of these diseases. Information on the newest antibiotics including proper antibiotic selection and drug dosages is included. Identification of simple and resistant forms of the common diseases of reptiles, as well as detailed techniques of treatment of each disease are covered by this book. There are also descriptions of the fundamental husbandry techniques for treating reptile diseases, including preparation and calculation of antibiotics. A section of full color photographs of all of the diseases is also present.

The Bacterial Diseases of Reptiles is available for $20.00, book rate postage included. Please add $1.25 for first class postage. Copies may be obtained by writing to the Institute at P.O. Box 2227, Stanford, California 94305.

OKLAHOMA TO BE SCENE OF RARE COMBINED MEETING

This summer, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Herpetologist's League, and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles will hold a combined meeting, 28 July

to 3 August, in sunny Norman, Oklahoma. The meetings will include the usual vast selection of scientific papers, many of potential interest to KHS members, and also special lectures, a workshop on larval amphibian biology, and symposia on predator-prey relationships, biology of Cnemidophorus, and the breeding and care of endangered amphibians and reptiles. There will also be an art and photography exhibit, commercial exhibits, an extensive display of live herps of Oklahoma (open to photographers), socials, tours, more socials, an auction, etc. Housing will be available on the University of Oklahoma campus or in nearby motels. Preregistration is a mere $35 regular ($25 student), $5 more after 1 July 1984. For information and registration materials, contact:

Dr. Victor H. Hutchinson, Meeting Chairman
Department of Zoology
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma 73019

phone (405) 325-6721

KHS BRINGS YOU NEWS OF THE WORLD AND WAY WAY BEYOND...

U.S. Botanist Laments Loss of Rain Forest

The rapid clearing of the world's tropical forests could cause the extinction of 750,000 species -- about one-sixth of all the forms of plants and creatures on Earth -- during the next generation, a botanist predicts.

Since many of these living things have never been cataloged or even named, said Peter H. Raven, "we're losing them without even knowing they exist."

Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, offered his projections Thursday at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The projections are based, in part, on a United Nations study three years ago that found that 1.1 percent of the world's tropical forests are being cleared each year.

Most of these rain forests are cut or burned to make room for farming. After a few years of agriculture, the soil is worn out, so the land is abandoned and more forest is cut. Other tropical woodlands are razed for their timber or to open land for cattle ranching.

Scientists estimate that there are 4 million to 5 million separate species of plants, animals, and insects throughout the world, Raven said. About 3 million of these live in the tropical forests, where they are highly vulnerable to changes in their surroundings.

"Many tropical organisms are very narrow in their geographic ranges, highly specific in their ecological requirements, seek out unusual foods, conceal themselves in unique situations or mate only at highly specific times in particular places," he said.

More than half of the tropical inhabitants live only in lowland forests, said Raven, and in most areas these forests will be substantially changed or completely gone within about the next 20 years.

Only the forests of the Congo basin and the western Brazilian Amazon are likely to escape widespread clearing over the next generation. These places are home to about half of all the tropical species.

Raven projects that about half of the remaining species that live elsewhere in the tropical forests will be wiped out forever.

--Lawrence Journal-World, 25 May 1984
(submitted by Irving Street, Lawrence, Kansas)

Gila Monsters Bite Two At San Diego Zoo

Two keepers at the San Diego Zoo were hospitalized after they were bitten Wednesday by two poisonous Gila monsters who became agitated during an examination.

Robin Greenlee, 54, who received a full injection of venom in "quite a bite," was listed in serious but stable condition at Mercy Hospital today. Susan Schafer, 34, received a less severe injury.

Although there is no known antidote for the Gila monster's venom, it is generally not fatal if the victim receives prompt medical attention, said a zoo spokesman, Georgeanne Irving. The venom acts on the nervous and circulatory system and the bites are extremely painful.

--Kansas City Star, 16 February 1984

Captured Fish Shows Its Venom to Angler

(Minden, LA)--Mark Parker, 29, will have a great fish story to tell when he gets out of the hospital. He was bitten by a poisonous snake that was inside a black bass he was cleaning in his kitchen sink. Parker caught the 1 1/2 pound fish from the bank of Caney Lake. At home, he stuck a finger into the fish's mouth and was bitten by a water moccasin the fish apparently had swallowed tail-first. A friend helped Parker remove the snake from the fish, and his finger, and took him to the hospital -- where he was treated and held for observation.

--USA Today, 6 April 1984
(submitted by Marty Capron, Ozford, Kansas)

Researcher Says Pollution Threatens Baby Sea Turtles

(Gainesville, FL) -- Baby sea turtles are dying after eating tar balls, plastic and heavy metals found in polluted waters off the coast of Florida, a researcher says.

University of Florida biologist Archie Carr, who has studied green, loggerhead and hawksbill turtles for 36 years, said the seaweed "life rafts" in the Gulf Stream where the hatchlings spend their early days are laced with pollutants.

"The seaweed, the turtles, the small crabs and shrimp that they eat -- they're all pulled together into drift lines, which form wherever two ocean currents meet," he said.

"Unfortunately, that's also where heavy metals, busted-up Styrofoam, oil and oil pellets collect," Carr said.

