

DECEMBER, 1984

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1985 Annual Chikaskia River Wildlife Study Being Planned

The 1985 Chikaskia River Wildlife Study has been set for 10-12 May 1985. The event will once again be held in Sumner County, Kansas. A number of activities are in the planning stages at this time and suggestions and comments are welcome.

Gene Trott, KHS member from Hunnewell, Kansas, will be in charge of the 1985 wildlife study. All interested KHS members are, of course, invited to attend and help with the event. More information can be obtained by contacting Gene Trott at Box 11, Rt. #1, South Haven, Kansas, 67141.

KHS Members in the News

Joyce R. Harmon, Wildlife Education Coordinator for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, will be married to Gene J. Depenbusch, rancher and farmer, on Saturday, 20 April 1985, in St. Leo, Kansas. Best wishes, Joyce.

Two Opportunities to Save the Turtles

Earthwatch will offer two sea turtle projects during the spring of 1985. One deals with endangered Caribbean turtles at Culebra National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico. Until recently, poachers claimed 80 to 90 percent of the eggs that green, hawksbill, and leatherback turtles laid each year on the white sand beaches. This project will involve nightly turtle patrols under the direction of experienced field workers to monitor nesting and tag turtles. Nine teams will work for 10 day periods each from April through June. Cost is \$985.

The second project is Saving the Leatherback Turtle, at Sandy Point, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. This project also involves spending all night on the beach to tag turtles, locate nests, etc, with teams working from April through June. Cost is \$1090.

Both of these projects are important for the future of sea turtles, and have been described by participants as extremely inspiring, educational, and fulfilling opportunities. For more information, contact Earthwatch, 10 Juniper Road, Box 127, Belmont, MA 02178, telephone (617) 489-3030.

The Snakes of Australia

In 1869, a mere 700 copies of Gerard Krefft's The Snakes of Australia, an Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue of All the Known Species were printed. This important work included all snakes known

from Australia to that date, including sea snakes. A facsimile edition is now available, with 100 pages and 12 hand colored lithographs. Only 1000 copies of the facsimile have been printed. It is available from Lookout Publications, Box 1405 G.P.O., Brisbane, 4001, Australia, for A\$55.00 (that's Australian dollars, kids).

New Herp Books

Sterling Publishing Company announces three herp books available at a 20% discount off regular price. They are Poisonous Snakes by Tony Phelps, 237 pages, 33 color photos plus "numerous" black and white photos, regularly \$9.95. Covers the biology, captive maintenance, and treatment of bite from venomous snakes. Also offered are two herp care manuals, The Care of Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity by Christopher Mattison, 304 pages, 48 color photos plus black and white photos, regularly \$17.95. Described as being written for a wide audience, covers housing, feeding, diseases, breeding, handling, etc. "Two appendices detail the legal unpleasantries of animal keeping and the herpetological societies and publications of the world." Hmmm. The third book in the offer is Reptiles and Amphibians by Joan Palmer, 94 pages, black and white photos, \$6.95, described as "an elementary guide for the beginning herpetologist. All three are available at 20% off with \$1.25 per book for postage and handling (three or more shipped free, nice) from Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., Two Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016.

New Publication

The Reptile Breeding Foundation announces the forthcoming publication of the journal, The Herpetoculturist, "a periodical devoted exclusively to the husbandry and propagation of amphibians and reptiles in captivity." It will begin as a house publication of the foundation, and hopefully expand into a quarterly journal. The first issue is scheduled for January, 1985. Subscription rates have not yet been established, but the first issue may be obtained by writing to Reptile Breeding Foundation, P.O. Box 1450, Picton, Ontario Canada, K0K 2T0.

Review of Foreign Turtle Species

The Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the status of eight species of foreign turtles to determine whether they should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. These species are declining because of habitat alteration and collection of eggs and/or adults for food for the pet trade. The species are the Painted Batagur (Callagur borneoensis) from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand; Celebes Tortoise (Geochelone forteni) from Indonesia; Brazilian Sideneck (Phrynops hoguei) from Brasil; Cat Island Turtle (Pseudemys felis) from Bahamas; the Chaco Sideneck (Platemys pallidipectoris) from Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay; the Inagua Island Turtle (Pseudemys malobei) from the Bahamas; the Kavalai Forest Turtle, or Cane Turtle (Heosemys silvatica) of India, and the South American Red-lined Turtle (Pseudemys scripta callirostris) from Colombia and Venezuela.

Chikaskia River Wildlife Study T-Shirts

Orders are now being taken for the always stunning Chikaskia River Wildlife Study T-Shirts. All orders must be placed before 20 February 1985, and the shirts will arrive before 1 May, so you'll have plenty of time to get yours broken in before the 10 May start of the study. Shirts must be paid for when ordered. They are silkscreen yellow with lettering and art in black, 50% cotton and 50% polyester, all sizes \$4.75 each (hey, includes shipping!). Specify size (large child, small adult, medium adult, large adult, extra large adult), and make checks payable to Larry Miller, 524 North Osage Street, Caldwell, Kansas 67022.



