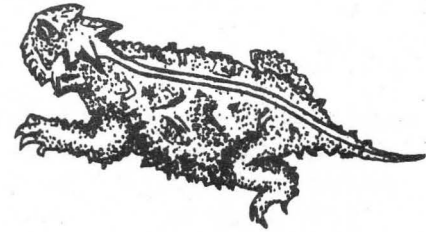




KANSAS
HERPETOLOGICAL
SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 7

June 1975

KHS JULY MEETING AT BETHEL COLLEGE IN NEWTON

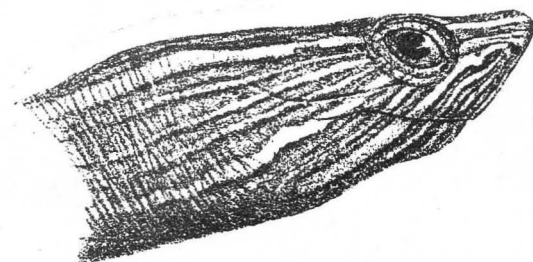
The Kansas Herpetological Society will hold its next meeting on 19 July (Saturday) at Bethel College in Newton Kansas. The program, which starts at 1:30 pm in room 203 of the Science Hall, will feature Dwight R. Platt, professor of biology at Bethel College. Dr. Platt will discuss "Reptile studies on the Sand Prairie Natural History Reservation in Harvey County." All members are urged to attend and bring guests -- after the program, Dr. Platt will lead a short field trip to the Sand Prairie Natural History Reservation.

FIRST KHS FIELD TRIP YIELDS THREE COUNTY RECORDS

The weekend of 2-4 May saw host to the first KHS field trip at the Kingman County Wildlife Management Area. The field trip was a joint project by the KHS and the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission to survey amphibian and reptile populations at selected areas on the Kingman County GMA. Under the organization and direction of KHS President-elect Jan Caldwell, the group began assembling at the field trip site on Friday. Jan, Eric Rundquist and Stephanie Lyall met with Fish and Game personnel Steve Sorenson, Byron Walker and Steve Capel and toured the area to be surveyed. They also had an opportunity to examine the preserved herp collection accumulated and maintained by Area Manager Byron Walker at his headquarters.

After the tour, the KHS group decided to take a closer look at various sections of the area to help determine where to survey the next day. Their close look turned up only one small prairie-lined racerunner and a western chorus frog. At a late hour, the three KHS members retired to Kingman County state lake and made camp.

KHS President George Pisani rolled into the county lake campsite around 6:00 pm and was followed shortly thereafter by Wichita KHS members Dave Grow and Delphi Messinger. Naturally, as soon as tents began to be erected, a storm arrived from the west and dumped rain on the field party, but it also raised hopes for a good night of road hunting for amphibians. So, with visions of hopping toads and leaping frogs, the entire group (minus Pisani who figured to do his collecting on foot) took off at 9:00 pm. A thorough two-



hour search revealed numerous Plains spadefoot toads and a few Rocky Mountain toads. Unfortunately, due to heavy traffic many of the little anurans had been reduced to thick soup on the pavement. A few western chorus frogs and Blanchard's cricket frogs were heard calling. Around 11:00 pm the group elected to call it quits and went back to camp. So ended the first day of the first KHS field trip.

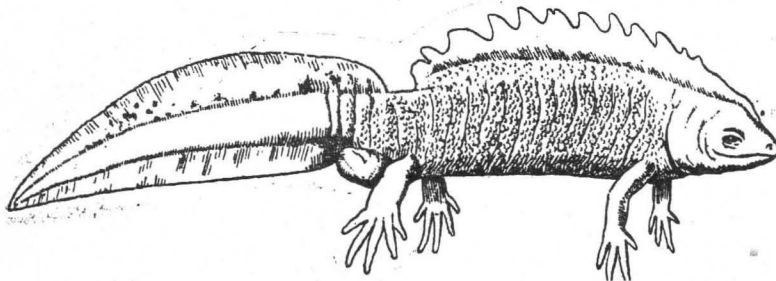
Getting up at the very unherpetological hour of 7:30 am or so, the team drank coffee, collected their wits and/or birdwatched. By 9:30 am almost everyone had wandered off to do a little exploring around the lake. Species observed or collected were: eastern ornate box turtle, northern prairie lizard, Texas brown snake, and bullsnake. An added bonus was several dozen morel mushrooms that Stephanie discovered while pursuing lizards. A gourmet repast loomed on the culinary horizon.