One hatchling that washed up dead on the beach was found to have Styrofoam in its stomach along with the tiny shrimp that turtles normally eat, he said.

"Being rather simple-minded creatures, baby turtles eat things they shouldn't -- especially tar balls," said Carr, who has written 11 books on sea turtles and was honored Monday as the first recipient of the Audubon Society's Borland Award.

Green turtles are killed for their meat and hawksbill turtles for their colorful shells throughout the Caribbean, posing another threat to the animals, he said.

"It's easy to protect them from poachers; just enforce the laws," Carr said of the turtles. "Florida does a darn good job protecting sea turtles, and so does Costa Rica. But in the Caribbean, little is being done to protect the green turtles living there."

--Lawrence Journal-World, 18 April 1984
(submitted by Ligia Galarza, Lawrence, Kansas)

Road to Love Has Its Dangers

Why did the yellow-spotted salamanders cross the road? Ah, romance -- and they've got friends in high places.

For the second consecutive spring, selectmen in Framingham, Mass., have closed Hemenway Road to cars until the tiny amphibians complete their annual ritual of crossing at night to mate in a pond.

Traffic on the one-mile road was rerouted last year after several salamanders making the five-minute trek from their hibernating holes were flattened by vehicles. Some residents were horrified.

To prevent salamander slayings this year, Hemenway Road resident Jorie Hunken asked selectmen to close the one-way street until April 10.

"We have been pleasantly surprised with the response from the city of Framingham," resident Dave Longland said. "We wanted to raise awareness as well as give the salamander some protection during this critical period."

--The Kansas City Times, 29 March 1984
(submitted by Joseph T. Collins, Lawrence, Kansas)

Thais Consider Ban on Snake Exports

(Bangkok, Thailand) -- Which will have to go -- the rat or the snake?

That's the question officials are debating as they consider whether to ban Thailand's export of snakes, which brings in good money for exporters but depletes croplands of the adversary of the rat -- the Thai farmer's No. 1 enemy.

As the snake export business has grown, officials say, so has the rat population wreaking havoc in the fields.

The Forestry Department says Thailand exported 1.3 million snakes last year to Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, the United States and other countries, 160 percent more than in 1982.

Seventeen firms export live snakes and 35 others deal in snake skins. The Commerce Ministry says snake exporters, employing about 300 people, made 80 million baht ($3.4 million) in revenue last year.

Snakes are also eaten in several "jungle-foodshops" in Bangkok, especially by ethnic Chinese with traditional beliefs in the snake's curative powers. Snake soup is served in the winter and snake meat fried with herbs in the hot season.

But Udom Dechmani, director of the Crop Protection Service in the Agricultural and Cooperatives Ministry, says the trade in snakes has upset the balance of nature and given free rein to the rats. He said the burgeoning rat population last year had destroyed nearly a million acres of paddy fields.

Udom said in a recent interview that Thai farmers had spent more than $350,000 last year to kill 6.4 million rats in 65 of the country's 73 provinces. He said a pair of rats could produce 500 to 1,000 offspring in a single year. Each year, the ministry organizes a "kill the rat week" in which the farmers who eliminate the most rats are rewarded with agricultural equipment.

Potchna Toyjata, chief of the Thai Red Cross Snake Farm in Bangkok, says tropical Thailand has 40 varieties of non-poisonous snakes and seven poisonous kinds, including cobras, banded kraits and green pit vipers. Poisonous snakes are kept at the farm to produce serum to treat snake bites. Potchna too would like snake exports banned to ease the plight of the farmers.

But Nopparat Tengratsuwan, owner of the Bangpa-in Snake Farm, says he would go bankrupt if the government banned snake exports. Nopparat, 44, says his farm, the largest in Thailand, is not only an export business but also a tourist attraction in scenic Ayuthaya, 45 miles north of Bangkok.

He said any ban would also hurt the many snake catchers who sold him snakes.

--F.Y.I., 25 April 1984
(submitted by Joseph T. Collins, Lawrence, Kansas)

Treacherous Trash

(Culebra National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico) -- Endangered leatherback turtles face an insidious new threat, according to Dr. Juan Gonzalez of the University of Puerto Rico. They mistake plastic trash bags floating in the ocean for their staple food -- jellyfish. Dead leatherbacks have been found with trash bags clogging their digestive systems, Gonzalez reported at the EARTHWATCH Principal Investigator Conference in February.

--Earthwatch News, May 1984

I Was Eaten By A Giant Snake

A 16-year-old girl on a religious mission in Peru was swallowed whole by a boa constrictor -- and then mercifully carved out of the 26-foot snake just before her heart stopped beating.

Marjorie Saris quickly revived, after her lungs were emptied of river water. But she will never forget the terror that gripped her as the big snake dropped on her from a tree and dragged her beneath the surface of the river she had been bathing in.

"I feel so lucky to be alive," said Marjorie at a press conference at her home in El Monte, California. "I was dragged under the river while bathing one afternoon. I blacked out, and then woke up on the bank surrounded by Indians. They had peeled the snake that was swallowing me away like a banana skin."

If Marjorie will never forget that moment, neither will her parents or the church that sent her to minister to the Amachuaca Indians, deep in the rain forest of the Amazon Basin of South America.