KHS Annual Meeting Report -- 1984

It was a cold and grey Saturday as KHS members and friends from all over Kansas gathered in Fredonia for the 11th Annual Meeting of the Kansas Herpetological Society on 10 November, 1984. The crowd assembled in the National Guard Armory and was called to order at 13:00 hours by KHS President John Fraser. The first speaker was the famed scoutmaster Kelly Irwin, who presented an interesting report on the Alligator Snapping Turtle (Macroclemys temmincki) in Kansas, a presentation which generated lots of comment and questions from the audience.

The KHS General Business Meeting was next. After nominations from the floor, Marty Capron of Oxford, Kansas, was chosen KHS President-Elect, and Larry Miller reconfirmed as Secretary/Treasurer. Congratulations to both, we know you will do a fine job for KHS. The KHS president for 1985 is Louis Guillette.

A motion was made by John Fraser to establish a lifetime membership category in the KHS. Kelly Irwin suggested a one-time dues payment of \$100 for this, and the proposal was approved.

Honorary Membership in KHS was also discussed. Currently, there are two honorary members, Hobart Smith and Frederick Frye. It was decided to run a request in a future newsletter for nominations for other honorary members.

The next issue considered was KHS Membership Dues and the mailing of the Newsletter. At \$4.00/year, KHS is one of the lowest priced regional societies in the U.S. One reason our membership dues are so low is that we use a non-profit postage permit for mailing. For \$40.00 annually for the permit, we can mail the newsletter for 5.7 cents each (a minimum of 200 must be mailed each time). However, there have been a lot of complaints from members that they are not receiving their newsletters. If the address is not exactly correct, or if the addressee has moved, the newsletter will be lost in the great postal void, since the post office does not forward or return bulk mail. The proposed solution was to send the newsletter by first class mail, which will cost about 37 cents each, but this way the copies will be returned or forwarded, if needed. First class mail will also mean that members will get their newsletter sooner. A motion was made by Kelly Irwin and passed by the members present to raise the membership dues to \$5.00/year and begin first class mailing of the KHS Newsletter.

Larry Miller gave the treasurer's report. As of 10 November 1984, the balance was \$270.09. Following the meeting, with the proceeds from the auction and dues collected in Fredonia, the balance as of 1 December 1984 was \$681.29.

Following a coffee break and the annual Group Photograph, courtesy of Larry Miller, John Fraser spoke on "A Week of Adventure in the Trans-Pecos," relating some of his Texas herping tales and observations. Next came the "Members Best" slide show. A great variety of slides were presented by Dave Breidenbach, John Fraser, Jeff Hubbard, Ray Loraine, Larry Miller, Dan Moser, and John Simmons.

Everyone braved the cold to assault the numerous (2) eating establishments in town, the hands-down favorite being the Western Diner, principally because of the fabulous artwork on display there. The beer social got underway at 19:00, followed by the annual auction. The auction has grown to be not just the major fundraiser of the year for KHS, but one of the most anticipated events of the annual meeting, thanks in large part to the sedate and understated style of the auctioneers, Joe Collins and Kelly Irwin. Many, many thanks to all of those who contributed items to the auction. KHS could not thrive without this kind of support.

As the crowd thinned out after the auction, a new event got underway, the First Ever KHS Slumber Party. Those with sleeping bags stayed overnight in the Armory, about 30 people in all. You can certainly sleep soundly knowing there is a tank in the next room to protect you.

Sunday, 11 November, the meeting was called to order at 9:00 with Joe Collins presenting his multimedia spectacular, "Natural Kansas." Marty Capron was unable to make the meeting, so his slot was filled by Marvin D. Schwilling of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission. He had a beautiful poster of Birds of Kansas to show off to the members, and an interesting proposition for the KHS. He would like to have our input in producing a similar poster of amphibians and reptiles of Kansas. After



Loyal KHS members tear themselves away from the thrilling 1984 Annual Meeting in Fredonia just long enough to pose for the official portrait. Photo by Larry Miller.

some discussion, a committee was appointed by the President to study this proposal further. The poster will be funded by money from the Chickadee Check-Off, as was the bird poster.

The last two speakers were John Simmons, who related his recent exploits herping in Ecuador, and Ray Loraine holding forth on his experiences with "Herpetology at the Savannah River Ecology Lab" in South Carolina.

The meeting was dismissed by John Fraser.

This was one of the most successful meetings ever, with over 55 people registered. One factor which probably helped a lot was the free overnight lodging in the Armory building. It is hoped that future KHS meetings will also have some place where people can stay overnight at no cost.

Thanks for a job well done go to KHS President John Fraser. The coffee and donuts were donated by Fraser Retail Liquor. John Fraser donated the beer for the auction. We also thank the National Guard for the use of their facility, and the staff of the Western Diner for being so cheerful about putting up with all of us throughout the weekend.

--Irving Street
KHS Special Correspondent
Sibleyville, Kansas

Snake Becomes Staff

Some novel speculation is offered in the monthly Biblical Archaeology Review about how Moses turned a staff into a snake in his confrontation with the ancient Egyptian pharaoh.

A Jerusalem archeology buff, Leon Shalit, writes that the "staff" may have been a regional snake that stiffens when whirled about while holding its tail, remaining stick-like for some time before recovering movement.