At noon everyone gathered at the Kingman County GMA headquarters for a photography session, lunch, and to receive instructions from Jan Caldwell as to the nature and area of the survey to follow. A little after 1:00 pm the assembled KHS members headed to an experimental test area that had undergone controlled burning by the Kansas Forestry Fish and Game Commission a year earlier. The group spread out into a skirmish line and thoroughly scoured the field. One eastern ornate box turtle and one northern prairie lizard were the total catch. An eastern yellow-bellied racer was almost caught, but the KHS member who stepped on it forgot, in his excitement, to keep his feet firmly planted on the ground -- the snake made a quick exit.

After marking and releasing the captured animals, the herpers went to a natural prairie area in the southwest section of the Game reserve. Two Bullsnakes and a Red-sided Garter snake were caught at this site. Many Bullfrogs and Plains Leopard frogs were seen at a small pond there. The snakes were marked and released.

Around 4:00 pm the pilgrims traveled to a wooded marshy area just north of the prairie area. The search that followed turned up numerous Prairie lizards. The highlight of the trip, a souther Prairie skink, was captured by Delphi Messinger at this place. It was only the sixth known specimen from the state and a slight range extension. It was also the first time this form has been collected outside of the Gypsum Hills in Kansas. The significance of the find was underscored by the extremely rare occurrence of J. T. Collins gushing over a herp find.

As evening approached, various groups went various ways to pursue various meals. After their repasts, they gathered and regrouped at the lake. Three road cruising groups were formed

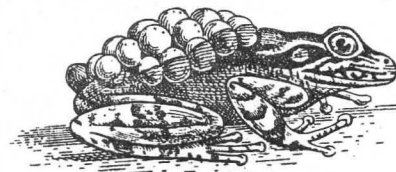


and they went their unsullied way into the night. Plains spadefoots, Great Plains toads, Rocky Mountain toads, Western chorus frogs, and Plains leopard frogs were heard or caught. The most interesting find of the night was a Great Plains, Rocky Mountain toad hybrid. One group had such little luck that they drove all the way to Medicine Lodge 60 miles south of the lake and still saw only one Spadefoot toad and two to three Rocky Mountain toads. And so ended the second day.

On Sunday, most bodies had risen by the inhuman hour of 8:30 am. After breakfast, the various animals were brought out to be photographed and marked. Inquisitive campers gathered about to take a look at the nasty creatures and a few of the members took the opportunity to do a little impromptu public ed work. Big surprise was the seventh known Kansas example of the southern prairie skink being delivered to the KHS campsite by Steve Sorenson--the specimen had been collected by 400 boy scouts, but was still recognizable.