Marjorie's parents are suing the Faithful Followers of Christ Abroad for sending the young girl into the rain forest with little or no training in jungle survival skills.

They are asking personal damages of $1.5 million.

The Faithful Followers, founded some 60 years ago by a Belgian minister who had a vision while praying, denied they were irresponsible in sending Marjorie into the jungle.

"We were following the direct word of God and what happend was the will of God," said a spokesman for the church. "And I cannot see what the parents are complaining about.

"The girl survived. It was a miracle. We have the shield of the Lord for our protection, and it saved Marjorie."

Marjorie, however, no longer considers herself a member of the Faithful Followers, according to her parents. The girl herself has declined to be interviewed since her quarter-hour press conference announcing the lawsuit.

The church spokesman said she was being "deprogrammed" against her will and virtually held a prisoner by her parents.

Meanwhile, the detailed accounts of the girl's miraculous brush with death come from a minister who ran the mission in southern Peru, Elder Jack Olson.

Marjorie had been traveling upriver by canoe, carrying medical supplies and talking to the Indians about the need for eternal salvation.

She had been in the Amazon only a few weeks, but she took to the missionaries' life with great zeal.

"She told me she had never felt such meaning to her life," said Olson. "She said she loved the life, in spite of the discomforts. She told me she wanted to stay in the Amazon Basin for the rest of her life."

Marjorie had been bathing in a quiet river pool when the snake dropped on her from a tree overhanging the bank. The great constrictor pulled her underwater and held her there until she stopped moving.

Then the snake dragged her downstream several hundred yards and began to swallow her. Meanwhile the Indians missed the girl and began a frantic search to find her.

They discovered her in the nick of time, just as her head was about to disappear down the snake's gullet. They quickly fell upon the immobilized snake and sliced it from end to end.

The Indians thought Marjorie was dead, but as they watched in amazement the healthy teenager moaned and moved her arms.

They quickly moved to drain the water from her lungs, and within minutes she was sitting up and talking to them.

A spokesman from the Miami serpentarium said boa constrictors had been known to swallow small Asians now and then, but no one had ever been on record as living through the experience.

"The constrictor always kills his prey before eating it," the spokesman said. "Also, the constrictors engulf their victims head first. This one must have been in a big hurry to have gone for the wrong end and not to wait for his victim to die." No doubt that is what saved the girl's life.

Marjorie joined the Faithful Followers only a few months before she was sent out on missionary work. This is common in the sect, a spokesman said, because "spreading God's word in foreign countries is what we're all about."

The Followers contend that Marjorie was a runaway and an abused child when she came to their storefront haven in a Los Angeles suburb.

This her father vigorously denies. "She was confused, yes. Aren't all teenagers these days?" said Saris.

--(submitted by Martinez Caprinio, Oxford, Kansas)

Eat Snake in Private

An old Kansas law made it legal to eat rattlesnake meat, but not in public.

--The Shopper/Emporia, 22 May 1984
(submitted by Olin Karch, Emporia)

RECENT LITERATURE OF INTEREST

Cold Toads, Warm Nights

Hillis, D.M., A.M. Hillis, and R.F. Martin. 1984. Reproductive ecology and hybridization of the endangered Houston Toad (*Bufo houstonensis*). Journal of Herpetology 18(1):56-72.

Before an endangered species can be saved, a lot of information about its life history must be gathered. This is often a slow and difficult process, requiring extensive laboratory and field work. Two of the participants in such a study reported in this paper are KHS members David Hillis and Ann Hillis of Lawrence, Kansas.

The study was conducted at 12 sites in Bastrop County, Texas. The researchers wanted to study the population ecology of the Houston Toad, its hybridization with other species of toads, and determine the status of the populations living in Bastrop County.

Frequent visits were made to the study sites, collecting data on weather conditions, toad activity, and tadpole development.

They found that on warm nights during the breeding season, about 20 minutes before sunset, the male Houston Toads begin to call in underground burrows, moving to the water shortly, even though the females do not arrive for several hours. They avoid most hybridizing with other toads by breeding earlier in the season and by habitat isolation.

The best news is that the populations studied for this project are larger than they were expected to be, however, the small range of the Houston Toad and the threat of habitat destruction continue to threaten the existence of the species.

Bats and Boas

Rodriquez, G.A. and D.P. Regan. 1984. Bat predation by the Puerto Rican Boa, *Epicrates inornatus*. Copeia 1984(1):219-220

Puerto Rican boas have often been found near caves and other bat roosts, but this paper is the first confirmation that they do, in fact, prey on bats. A cave was selected, and observations were made over a period of 14 days of bat and boa activity. An average of seven boas were seen on each visit.

The boas fed by catching the bats in mid-air. The snakes would drape themselves on arboreal tree roots and grab the bats in the air as they flew out of the roosting area and hit the vegetation.

BOOK REVIEW

O'Brien, Patricia J. 1984. Archeology in Kansas. University of Kansas Museum of Natural History Publication Series No. 9. 144 pages, $12.00 paperbound.