--Capper's Weekly, 5 July 1983

Tennessee Cave Salamander Hatched

The Tennessee cave salamander (Gyrinophilus palleucus) is indigenous to Alabama and Tennessee, but nothing was known of the reproductive habits of this cavernicolous species until a female was observed fastening her eggs to the underside of a rock on 10 June. A total of 70 eggs were laid, of which the majority were deposited in clusters to the bottom of the rock, with the rest randomly fastened to gravel and the aquarium airlifts. Each was enclosed in several layers of a transparent, jelly-like mass which measured about 9mm. The female has been in the Cincinnati Zoo's collection since 1983, and the male was collected in Tennessee in 1978. The majority of the eggs were lost to a fungal infection, probably resulting from oxygen deprivation. However, one egg survived, with the larva hatching on 13 August at a water temperature of 10-12 degrees C. It measured 18 mm total length.

--AAZPA Newsletter, 25(10):15, October 1984
(Submitted by Ruth Gennrich, Lawrence, Kansas)

City Says Serpents Have to Go

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN. Patricia Brown's snakes will have to pull up stakes, city officials say, but the reluctant reptiles are not going to slither away quietly.

The city Housing Appeal Board, acting on complaints from neighbors who said the creatures have been taking unsupervised jaunts through the neighborhood, last week gave Ms. Brown 10 days to give her 10 pythons, boa constrictors and other snakes the heave-ho.

But Ms. Brown says it's all a frame-up and will consult a lawyer to determine her next move to combat what she says is cold-hearted treatment of her cold-blooded pets.

"Just for 10 snakes they won't grant me the permit?" she asked tearfully after learning that Chuck Wikenhauser, director of the city-run John Ball Zoo, didn't plan to reconsider his decision to deny her a permit to keep exotic animals.

"They're my pets. I've had them for years," Ms. Brown said. "Those 10 I saved. I got rid of all the other ones so the city would let me keep my 10. I've spent over \$400 on veterinarian bills on my snakes, just to keep them alive."

Ms. Brown, 31, says she has had as many as 50 snakes in her home and that it all started when she bought her son a 5-inch garden snake as a pet. She says it's all good, clean fun and that snakes just have an image problem.

But the Housing Appeal Board didn't see it that way Wednesday, rejecting Ms. Brown's appeal of Wilkenhauser's refusal to issue her a permit. Wilkenhauser says inspectors will be sent to her house to see that the snakes are gone.

Wilkenhauser said he refused to renew Ms. Brown's permit, which had expired more than a year ago, primarily because of neighbors' claims that her snakes had escaped several times.

Ms. Brown disagreed, saying all of her snakes are at least 5 feet long and would have trouble escaping without being noticed.

"These are very valuable pets. I'm not going to let a \$300 snake go out the door," she said.

--Lawrence Journal-World, 18 November 1984

Key to First Successful Mating of Rare Python? Avoid Boredom

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE. The secret to the first successful mating in captivity of a rare python was keeping the male and female apart periodically so the snakes wouldn't get bored with each other, a zoo official says.

A 14-foot, 30-pound female Papuan python, on loan from the San Antonio zoo, laid 20 eggs recently at the Knoxville Zoo, officials said. The eggs, which weigh nearly half a pound each, are expected to hatch in about 60 days.

The female and her two male companions, which belong to a private owner in Pennsylvania, are the only Papuan pythons in the United States, said Bern Tryon, curator of the Knoxville zoo's reptile department.

There may not be more than two of the black, iridescent snakes in captivity in the rest of the world, he said.

Tryon said it was the first time a Papuan python in captivity had laid eggs. The zoo has been trying to breed the snake for three years but has had to guess about their habits because so little is known about them, he said.

The snakes lost interest in each other when kept in the same cage around the clock.

"The thing we did more than anything else was separation and reintroduction at frequent intervals," Tryon said.

Also, the temperature in the cage was adjusted to reflect seasonal changes in the python's native Papua New Guinea, on a tropical island off the northeast coast of Australia.

--The Des Moines Register, 22 November 1984

Payoff in Turtle Races May Be Trip to Prison

TORONTO. There's more than one reason not to bet on a turtle.

Wagering on the waddlers has caused two men from the village of Ailsa Craig, Ontario, to be hauled into court in nearby London recently.

The charge: conducting parimutuel betting on turtle races.

The alleged turtle betting was part of the Ailsa Craig 13th annual Gala Days celebration last July, to help pay for a community center for children.

Indeed, four races--each with eight turtles "hurtling toward a (finish) line" 28 feet away--were held July 20, admitted David Scott, 45, a member of the Gala Days committee and one of the accused.

Pleased with the event, which raised \$117, Mr. Scott said: "Turtle racing is really exciting. When they get their heads up to go, they can really trot."

The course record, he said, was 29 seconds.

Checking last summer's program, Mr. Scott said turtle touts could pick from such entrants as Wendy's Wympp (a winner at 7-2 odds), Salty Peter, Mother's Ruin and Ta-Bar-Nack (derived from a mild French-Canadian curse).

Ontario Provincial Police stopped the betting after one night. Last week a police officer testified that he had warned Mr. Scott before the annual celebration not to conduct the betting.

If convicted, Mr. Scott, who is the travel writer for the London Free Press, and Douglas McNair, 41, could get up to two years in prison, as well as another two years for a second charge of illegal operation of a wheel of fortune.