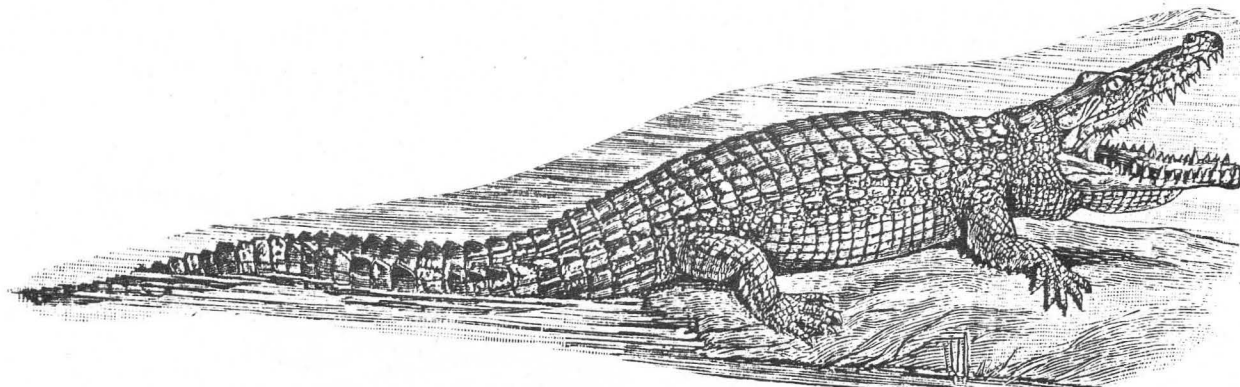
After the photo session, a few people went out to take one last survey around the lake. The only new addition was a midland smooth softshell turtle. So the marked animals were released, farewells said, and the first KHS Field Trip adjourned at 12:00 pm, 4 May 1975.

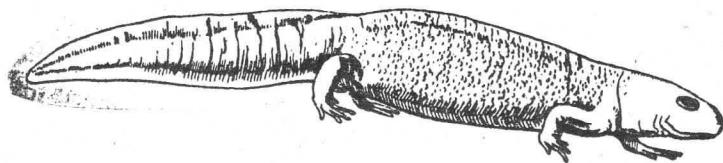
-- ERIC M. RUNDQUIST



GROW JOINS PERRY FOR KHS NEWSLETTER

David Grow, Animal Keeper at the newly opened Sedgwick County Zoo, has been appointed Associate Editor of the KHS Newsletter. His appointment is effective with this newsletter. Dave's duties will be to search for feature articles for the Newsletter and to assume part of the Editor's responsibilities.





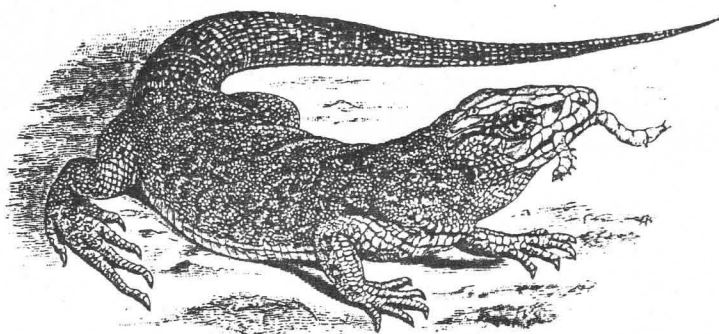
A TRIP TO SOUTHEASTERN KANSAS

On a partly cloudy April 12, Eric Rundquist and Marc Thiry headed south out US 75 for Chautauqua County. Hitting Elk City State Lake in Montgomery County at 1600 hours they found the following critters: four Great Plains skinks (Eumeces obsoletus), three Five-line skinks (Eumeces fasciatus), one Flat Headed snake (Tantilla gracilis) and 13 Ringneck snakes (Diadophis punctatus arnyi). The Tantilla gracilis was not kept. A clever male collared lizard (Crotaphytus c. collaris) managed to escape their collecting bags. An inviting road cut was searched, but yielded no herps. With the chorus frogs (Pseudacris t. triseriata) churping they left the cross-timber highlands surrounding the lake to drive back to Independence for food, with the promise to return. Loyal to their promise, they returned in time to be greeted by a full chorus of American toads (Bufo americanus), Rocky Mountain toads (Bufo w. woodhousei), Plains leopard frogs (Rana pipiens), Pseudacris t. triseriata, and Cricket frogs (Acris crepitans), though the Acris were calling very slowly. Of the above beasties, four Rana pipiens, 14 Bufo, and two lots of Rana eggs were found. Losing interest with herps Marc decided to broaden his scope and collected two species of Tetragnathid spiders. Leaving Elk City State Lake for Elk County, they stopped for a midnight coffee break in the Independence Pizza Hut. Their talents(?) being recognized their reward was a free pizza, courtesy of the Independence Pizza Hut. With hot pizza and coffee in their stomachs, camp was made in Elk County with the drizzle forcing them to spend a restless night cramped inside a car.