While you are roaming the hills and plains of Kansas in search of reptiles and amphibians, ever look down to find an arrowhead or piece of broken pottery? Ever wonder where these things came from? With the aid of this much-needed new book, you can not only get started on the road to identifiying things you find, you can also make important contributions to Kansas Archeology. Dr. O'Brien gives detailed instructions on how to locate potential archeological sites and what to do when you find one so it can be properly excavated. She tells you how to identify cultures, to whom to report sites, and how to fill in site survey sheets.

The chapters covering each of the seven Archeological Periods in Kansas are well organized, with the topics listed on the margin of each page to help you quickly locate the information you want. At the end of each chapter is a section entitled, "Research for the Amateur," detailing just what material to look for and where to search out sites from that period.

The illustrations show projectile points, pottery, and maps from the various Archeological Periods in Kansas. Also included is a good bibliography of general works, journals, and Kansas Archeology.

Any Kansas herper who roams around the state should be concerned with understanding and preserving all of natural Kansas. We tend to see the terrain we walk over with a much keener eye than many people, and with the aid of this book you just might be able to contribute something important to a better appreciation of the ecology of the state by shedding some light on how humans lived here in the past.

--John E. Simmons
Lawrence, Kansas

WATER SNAKES, LOST GOLD AND REVOLUTIONARIES

You see some strange things when you're a herpetologist, a "snake-person" as the locals will soon come to call you. I've never been quite sure if herpers just happen to get into the kind of places where the bizarre is commonplace or whether it's the oblique angle we view the world with. You also meet some very strange people being a herpetologist, not all of them colleagues, either! And somewhere down the road the two (the strange things and the strange people) become intertwined in some sort of oddly woven fabric that holds the true lure of herping afield.

Some of what you see is natural. Odd, perhaps, but undeniably something that natural forces are behind. Take water snakes for instance. Where there's water there's Nerodia in one form or another and usually a few humans to boot. It makes for interesting happenings. A friend and I spent a lot of our youth fishing when we weren't actually

snake hunting. In so doing, we learned quite a bit about fish, water snakes, the natural order of things and the skewed way in which most human beings view the natural world. On one such occassion we noticed a thrashing out in the water near midstream, obviously involving a serpent. We sprang into the water, which was only about a food and a half deep, and chased after the altercation that was in progress and being swept briskly along by the strong current. We discovered two adult Northern Water Snakes (Nerodia sipedon sipedon) locked in a desperate struggle with one another, biting furiously, thrashing wildly about and totally oblivious to our presence. Twenty yards downstream the two bloodied combatants were carried onto a drift pile by the current, visibly torn and worn from the spat. As soon as their coils found purchase on the branches the less worn Nerodia promptly began to swallow the other. I doubted the merits of this move since both were about 28 inches long. The meal turned into a slow, time-consuming and eventually boring culinary marathon. We resumed fishing and, returning an hour later, found both snakes dead...one half swallowed by the greatly distended other.

Yeah, it was strange, but then a lot of things are. Snakes may be inconveniently picky eaters in captivity but seem to consume anything in the wild. I once dropped a stick about the size of a man's index finger off a bridge, directly in front of a water snake that was hunting along the edge of a sandbar. The stick bounced once and was quickly seized by the water snake who tried for several minutes to devour it before giving up in favor of more appealing prey. Well, so much for the natural...or at least what we presume to be natural. The list could go on indefinately. Sometimes it's just too strange to try to get anyone to believe. I mean, who would believe you could nonchalantly drop a chunk of wood off a bridge and get a passing water snake to try and swallow it?

Thus inspired, we captured a large water snake several days later and took it to the bench in front of the pool hall where all the local old men used to loaf away the day, sitting in the sun. For the better part of an hour we dropped wood, rocks, even a Baby Ruth in front of the water snake in an attempt to prove our story before an audience. Although the snake willingly struck at everything that moved, it did not try to devour a thing. One old man by the name of Jolly Woods regarded himself as a snake expert of sorts and confidently told us that the Nerodia (then a Natrix) was actually a Thunder snake. What connection there was I'll never know but he told us the same thing when we presented him with a juvenile Racer a couple of weeks later. He disappeared and in later years I heard he was living in Baja...fishing for sharks.

He was just one of those bizarre sorts of people I was destined to run into during the course of more and more advanced herpetological observations. The man I ran into while collecting copperheads (KHS Newsletter No. 53:19-21) is a case in point--or a case, at least. But there are, well, more interesting sorts out there.

January 1977 found Max Nickerson and myself sitting beneath the tin roof of an open-air logging camp cantina in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, sipping a couple of cold Imperials and watching the rain come down. We were forty miles from the Nicaraguan border and Nicaragua was about four months away from the demise of the Somoza regime. No commandos, no mercenaries there then, just truck loads of green, green bananas and

rain, a grey curtain of water that had brought even our stalwart snake-hunting attempts to a halt. The jeep was down, having blown a radiator hose in the cloud-shrouded foothills thirty miles up the road.

The Fer-de-Lance, Bothrops atrox (known locally as a Terciopelo, or "Velvet Head") that we had planted a transmitter in hadn't moved from beneath his clump of elephant ear leaves for three days. It was beginning to look like a very sedentary life there in banana land.