"I anticipate winning," said Mr. Scott.

--The Kansas City Star, 2 December 1984

Zoogate

Now they're calling the whole affair "Zoogate," and it won't go away.

It began when someone took a hard look at the most popular exhibit at the Houston Zoo's Reptile House, the one called "Poisonous Snakes of Harris County" with the tiny, bright, diffident but deadly coral snake as its centerpiece.

The little red, black and yellow-banded reptile, cousin to the cobra, had been on display in its cage for four and a half years. One visitor, who went by often, noticed that the snake did not appear to have moved in more than four months, which is lethargic even for coral snakes, animals not noted for aerobic activity.

Fearing the snake had slithered off the mortal coil, the visitor called in the press, and the whole thing snowballed. The zoo appeared to be exhibiting a deceased reptile.

Worse: Inquiry revealed that the snake was a rubber replica, a sort of reptilian death mask pulled from a mold made from a dead specimen and painted to look like the real thing.

"I guess people felt cheated," said 30-year-old Robert Rothbard of Houston, a biological modeler who spawned the serpent from a dead antecedent and a mound of rubber. A specialist in snakes, Mr. Rothbard also clones the odd toad.

No fraud was intended, says the unrepentant Mr. Rothbard. Coral snakes, it develops, are rather delicate creatures, and tend to languish and expire under the lights. Even perfect dead specimens are hard to come by, inasmuch as the average citizen, finding one in the heliotrope, tends to shout "Snake!" and mangle it with a garden implement.

The zoo, Mr. Rothbard explained, does indeed have a real, live

specimen, but it was rejected for display on the ground it is an albino.

Now the rubber snake is getting a new paint job, and The Houston Post, which uncovered the sham, is conducting a contest to give it a name. The winner gets a rubber coral snake.

Mr. Rothbard is considering entering: "I thought I'd call it 'Mirage.'"

--New York Times, 24 September 1984

Gator Files His Way to Freedom

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA--A 6-foot male alligator dived into his new pen at the Sawgrass Recreation Area and immediately began filing the pen's aluminum bars with his rough hide. It worked.

"He's trying to get out," shouted onlookers Sunday.

It took only minutes for the alligator, a former resident of the Miami Serpentarium, to file his way to freedom.

A search of the saw grass from airboats for the fugitive alligator was in vain, but reptile handlers said they would get him eventually.

--University Daily Kansan, 9 October 1984
(Submitted by Irving Street, Lawrence)

Two Rare Crocodiles Hatched at Zoo

PHILADELPHIA--Two members of an endangered South American crocodilian species have been hatched at the Philadelphia Zoo after a three-month incubation period, zoo officials said.

The birth of the Paraguayan caimans, similar to alligators, was only the second time a crocodilian species has been hatched in the zoo's 110-year history, said John Groves, curator of amphibians and reptiles. Last August, four dwarf crocodiles were hatched.

Groves said the zoo mated a female from the Cincinnati Zoo with a male from the Baltimore Zoo. The yellow- and brown-banded babies emerged Friday from among the 26 eggs laid July 11 in the zoo's exhibit area.

--Duluth Newspaper, 10 October 1984
(Submitted by Ruth Gennrich, Lawrence)