Waking up to the sounds of a slow, steady rain, plans were changed from Chautauqua County to Cherokee County. Heading east through steady rain, the young scientists hit Schermerhorn Park at 1300 hours and a brisk 48° F. Noted for its Amphibia--mostly salamanders, Schermerhorn kept its reputation. One leopard frog (Rana pipiens), one Cave salamander (Eurycea lucifuga), two Grotto salamanders (Typhlotriton spelaeus) larvae, seven Eurycea sp. larvae and various aquatic insects were observed. Thirteen cave salamanders were spotted in the twilight zone hiding in cracks in the cave wall or under various stones, with the larvae being captured in the stream below the cave.

Leaving the herp collecting areas at 1800 hours, the tired, rain-soaked campers headed home dodging anurans hopping across highways.

-- JANICE PERRY



CURRENT LITERATURE

This current literature section has been compiled by Mary E. Dawson, and contains articles or books of possible interest to KHS members.

Allen, T. B.

1974. Vanishing wildlife of North America. Special Publication, National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C. 208 pp.

Brown, J. H.

1973. Toxicology and pharmacology of venoms from poisonous snakes. C. C. Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Illinois. xiv + 184 pp.

Campden-Main, S. M.

1970. A field guide to the snakes of South Vietnam. vi + 114 pp. Available from: Division of Reptiles and Amphibians, U. S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. 20560.

Gans, C.

1974. Biomechanics. J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia. x + 261 pp. This book features reptiles and amphibians as subjects of reference.

Gans, C.

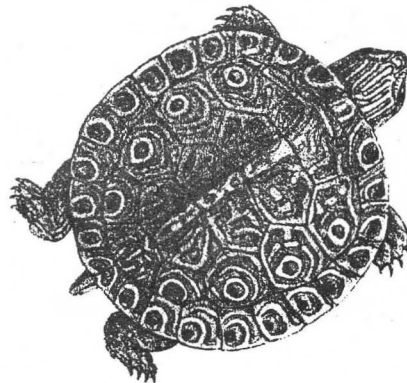
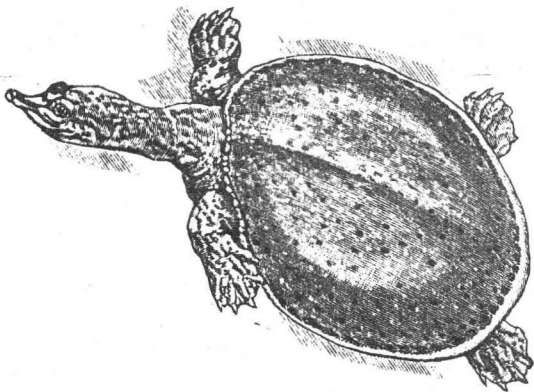
1974. Reptiles of the world. Bantam Nature Guide. 159 pp. Available for \$1.95 from most major book stores.

Simon, H.