It was about then that a white Land Rover came swimming in through the sea of pot holes and squashed Marine Toads that used to be the main road. On the roof was tied an eleven-foot aluminum ladder. The gentlemen who got out both sported heavy black beards and beady eyes. There was something about them I couldn't put my finger on...

We found out later from one of the local senoritas that they were Russians, studying trees in the jungle north of town near the Nicaraguan border. It didn't bother me much at the time, but six months later with the Sandinistas in power in Nicaragua and CIA-backed Contras sipping Imperials beneath the same rusting tin roof I had once drank under, I thought back on those two bearded Soviets and their eleven-foot ladder in a forest full of trees 200 feet high. It was ludicrous.

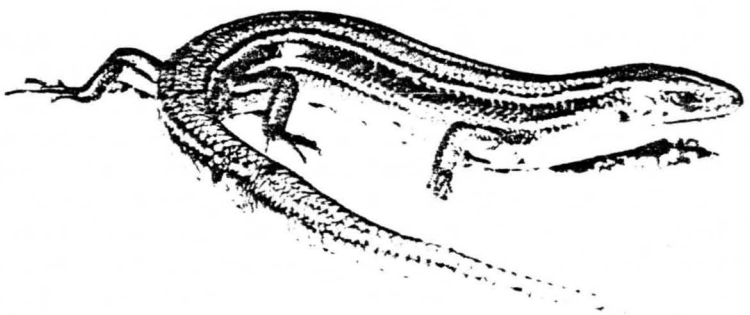
There were others on that trip. Central America seems to crawl with them...escapists, smugglers, secret agents, snake hunters...fortune seekers. Like the man in the hotel lobby in San Jose looking for all the world like Humphrey Bogart or maybe Indiana Jones, a gold hunter by profession. He swished a half a glass of dark rum around contemplatively, cigar smoke swirling upward through the blades of a whirring ceiling fan. I kept looking around for movie cameras hidden amongst the parlor palms that were placed strategically about. There were none. This was real life, cliche or not.

There was gold, gold, gold paving the bottom of the Rio-Whats-Its-Name in the jungle off to the southwest. He'd seen it, too, held it in his hands. But the expedition was fraught with bushmasters and flash floods and it ended, like all good stories of lost gold, with him losing his equipment, his profits, and very nearly his life. Still, it was there and he was going back for it...just as soon as he could raise the money to try. Ah, the pitch, I knew it had been coming. Whether he was a professional yarner, a hustler, or a bona fide gold hunter God only knows. The next morning we were off and he was in the grips of a roaring rum hangover. There'd be other gringos in the bar to sell his story to by noon.

So, there you have the unnatural, or at least some of it. Sooner or later you will be innocently hunting snakes somewhere and while breaking for a beer or a bite to eat, you will suddenly find yourself face to face with anarchists, gold-crazed fortune hunters or political upheaval. Its the people you meet on herpetological excursions that sometimes makes the going worthwhile. The gold hunter was one of them, and those two tree specialists with their puny ladder, and the bus driver Down Under who kept us rolling with jokes between stops for Death Adders and King Mulgas, crossing the Australian desert by night in a Greyhound.

So I'm sketching out my personal finances on the edge of a Rand McNally road atlas, recalling water snakes and Fer-de-Lances and Lost Gold and all the old excursions while planning new ones...because its what you see, natural or unnatural, but always bizarre, that makes herping afield worthwhile.

--Marty Capron
Somewhere on the Road



Southern Prairie skink from Sumner County, Kansas.
Photo by Larry Miller.

NEW RECORDS OF FISHES, AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES IN KANSAS FOR 1983

by

Joseph T. Collins
Museum of Natural History
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

The new county and maximum size records listed below are those accumulated or brought to my attention since the publication of records for 1982 (Collins, 1983). Publication of these new records permits me to give credit and express my appreciation to the many individuals who collected or obtained specimens and donated them to me for deposition in an institutional collection. Further, recipients of this list are permitted an opportunity to update the range maps and size maxima sections in "Fishes in Kansas" (Cross and Collins, 1975) and "Amphibians and reptiles in Kansas" (Collins, 1982). Finally, these new records represent information that greatly increases knowledge of the distribution and physical proportions of lower vertebrates in Kansas, and thus gives a better understanding of their biology.

The Kansas specimens listed below represent the first records for the given county based on a preserved, cataloged voucher specimen in an institutional collection, or represent size maxima larger than those listed in the two books mentioned above. All new records are presented in the following standardized format: common and scientific name, collection and catalog number, county, specific locality, date of collection and collector(s). New size maxima are presented with the size limits expressed in both metric and English units. Common names for Kansas amphibians and reptiles are those of Collins et al. (1982).

The records listed below are deposited in the following collections: Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, Lawrence (KU), and the University of Utah, Salt Lake City (UU). I wish to thank Frank B. Cross (KU), William E. Duellman (KU), John Legler (UU) and Douglas A. Rossman for their assistance. I am most grateful to members of the Kansas Herpetological Society, and personnel of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, who spent many hours in search of some of the specimens listed herein. Support for field work, that led to discovery of some of the specimens listed below, was given via grants from the Kansas Nongame Wildlife Program (Chickadee Check-off). Special thanks are due Philip S. Humphrey, director of the Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, for his encouragement.