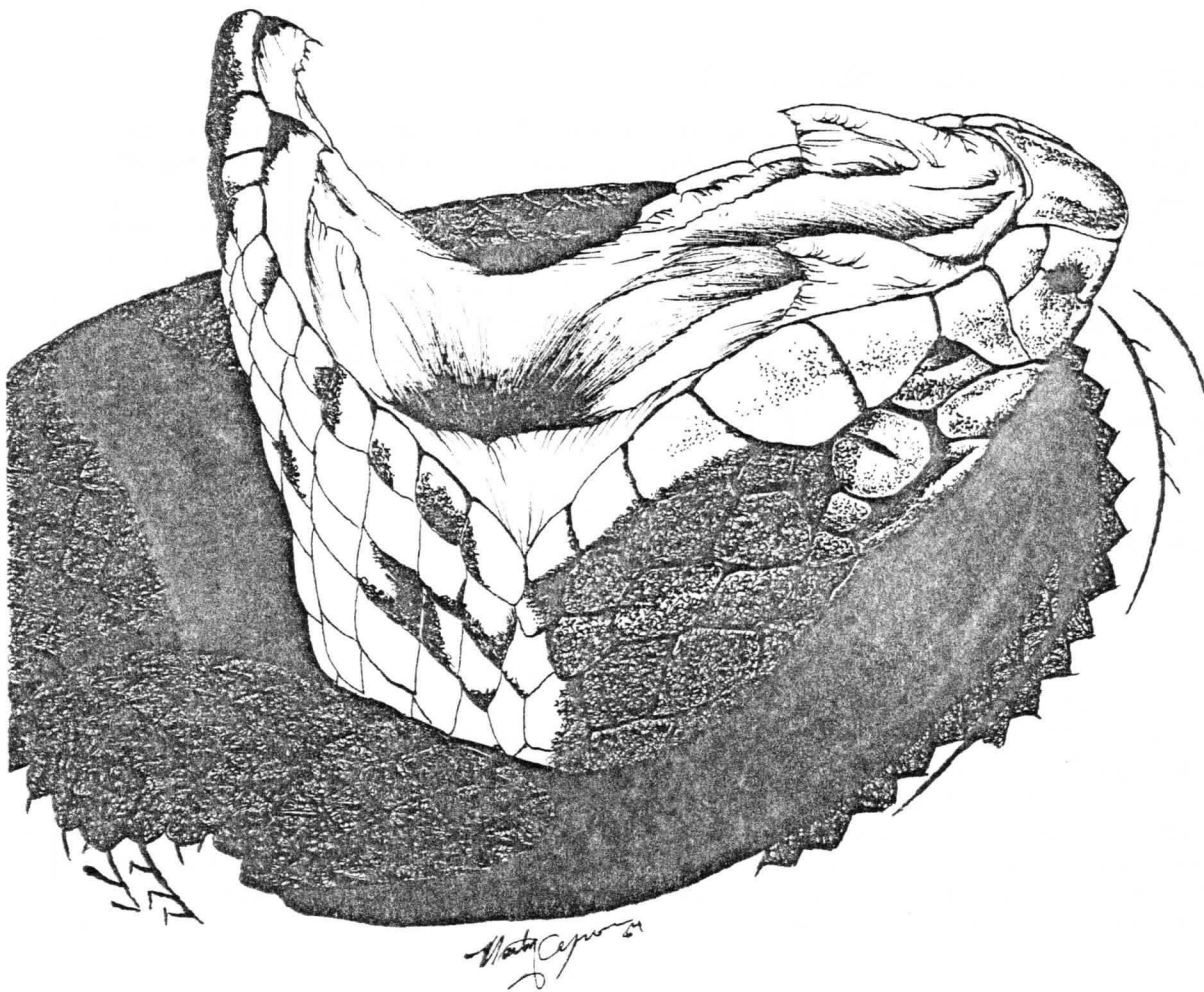
The Cottonmouth in Kansas

Few subjects have aroused more debate and controversy in Kansas herpetological circles than that of the possible occurrence of the Western Cottonmouth, Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma, within our state. Recently, another specimen of this dangerously venomous snake came into the possession of the Museum of Natural History at The University of Kansas bearing locality data placing it in Cherokee County in extreme southeastern Kansas.

Heartened, but by no means convinced with this find, Kelly Irwin and I took time off from our Macroclermys research project to scout out this new locality data and attempt to procure other voucher specimens. Even though equipped with detailed maps and Irwin's familiarity with that neck of the woods we failed to locate either the described locality (our directions led us to dry creek beds, farms, and pastures) or even any permanent water sources in the area!

Radio tracking of transmitter equipped cottonmouths in central Missouri with Max Nickerson of the Milwaukee Public Museum had shown me that although this species may range far afield in search of food, a permanent water source is needed for any viable populations of this snake to exist. Similarly, my field experiences with cottonmouths in Florida and Louisiana were always associated with permanent water sources in the form of streams, canals, or swamps. I doubted either the accuracy of this latest data or the actual authenticity of its capture.

Subsequent searching of the area by Joseph T. Collins did pinpoint the locality where the snake was caught, at a permanent water source, by the way. Unfortunately, the locality was actually one-half mile south of the Kansas state line in Ottawa County, Oklahoma. Although near enough to Kansas to arouse some interest among herpers, it does not represent an actual native cottonmouth from Kansas.



Collins, in the second edition of his book on Kansas herps (1982), followed Rundquist et al. (1978) in questioning the authenticity of two Montgomery County specimens collected in 1976 and 1977, and chose not to recognize this species as a natural part of the Kansas herpetofauna. A specimen collected from the Neosho river at Chetopa by H.H. Hall in 1937 during a period of heavy flooding may represent a cottonmouth transported into our state by natural forces, i.e., high water. The Montgomery County specimens, on the other hand, are probably introductions, the work of misguided snake fanciers.

Thus, in summary, only one apparently authentic cottonmouth record, the 1937 Hall specimen, appears to exist for Kansas. Since this specimen was probably a waif brought in by flood waters it is right to say that it was of natural occurrence within our state. However, cottonmouths apparently do not exist here as a breeding species of permanent stabilized occurrence.

There are records for the Western Cottonmouth from Jasper County, Missouri, and Ottawa County, Oklahoma, both adjacent to Cherokee County, Kansas. Thus, during high waters and possibly even at other, less stressful times, an occasional specimen may turn up in Kansas. I collected a lone specimen of the snake in St. Clair County, Missouri, along the Osage River which has its beginnings in extreme east-central Kansas (the Marias De Cygnes river). However, even during flood times, no reports of real cottonmouths exist from those drainages in Kansas.

The point of all this speculation and re-examination of the status of Kansas cottonmouths is simply this: they may be in Kansas and they may not. People looking for someone to say definitely "Yes" or "No" to the question of whether or not we have cottonmouths in Kansas may be dismayed. It is doubtful that a breeding population exists within our state, but lone individuals may still be carried within our boundaries by the whim of nature or the unethical practices of snake-catchers. I will leave it to the book writers and map makers to decide whether or not the cottonmouth will appear on range maps as native to southeastern Kansas. In my own mind, it should not.