1973. Snakes: the fact and the folklore. Viking Press, New York. 128 pp. A good book for younger herpetologists.

ASHTON TO FLORIDA

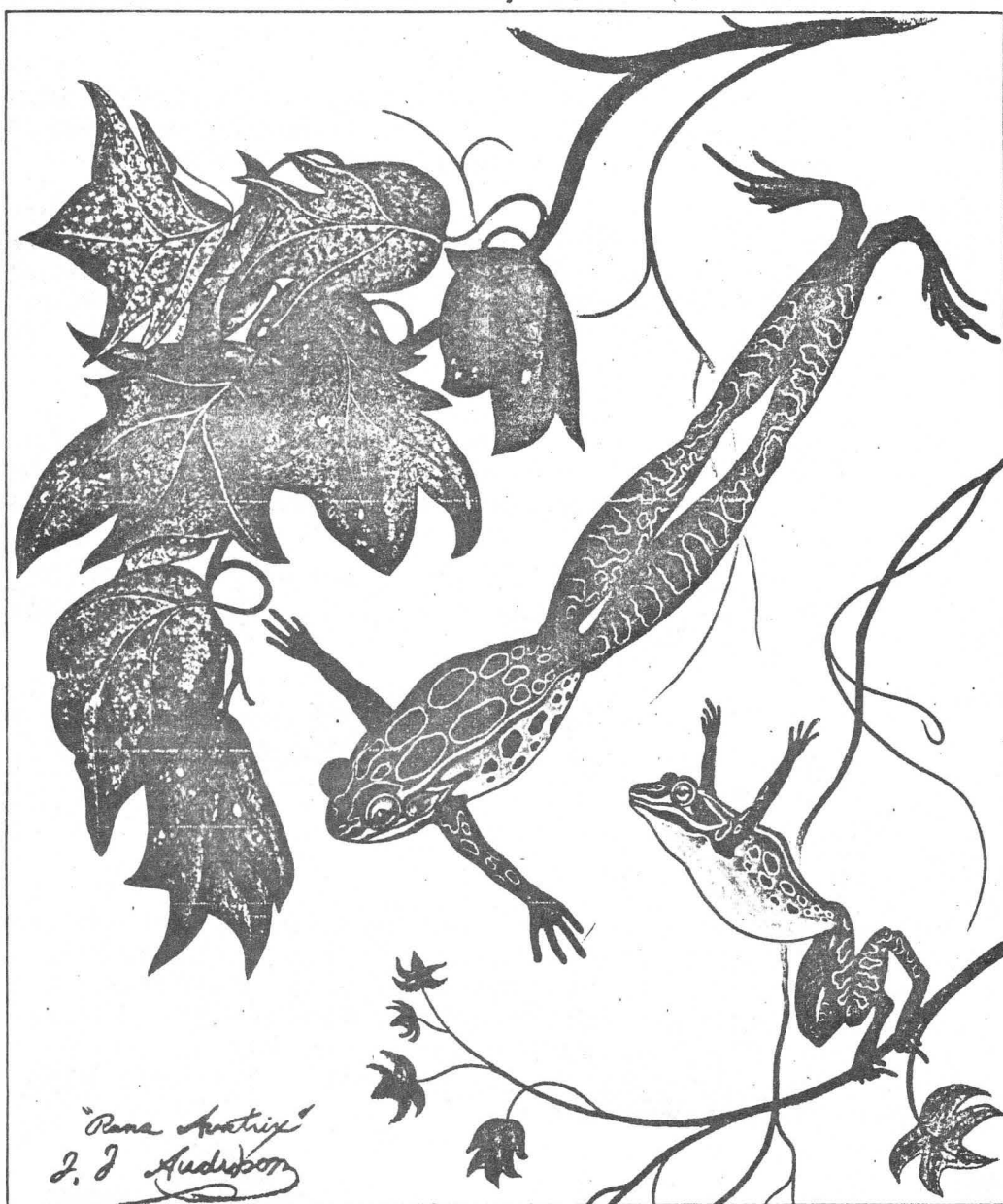
KHS member Ray E. Ashton, coordinator of public education at the KU Museum of Natural History in Lawrence, has accepted a position as assistant curator of education in the department of interpretation at the Florida State Museum in Gainesville. Ray took up his duties in Florida on 31 May. The KHS wishes him well in his new job -- we will miss his companionship and good humor.



Frogs Fly over the Rainbow

Why, then, oh why can't I?

from National Lampoon



Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Frog thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full blurt
In profuse blasts of ether
cool and smoothly girt.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou floatest
Like a cloud of mire;
The blue deep thou bloatest,
And bloating still dost croak,
and croaking ever bloatest.