NEW COUNTY RECORDS FOR FISHES

GIZZARD SHAD (Dorosoma cepedianum)

EDWARDS Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 10, T24S, R19W, 23 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20700).

SOUTHERN REDBELLY DACE (Phoxinus erythrogaster)

BARBER Co: W branch S Elm Creek, Sec. 20, T30S, R13W, 27 May 1983, K. Brunson and B. Todd (KU 20409).

SUCKERMOUTH MINNOW (Phenacobius mirabilis)

RICE Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 25, T21S, R9W, 16 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20515).

RED RIVER SHINER (Notropis bairdi)

CLARK Co: Big Sandy Creek, 14.4 km S Ashland, Sec. 36, T34S, R23W, 4 July 1978, O.T. Gorman and D. Wiseman (KU 18473). MEADE Co: Cimarron River at Rt. 23, Sec. 8, T35S, R29W, 8 May 1979, J.E. Fry and R.R. Bronaugh (KU 18016).

The above specimens of this minnow were reported by Cross and Gorman (1983), and represent an addition to the fish fauna of Kansas.

TOPEKA SHINER (Notropis topeka)

BUTLER Co: S Fork Cottonwood River, Sec. 21, T23S, R8E, 19 July 1979, H.A. Kerns and O.T. Gorman (KU 18682). MARION Co: tributary to Middle Creek, Sec. 34, T18S, R5E, 16 July 1979, T. Schroeder and A. Nonhof (KU 18394).

PLAINS MINNOW (Hybognathus placitus)

KIOWA Co: Thompson Creek, Sec. 15, T29S, R17W, 20 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20647). PRATT Co: S Fork Ninnescah River, 4.8 km E Cairo, 27 May 1983, K. Brunson and B. Todd (KU 20408).

STONEROLLER (Campostoma anomalum)

RENO Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 16, T22S, R7W, 16 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20517). RICE Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 25, T21S, R9W, 16 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20508).

BLACK BUFFALO (Ictiobus niger)

SEDGWICK Co: Ninnescah River, Sec. 14/23, T29S, R3W, 17 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20556).

GOLDEN REDHORSE (Moxostoma erythrurum)

KIOWA Co: Thompson Creek, Sec. 15, T29S, R17W, 20 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20650).

This is the westernmost record for the golden redhorse in Kansas.

SHORTHEAD REDHORSE (Moxostoma macrolepidotum)

RENO Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 16, T22S, R7W, 16 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20523).

BLACKSTRIPE TOPMINNOW (Fundulus notatus)

KINGMAN Co: Allen Creek, Sec. 27, T29S, R9W, 8 July 1983, R. Wood and W. Layher (KU 20604).

MOSQUITOFISH (Gambusia affinis)

BARTON Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 22, T20S, R14W, 23 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20713). RICE Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 25, T21S, R9W, 16 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20511).

WHITE BASS (Morone chrysops)

DICKINSON Co: Smoky Hill River at Enterprise, 8 September 1983, J. Fry, D. Gilliland, S. Haslouer and K. Brunson (KU 20489). SUMNER Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 13, T32S, R2E, 17 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20568).

SPOTTED BASS Micropterus punctulatus)

RILEY Co: Deep Creek at Pillsbury crossing, 8 September 1983, J. Fry, D. Gilliland, S. Haslouer and K. Brunson (KU 20490).

This is the most northern record for the spotted bass in Kansas.

LARGEMOUTH BASS (Micropterus salmoides)

EDWARDS Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 10, T24S, R19W, 23 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20706).

GREEN SUNFISH (Lepomis cyanellus)

BARTON Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 22, T20S, R14W, 23 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20714).

ORANGESPOTTED SUNFISH (Lepomis humilis)

EDWARDS Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 10, T24S, R19W, 23 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20705).

LONGEAR SUNFISH (Lepomis megalotis)

KIOWA Co: Thompson Creek, Sec. 15, T29S, R17W, 20 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20649).

SLENDERHEAD DARTER (Percina phoxocephala)

KINGMAN Co: S Fork Ninnescah River, Sec. 36, T28S, R5W, 17 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20552).

ARKANSAS DARTER (Etheostoma cragini)

SEWARD Co: Cimarron River, Sec. 25, T33S, R23W, 21 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20685).

This is the westernmost record for the Arkansas darter in Kansas.

ORANGETHROAT DARTER (Etheostoma spectabile)

COMANCHE Co: Mule Creek, Sec. 3/10, T32S, R16W, 19 July 1983, F.B. Cross, J.T. Collins, R.E. Moss and K.J. Irwin (KU 20641).

NEW MAXIMUM SIZE RECORDS FOR FISHES

STRIPED BASS (Morone saxatilis)

Weight: 43 pounds (19.5 kg). Length: ca. 46 inches (117 cm). Sex: unknown. Caught by Ralph Pray in Cheney Reservoir, Reno County, on 21 September 1983.

SMALLMOUTH BASS (Micropterus dolomieui)

Weight: 4.73 pounds (2.1 kg). Length: 19 inches (48.5 cm). Sex: unknown. Caught by Terry Stanton in Milford Reservoir, Geary County, on 21 October 1983.