Literature Cited

- Collins, J.T. 1982. Amphibians and reptiles in Kansas. Second edition. Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist. Pub. Ed. Ser., 8:1-356.
Rundquist, E.M., E. Stegall, D. Grow, and P. Gray. 1978. New herpetological records from Kansas. Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci. 31(1):73-77.

Record Turtle From Kansas

Richard Keller and Ralph Massoth got more than they bargained for on their trot line in Sand Creek this summer. Fishing near Nashville, Kansas, on a tributary of the Chikaskia River in extreme southwestern Kingman County, they found that they had hooked a giant turtle--by the foot. Because of the turtle's size and ferocity, they had to shoot it three times even to get it into their boat.

It was a Western Spiny Softshell (Trionyx spiniferus hartwegi), and since they are known to be tender in the stewpot, the turtle was duly delivered to a friend for a feast. Its size was suspicious, however, and before they butchered it, they took the time to call the Kansas

Department of Fish and Game. A check of the records showed that this turtle was not only a record size for Kansas, but for the entire United States. The largest Kansas softshell was just over 16 inches long, the record for the United States was one from Florida that measured 18 inches. This brute was an incredible 20.5 inches from one end of its leathery shell to the other, and weighed 35 pounds.

When word reached KHS member Joseph T. Collins of the Museum of Natural History at KU about the find, he called KHS member Larry Miller from nearby Caldwell to go over and preserve the beast. Even with the turtle dead, the problems were not over. Miller used up all the formaldehyde he could find in Caldwell, and was still stuck with the task of finding a container large enough to hold a 35 pound, 20.5 inch long turtle until he could get it up the the museum in Lawrence.

Once at the museum, Collins verified the turtles identification and scratched his head in amazement. "Of all the great aquatic systems of the eastern United States," he said, "the least likely place for a record softshell is a tributary of the Chikaskia River in Western Kansas." Softshell turtles are found in rivers and streams throughout the eastern part of the country, but it is surprising to find a record size individual at the fringe of the range of the species.

Softshells are shy and wary creatures in the wild, but ferocious when captured. Having her foot caught on the trot line did not make this large female any easier to capture.

"It was very capable of defending itself in the position it was in," Collins explained. Softshells have great speed and agility in the water, and feed on crayfish, insects, worms, snails, clams and frogs. It is commonly thought that fish is a major part of their diet, but actually, fish only account for less than 2% of what the turtles eat.

The turtles hatch from eggs laid in mid-summer, which must incubate buried on the beach for over two months. There are usually 20 eggs per nest. The hatchlings are about 1.5 inches long when they dig out of the sand and head for the water. Males reach sexual maturity at about 4 inches, females at about 7 inches, although both sexes continue to grow after that. A mature female of 7 inches in shell length is thought to be about 9 years old.

So why add the giant turtle to the 200,000 other specimens of reptiles and amphibians in the museum's collection? For one thing,



Richard Keller hoists the record size softshell. Photo by Larry Miller.

says Collins, "it satisfies the public's curiosity as to how big things grow." Knowing the maximum size for a species is also useful for identification and developing life tables to better understand the way animals live in nature.

Each year, Collins publishes new size and locality records for amphibians and reptiles in Kansas, many of which are contributed by KHS members. "If people catch an animal that they consider exceptionally large," says Collins, "they should check in Amphibians and Reptiles in Kansas to see if it is a record. If so, they should bring it to the museum to add to the research collections. If its not a record, it should be immediately released so it can grow large..." Animals that represent new distribution records are also needed in the collection.

Perhaps the most important reason for putting the specimen in the museum is for verification of the record. As long ago as 1878, one writer reported that turtles of this species could regularly be found that reached 24 to 28 inches, and sometimes even giants of 30 inches. Without preserved specimens to back them up, however, these claims have long been considered worthless. This time, the record size turtle won't be the one that got away.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to Cathy Dwigans for permission to use this article, most of which appeared in the December issue of Panorama, the new newsletter of the Museum Associates of the Museum of Natural History at The University of Kansas.)

BOOK REVIEW

Low, Denise. 1984. Spring Geese and Other Poems. Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Softbound, 84 pp, illustrated by Sherry Sparks. Order from Publications Secretary, \$6.50 + postage and handling plus state sales tax.

"They fill the out-of-doors,
their old cellophane skin.
left blowing in yellowed grasses,
their holes unhidden beside creek beds..."

This is from a piece entitled simply "Snakes" in an unusual collection of poems by Denise Low. What is so unusual about the book is that the inspiration for each of these subtle pieces came either from a museum exhibit (most in the Museum of Natural History at The University of Kansas), from a workshop through the museum's Department of Public Education, or from the poet's own experiences in Kansas. Thus it is that these poems are about a stuffed Walrus, some dead cats, hidden arrowheads, rest stops on the interstate highway, Topeka's sidewalks in 1873, wild strawberries, and more. The poems are divided into four groupings, dealing with the Animal Kingdom, Field Trips, Histories, and Flora.