HATCHLINGS IN THE SCZ DESERT ROOM

Less than four months after the opening of the Sedgwick County Zoo's Herpetarium, several hatchling sideblotched lizards Uta stansburiana have appeared in the walk-through desert exhibit. Unfortunately only two survived, as the others were eaten by larger lizards. The two young lizards were removed as soon as we could catch them, and are being cared for in their own safe terrarium.

With the warmer weather the courtship displays and breeding activities has very much increased in the desert exhibit. Mating behavior in the desert iguanas Disosaurus dorsalis and the sideblotched lizards Uta stansburiana, is observed nearly every day although actual copulation is not nearly as common. We are looking for many hatchlings from these two species. A gravid western fence lizard Sceloporus and a gravid sagebrush lizard Sceloporus have also been observed. Out of seven species, five have been observed mating and we've seen courtship displays in all species.

--DAVID GROW

TWO CENTURIES LATER -- THE SAME PREJUDICE

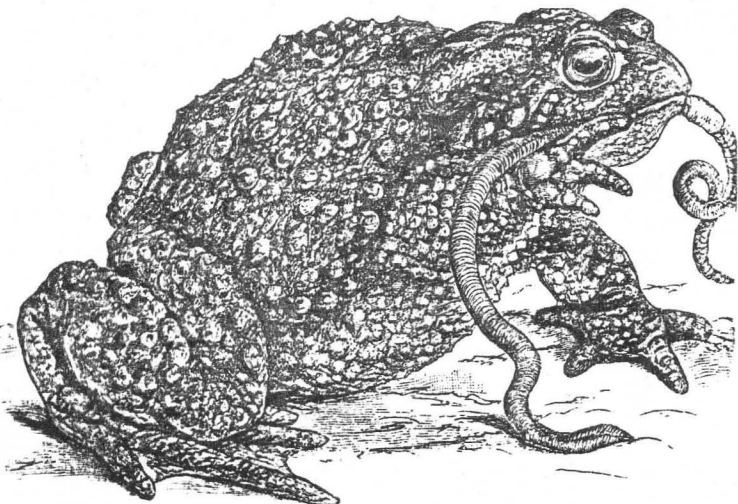
Next year our country celebrates its 200th birthday. We've come a long way in many aspects of our living, but stupid prejudice against snakes, prevalent throughout our nation today, was just as rampant when our country was first being settled -- note the following quote:

A Natural History Observation

In some of the uninhabited parts of these Provinces, there are numbers of these venomous reptiles we call rattlesnakes; felons-convict from the beginning of the world: these, whenever we meet with them, we put to death, by virtue of an old law:

Thou shalt bruise his head

Benjamin Franklin
May 9, 1751



CRAWFISH FROG RE-DISCOVERED IN KANSAS

On the weekend of 5-6 May, we visited southeastern Kansas to collect and photograph amphibians and reptiles. On Saturday evening we were driving along a highway in western Cherokee County when we heard the "snore" of chorusing crawfish frogs (Rana areolata circulosa) in a shallow road-side slough. The distinctive "snoring" was nearly drowned out by a concurrent chorus of leopard frogs in the same ditch. We waded into the slough and started hunting. The water never exceeded two feet in depth, and tall grass grew abundantly everywhere, providing excellent hiding places for these secretive, elusive animals. After an hour of frustrating search, we managed to capture two adult crawfish frogs and a leopard frog. All were floating at the water's surface when caught. We estimate that these two crawfish frogs were part of a chorus of approximately 15 to 20 individuals in the roadside ditch. Most interesting was the complete lack of rain, a condition of weather considered necessary by most texts on amphibians if this species is to breed. Further, these are the first Kansas examples of this species observed in the state in over a decade, and this animal is considered a THREATENED SPECIES in our state by the Kansas Academy of Science. We got excellent photographs of both frogs.

-- JOSEPH T. COLLINS and MARY E. DAWSON



-- The KHS Newsletter is issued every other month by the Kansas Herpetological Society. EDITOR: Janice Perry, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence 66045, and ASSOCIATE EDITOR: David Grow, Sedgwick County Zoo, 5555 Zoo Boulevard, Wichita, Kansas 67212.