REDEAR (Lepomis microlophus)

Weight: 1 pound, 7 1/2 ounces (0.65 kg). Length: 11 3/8 inches (29 cm). Sex: unknown. Caught by Pat Whetzall in a strip-mine pit near Franklin, Crawford County, during 1983.

NEW COUNTY RECORDS FOR AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

GREAT PLAINS TOAD (Bufo cognatus)

SHAWNEE Co: ca. 5.6 km SE Silver Lake, 10 May 1982, J. Hubbard and K. Coleman (KU 192720).

WOODHOUSE'S TOAD (Bufo woodhousii woodhousii)

STEVENS Co: within Hugoton city limits, 21 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193397).

WESTERN CHORUS FROG (Pseudacris triseriata triseriata)

BARBER Co: along Ks. Rt. 2 in Hazelton, 31 March 1983, L. Miller (KU 193030).

BULLFROG (Rana catesbeiana)

EDWARDS Co: Arkansas River, Sec. 9, T25S, R19W, 23 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193398). STAFFORD Co: 3.2 km SW St. John, Sec. 12, T24S, R14W, 26 August 1983, K. Brunson and G. Brehm (KU 194943).

PLAINS NARROWMOUTH TOAD (Gastrophryne olivacea)

ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 30 April 1983, J. Fraser (KU 193218).

COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE (Chelydra serpentina serpentina)

ALLEN Co: near Elsmore at jct. U.S. Rt. 59 and Ks. Rt. 203, 17 September 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, L. Miller and R. Morris (KU 193579). WALLACE Co: 2.4 km E and 19.2 km N Weskan, Sec. 1, T12S, R42W, 5 June 1983, A. Dick and S. Roth (KU 193277).

YELLOW MUD TURTLE (Kinosternon flavescens flavescens)

PAWNEE Co: E of Larned on Ks. Rt. 19, Sec. 6, T22S, R15W, 29 May 1983, J.T. Collins and S.L. Cupp (KU 193240).

OUACHITA MAP TURTLE (Graptemys pseudogeographica ouachitensis)

COWLEY Co: Arkansas River, SW of Winfield, Sec. 8, T33S, R3E, 18 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193396).

WESTERN PAINTED TURTLE (Chrysemys picta bellii)

JOHNSON Co: Olathe, Cedar Lake, September 1983, E. Cleveland (KU 194366). MORRIS Co: Neosho River, 8.8 km NNW Council Grove, 7 September 1957, J.M. Legler (UU 11429).

RED-EARED SLIDER (Chrysemys scripta elegans)

JOHNSON Co: U.S. Rt. 69 at 179th St., 24 August 1983, E. Cleveland (KU 194367).

MIDLAND SMOOTH SOFTSHELL (Trionyx muticus muticus)

JOHNSON Co: S bank Kansas River near Bonner Springs, 25 March 1983, J. Slowinski (KU 192960).

EASTERN COLLARED LIZARD (Crotaphytus collaris collaris)

ALLEN Co: just W of Mildred, 17 September 1983, M. Puckett (KU 193580). WOODSON Co: near Toronto Lake, Sec. 26, T26S, R13E, 30 April 1983, K.J. Irwin (KU 193219).

WESTERN SLENDER GLASS LIZARD (Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus)

BUTLER Co: 1.6 km E El Dorado, 9 June 1982, S. Nazaran (KU 193225). NEOSHO Co: 1.6 km S Allen County Line on U.S. Rt. 59, 17 September 1983, D. Reber, M. Reber, M. Berman and B. Berger (KU 193581).

WESTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE (Heterodon nasicus)

ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 17 June 1983, J. Fraser (KU 194777). STEVENS Co: N of Hugoton, Sec. 3/4, T33S, R37W, 22 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193400).

The specimen from Elk County (KU 194777) is one of the easternmost records for this snake in Kansas, and supports earlier records for Chatauqua and Greenwood counties mapped by Collins (1982). The specimen, a juvenile, has 33 dorsal blotches (snout-vent), making it assignable to Heterodon nasicus gloydi, the dusty hognose snake, which occurs only in southeastern Kansas.

EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE (Heterodon platyrhinos)

PAWNEE Co: 6.4 km S Larned, Sec. 21, T22S, R16W, 29 May 1983, J.T. Collins and S.L. Cupp (KU 193243).

GREAT PLAINS RAT SNAKE (Elaphe guttata emoryi)

ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 30 April 1983, L. Miller (KU 193220).

BLACK RAT SNAKE (Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta)

BARBER Co: near Elm Creek, S of Medicine Lodge, Sec. 13, T32S, R12W, 19 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193399).

This is the westernmost record for this snake in Kansas.

PRAIRIE KINGSNAKE (Lampropeltis calligaster calligaster)

ALLEN Co: just W Mildred, 17 September 1983, J. Fraser (KU 193582). EDWARDS Co: just S of Belpre, Sec. 21, T24S, R16W, 29 May 1983, J.T. Collins and S.L. Cupp (KU 193246). KIOWA Co: 6.4 km E Greensburg on U.S. Rt. 54, 29 May 1983, J.T. Collins and S.L. Cupp (KU 193245). NEOSHO Co: 8.5 km N St. Paul, 18 September 1983, K.J. Irwin (KU 193583).