Why is a book of poetry being reviewed in the Kansas Herpetological Society Newsletter? For starters, there is the poem about snakes, and others on turtles, fossil amphibians, and dinosaurs. More importantly,

others on turtles, fossil amphibians, and dinosaurs. More importantly, these poems are all concerned with how the poet sees the natural world. Denise Low has a very penetrating perception of life around her. Too often, in our concentration (or obsession) with just reptiles and amphibians, we neglect the other pieces of the ecosystem. We tend to develop the tunnel vision of the specialist. I suspect that Denise Low is a fine amateur naturalist. Her poems reveal a view of nature that is much broader than that of most of us. We all need to be reminded from time to time that there is a lot out there that we may not be seeing. Reading these poems is a good place to start. Most of them take place just outside your door. I recommend this volume for one of those long winter evenings when thoughts of herping in the field will be frozen in thick ice. Find a quiet spot to sit, and as you read each poem, project it on to your own experience. You just may discover a different way of seeing things you thought you had already seen.

Spring Geese is printed on a high quality paper, nicely bound in a green cover, and is illuminated with 14 line drawings of animals, plants, and S.P. Dinsmoor's mausoleum.

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

NEW RECORDS OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES
IN KANSAS FOR 1984

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 1983 (Collins, 1984). 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 "Amphibians and reptiles in Kansas" (Collins, 1982). Finally, these new records represent information that greatly increases knowledge of the distribution and physical proportions of these creatures in Kansas, and thus gives a better understanding of their biology. This report is my tenth in a series that has appeared annually since 1976.

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 Collins (1982). 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 are those of Collins et al. (1982).

The records listed below are deposited in the herpetological collection of the Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, Lawrence (KU). I am most grateful to members of the Kansas Herpetological Society and to personnel of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission who spent many hours in search of some of the specimens reported herein. Support for field work, that led to the 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 to Philip S. Humphrey, Director, and William E. Duellman, Curator of Herpetology, Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas.

NEW COUNTY RECORDS

TIGER SALAMANDER (Ambystoma tigrinum)

GRAY CO: 7.2 km S and 7.2 km W Ingalls, Sec. 27, T26S, R29W, 23 June 1984, S. Roth and J. Roth (KU 196301). REPUBLIC CO: near Scandia, 1 February 1984, T.W. Cloutier (KU 195565).

WOODHOUSE'S TOAD (Bufo woodhousii woodhousii)

PAWNEE CO: Arkansas River at Larned, 26 July 1980, R.F. Clarke and J. Clarke (KU 191301).

BLANCHARD'S CRICKET FROG (Acris crepitans blanchardi)

OSBORNE CO: S Fork Solomon River, 4 km W Corinth, Sec. 19, T7S, R11W, 8 August 1984, K. Brunson, P. Hilt and C. McAfee (KU 200298). PAWNEE CO: Arkansas River at Larned, 26 July 1980, R.F. Clarke and J. Clarke (KU 191302).

WESTERN CHORUS FROG (Pseudacris triseriata triseriata)

PRATT CO: 3.2 km S Pratt and 1.6 km W Rt. 281, 5 April 1984, T.F. Dillenbeck (KU 195685).

COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE (Chelydra serpentina serpentina)

WILSON CO: Verdigris River, Sec. 23, T29S, R14E, 21 August 1984, K.J. Irwin, M.B. Capron and J. Fraser (KU 199734).

ALLIGATOR SNAPPING TURTLE (Macrolemys temminckii)

LABETTE CO: Neosho River at Oswego, 1886, W.S. Newlon (KU 197329).

This is the third documented record of this turtle from Kansas. The specimen, consisting of a skull and lower jaw, was published by Cragin (1886), but was presumed lost and thus not mapped by Collins (1974, 1982). K.J. Irwin, in the course of an intensive search for new records of the alligator snapping turtle from Kansas, re-

discovered the specimen in 1984 at Washburn University, Topeka. Don Boyer of that institution graciously donated the specimen to KU.

OUACHITA MAP TURTLE (Graptemys pseudogeographica ouachitensis)

NEOSHO CO: Neosho River, Sec. 32, T29S, R21E, 30 August 1984, K.J. Irwin and M.B. Capron (KU 199737).

MISSOURI COOTER (Chrysemys floridana hoyi)

CHASE CO: lake at YMCA Camp Wood, ca. 48 km W Emporia, 17 July 1984, D. Jernigan and S. Case (KU 197109). WILSON CO: Verdigris River at Altoona, Sec. 16, T29S, R16E, 23 August 1984, K.J. Irwin and M.B. Capron (KU 197735).

The specimen (KU 197109) from Chase County is the westernmost record for this turtle in Kansas.

WESTERN PAINTED TURTLE (Chrysemys picta bellii)

MITCHELL CO: ca. 4 km W Beloit, Sec. 12, T8S, R7W, 3 June 1984, A. Kamb (KU 196255).

RED-EARED SLIDER (Chrysemys scripta elegans)

ELK CO: just N Chautauqua County line on Ks. Rt. 99, 19 May 1983, R.F. Clarke (KU 195562). KIOWA CO: 1.6 km E and 7.2 km N Belvidere near Spring Creek, January 1983, B.L. Todd and A. Todd (KU 195563). RUSSELL CO: ca. 7.2 km NE Fairport, Sec. 22, T11S, R15W, 8 June 1984, A. Kamb (KU 196256).

The specimen (KU 196256) from Russell County lends credence to the northwesternmost Kansas record of this species from Trego County mapped by Collins (1982).

WESTERN SLENDER GLASS LIZARD (Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus)

SUMNER CO: SW of Caldwell near Bluff Creek, Sec. 17, T35S, R3W, 18 April 1984, A. Levings (KU 196154).

EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE (Heterodon platyrhinos)

TREGO CO: Cedar Bluff Reservoir area, 19 May 1984, J.T. Collins et al. (KU 196156)

PRAIRIE RINGNECK SNAKE (Diadophis punctatus arnyi)

GRAHAM CO: just W Hill City on U.S. Rt. 24 at Mile Marker 115, 19 May 1984, L. Miller (KU 196155).

PLAINS BLACKHEAD SNAKE (Tantilla nigriceps nigriceps)

GRAHAM CO: just S Hill City on U.S. Rt. 283, Sec. 24, T8S, R23W, 19 May 1984, K.J. Irwin (KU 196162). WALLACE CO: 16 km N Sharon

Springs on Rt. 27, 29 June 1984, D.W. Brzoska (KU 196314).

COACHWHIP (Masticophis flagellum)

SEWARD CO; 24.8 km E and 5.6 km S Liberal, Sec. 13, T35S, R13W, 23 June 1984, S. Roth and J. Roth (KU 196303). STANTON CO: 3.2 km E and 5.6 km N Saunders, Sec. 15, T29S, R43W, 2 June 1984, S. Roth and J. Roth (KU 196302).

BULLSNAKE (Pituophis melanoleucus sayi)

ELK CO: 12.8 km W Longton on U.S. Rt. 160, June 1984, J. Fraser (KU 200300).

COMMON KINGSNAKE (Lampropeltis getulus)

LINCOLN CO: E side Wilson Reservoir along Rt. 232, 6 May 1984, J. Fraser and M. Puckett (KU 196157).

MILK SNAKE (Lampropeltis triangulum)

CHAUTAUQUA CO: 12.8 km NE Sedan, 2 April 1981, J. Fraser (KU 200299). GRAHAM CO: just S Hill City on U.S. Rt 283, Sec. 24, T8S, R23W, 19 May 1984, K.J. Irwin (KU 196159).

TEXAS LONGNOSE SNAKE (Rhinocheilus lecontei tessellatus)

PRATT CO: 8 km E Pratt, October 1983, M. Thomas (KU 195689).

WESTERN RIBBON SNAKE (Thamnophis proximus)

MORRIS CO: 10.4 km SE Council Grove, Sec. 9, T17S, R9E, 26 May 1984, A. Kamb (KU 196254).

LINED SNAKE (Tropidoclonion lineatum)

PRATT CO: within Pratt city limits, October 1983, M. Fitzgerald (KU 195692).

MASSASAUGA (Sistrurus catenatus)

OTTAWA CO: 16 km E Bennington on Ks. Rt. 18, Sec. 2/3, T12S, R1W, 18 May 1984, J.T. Collins, N. Schwarting and K.J. Irwin (KU 196163).

NEW MAXIMUM SIZE RECORDS

MISSOURI COOTER (Chrysemys floridana hoyi)

CHASE CO: lake at YMCA Camp Wood, ca. 48 km W Emporia, 17 July 1984, D. Jernigan and S. Case (KU 197109). Upper shell length = 340 mm (13 3/8 inches). Female.

WESTERN SPINY SOFTSHELL (Trionyx spiniferus hartwegi)

KINGMAN CO: 4.8 km S and 3.2 km W Nashville in Sand Creek near Barber County line, 10 September 1984, R. Keller and R. Massoth, Jr. (KU 197330). Upper shell length = 523 mm (20 1/2 inches), weight = 15.8 kg (35 pounds). Female. This specimen exceeds the maximum size for the species in the United States as reported by Conant (1975).

KANSAS GLOSSY SNAKE (Arizona elegans elegans)

SUMNER CO: 1.6 km S and 0.8 km E Oxford, 17 June 1984, M.B. Capron (KU 199733). Total length = 1170 mm (46 inches). Male.

COPPERHEAD (Agkistrodon contortrix)

JEFFERSON CO: Nelson Environmental Area, 13 July 1984, H.S. Fitch (KU 196643). Total length = 1020 mm (40 inches). Male.

MASSASAUGA (Sistrurus catenatus)

COFFEY CO: 1.6 km N Gridley, 14 June 1984, G. Lairson (KU 197200). Total length = 850 mm (33 1/2 inches). Male.

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A Final Word from the Editor

Thanks for help with assembling, stapling, and mailing the last issue of the Newsletter to Ray Loraine and Jennifer Volpe, and a special thank you to David "Catfish" Cannatella for his assistance with the computer production aspects of the present newsletter.

You may have noticed that this issue, December 1984, is actually coming out in January 1985. For once, the delay was intentional. We wanted to avoid the Christmas mail volume, switch from bulk rate to first class mailing, announce the raising of KHS dues to \$5.00, plus I had to master a new, more efficient system for computer production of the newsletter, which will hopefully make my job easier in the future. Thank you, KHS members, for your patience.

PAY YOUR DUES. As reported in the article in this issue on the annual meeting in Fredonia, annual dues have been raised to \$5.00. Please pay your dues to the Secretary/Treasurer, Larry Miller, as soon as possible to insure the future of KHS.