COMMON KINGSNAKE (Lampropeltis getulus)

ALLEN Co: 6.1 km E jct. U.S. Rt. 59 and Ks. Rt. 203, 17 September 1983, K.J. Irwin, L. Miller and R. Morris (KU 193585). BOURBON Co: Bourbon County State Lake area, 17 September 1983, J. Fraser (KU 193584). ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 30 April 1983, J. Fraser (KU 193211).

WESTERN RIBBON SNAKE (Thamnophis proximus)

SEWARD Co: Cimarron River at U.S. Rt. 54, Sec. 25, T33S, R32W, 21 July 1983, J.T. Collins, K.J. Irwin, F.B. Cross and R.E. Moss (KU 193402).

WESTERN PLAINS GARTER SNAKE (Thamnophis radix haydenii)

BUTLER Co: near Cassoday Exit on I-35, 29 May 1983, R. Powell and D.D. Smith (KU 193453). EDWARDS Co: 8.8 km S Belpre, Sec. 17, T25S, R16W, 29 May 1983, J.T. Collins and S.L. Cupp (KU 193249). PRATT Co: 3.2 km N Isabel, Sec. 30, T29S, R11W, 10 August 1983, K. Brunson, B. Todd and W. Layher (KU 194944).

RED-SIDED GARTER SNAKE (Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis)

ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 30 April 1983, J. Fraser (KU 193222).

Collins (1982), following Fitch and Maslin (1961), mapped two isolated records for this species along the western border of Kansas, one based on a single specimen (KU 2088) from Hamilton County and the other based on an unverifiable report from Wallace County. I recently re-examined the specimen (KU 2088) from Hamilton County, and was unable to assign it to Thamnophis sirtalis. Douglas Rossman (Louisiana State University), a noted authority on the genus, also examined the specimen and identified it as Thamnophis cyrtopsis, a species that does not occur in Kansas. Thus, unless fresh material is discovered to authenticate the presence of Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis along the western Kansas border, I consider the isolated records for this species in Hamilton and Wallace counties, as shown by Collins (1982), to be invalid.

LINED SNAKE (Tropidoclonion lineatum)

ELK Co: ca. 6.4 km S Fall River, Sec. 6, T29S, R13E, 30 April 1983, K.J. Irwin (KU 193223). OSBORNE Co: Sec. 35, T10S, R11W, 30 April 1983, A. Kamb (KU 193224).

GRAHAM'S CRAYFISH SNAKE (Regina grahamii)

JOHNSON Co: 6.4 km W jct. U.S. Rt. 69 and 151st Street, 15 February 1983, D. Meyer (KU 192721).

MASSASAUGA (Sistrurus catenatus)

ALLEN Co: 5.6 km E jct. U.S. Rt. 59 and Ks. Rt. 203, 17 September 1983, K.J. Irwin, L. Miller and R. Morris (KU 193589). BOURBON Co: 4 km S Bourbon County State Lake, 17 September 1983, J. Fraser (KU 194778). MONTGOMERY Co: Sec. 24, T31S, R15E, 1982, G. Imel (KU 193009). NEOSHO Co: 1.6 km S Allen County line on U.S. Rt. 59, 17 September 1983, D. Reber, M. Reber, M. Berman and B. Berger (KU 193588). WILSON Co: 6.4 km E and 1.6 km N Fredonia, October 1981, J. Fraser (KU 192870).

NEW MAXIMUM SIZE RECORDS FOR AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

TEXAS NIGHT SNAKE (Hypsiglena torquata jani)

CLARK Co: 3.2 km N and 8 km W Ashland, 29 May 1983, J. Tollefson, M. Capron and C. Stammler (KU 193259). Total length = 412 mm (16 3/16 inches). Female.

MILK SNAKE (Lampropeltis triangulum)

ANDERSON Co: 1.6 km N Welda, 9 May 1982, H.A. Dundee (KU 193235). Total length = 858 mm (33 3/4 inches). Male.

NORTHERN WATER SNAKE (Nerodia sipedon sipedon)

COWLEY Co: Winfield at Tunnel Mill dam, 10 June 1983, M. Capron (KU 193278). Total length = 1133 mm (44 1/2 inches). Female.

MASSASAUGA (Sistrurus catenatus)

FRANKLIN Co: near Williamsburg, Sec. 31, T18S, R18E, 2 May 1983, F. McGinnis (KU 193238). Total length = 773 mm (30 inches). Male.

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A Final Word From Your Editor

A special thank-you goes to KHS member Hank Guarisco, who stepped in at the last minute to print the covers and then assemble, label, and sort the last KHS Newsletter, so I could go running off to South America for two months. Other people whose help is appreciated are Joseph Collins, Linda Dryden, and Jocelyn Kitchen.

Its not too early to begin planning for the Fall 1984 Kansas Herpetological Society Meeting in Fredonia, Kansas. The meeting will take place in November just prior to Thanksgiving. A splendid time is guaranteed for all.