

THE MICHIGAN HERPETOLOGIST

NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF HERPETOLOGISTS

DEDICATED TO EDUCATION ABOUT AND CONSERVATION OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY FACE

BY NATALIE ANGIER

Washington D.C. -- To the casual observer, an adult alligator afloat in an algae-dappled pond, its six-foot body motionless save for the sporadic darting of its devilish amber eyes, might conjure up any number of images, none of them fuzzy-wuzzy. A souvenir dinosaur. A log with teeth. A handbag waiting to happen.

For Dr. Daphne Soares, however, a neuroscientist at the University of Maryland, an alligator looks like nothing so much as a big, amphibious and grievously misunderstood kitten. Sure, it sports thick scales and bulging bony knobs



Photo courtesy Miami Museum of Science and Planetarium

called osteoderms rather than fur, and 80 teeth to the house cat's 30, and a tail that, as Dr. Soares learned from personal experience, can dislocate your jaw with a single whack.

But just look at the chubby belly, the splayed legs, the sunny smile that never sets!

"Oh, you are so cute, so adorable, I wish I could just pick you up and give you a hug!" Dr. Soares cooed to the alligators that obligingly posed for her at the National Zoo here on a recent weekday afternoon.

Dr. Soares, 32, who was raised in Rio de Janeiro by a Brazilian mother and an American father and who conveys a blend of high energy and droll ease, has worked with many species of Crocodylia, the reptilian order that includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans and gharials. And

(See **crocodilians** on page 3)

CHECK THESE OUT:

- You can now renew your MSH membership online **and** sign up for a discounted 2 years using your credit card and our secured website. Log onto www.michherp.org for more details.
- **Please!** If you've changed any of your personal information, especially your e-mail address recently, please send a short note to **Barbara Wheeler** and let her know. Thank you!

THE BIG DEAL ABOUT IGUANAS

Iguanas can be the best of pets. They can also be the worst of pets. How they turn out depends largely on how much time you spend with them, how well you work with and understand them, the individual iguana's temperament, and what your expectations are of iguanas in general.

Iguanas reach a total length of 5-6 feet within three to four years (often making them longer than their owners). The body itself only reaches 22-24 inches in length. The rest of the length is in the tail. And that tail



Photo by Philip Greenspun.

is a vital part of the iguana -- used in thermoregulation (how they regulate their body temperature), balance, and defense.

Some iguana owners make the big mistake of believing that because the iguana's body is only 2 feet long, they only need to pro-

vide an enclosure that's 2-3 feet long. Wrong. An iguana needs an enclosure 1.5-2 times its total length, so an iguana that's 6 feet long needs an enclosure that's at least 9 feet long. Many people realize too late just why so many experienced iguana keepers call these lizards giant green iguanas. -- Reprinted from *dummies.com* e-tips. Submitted by Susan Owens. For more information about iguanas, check out Melissa Kaplan's book, *Iguanas For Dummies*.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THINGS TO DO, THINGS TO SEE

MSH general membership meetings are open to the public, and members are encouraged to bring guests. Junior member meetings begin at 4 PM, the board meets at 5:30 PM, members are welcome at 7 PM, and the program begins at 7:30 PM.. Members are welcome to observe MSH board meetings.

- March 19 MSH MONTHLY MEETING. It's time once again for the ever popular "Bring Your Favorite Herp" meeting. So bundle up that most special critter of yours and bring it on over to the Scott Center in Lansing. The show starts at 7:30 PM.
- April 2,3 12th ANNUAL ReptileFest. The Chicago Herpetological Society presents the nation's largest educational reptile and amphibian show. 40,00 square feet of exhibits, vendors, and activities. MSH will have a booth to raise awareness and money for our Society. Come on down if you can possibly make it. University of Illinois-Chicago P.E. Building, 901 W. Roosevelt Rd. 10 AM till 5 PM both days. Adults \$8, children 3-11 \$6. Log onto www.ReptileFest.com for more info.
- April 9 MSH EDUCATIONAL EXHIBIT: MSU VET-A-VISIT. Sponsored by and held on the grounds of the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine. This is a big event and we need lots of exhibitors who can attend from 8:30 AM 'till 4 PM. Contact **Barbara Wheeler** as above.
- April 16 MSH MONTHLY MEETING. Speaker to be announced. John Ball Zoo, Grand Rapids.
- April 22, 23 ANNUAL KENTUCKY HERP WEEKEND. Co-sponsored by the Kentucky Reptile Zoo and the Natural Bridge State Recreation Area, both near Slade, KY. This is an awesome opportunity to get out of the cold and into some early season (for us Michiganders anyway) field herping. Contact your editor or **Theresa Moran** at 517.372.5730 or oldherper@acd.net for more details.
- May 7 MSH ANNUAL SPRING EXPO. Once again, we have contracted for the use of the gymnasium at Goddard Elementary School in Grand Rapids for this great event. We need volunteers and vendors to help make this expo a success. Contact **Rob Cook** at 517.819.2723 or greenfire2000@hotmail.com for more info.

THE MICHIGAN HERPETOLOGIST

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS . . .

Josh and Lisa Winklestein

Brian Cressman

Brent Jackobsen

Nicholas Worthington

Devin Hill

AND RENEWING MEMBERS . . .

The Mellen family (Tamara, Dewayne, Cameron, and Mariah)

Gary and William Rezny

Michael Brophy (R.E.P.T.I.L.E. Inc.)

Matt Lindstrom

Lauren Hicks

Paul Suplinskas

Stanley "Buster" Cowton

DNR UNVEILS NEW RESOURCE TOOL ON THE WEB

State wildlife officials today announced a new Web site that will help citizens identify the potential presence of rare species and unique natural features on lands in Michigan.

Called the Endangered Species Assessment, the new Web site can be accessed by going to www.michigan.gov, clicking on Online Services and scrolling down to Business Online Services.

The site is designed to provide private landowners, consultants, local governments, developers, and other citizens with a preliminary evaluation of whether endangered, threatened or special concern species; high quality natural communities or unique natural features have been known to occur at or near a site of interest. Following the preliminary assessment, users may contact the DNR to request a more formal assessment to learn whether rare species or unique natural features have been documented at or near the location.

"The Web site makes it possible for people to access important information about rare species early in the planning process," said Todd Hogrefe, endangered species coordinator. "With this new resource tool, people will be able to anticipate potential adverse impacts and then be able to take the appropriate actions to avoid them."

The Web site was developed through a partnership between the DNR, the Department of Information Technology Center for Geographic Information, and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory at MSU Extension.

(crocodilians from page 1)

while she admires the entire crocodilian dynasty, alligators are her favorite. "I absolutely love these creatures," she said. "They're beautiful, elegant and goofy at the same time."

They are also unmistakably observant, and as curious as, well, kittens. When Dr. Soares took a seat near the glass of the enclosure, the alligators paddled over for a close-up view. "They get a bad rap for being stupid little reptiles," she said. "But they're very curious, very alert, and they want to know what's going on."

In fact, the reptiles are virtual newshounds, for whom the term "current events" holds particular meaning. Dr. Soares, who specializes in neuroethology - the neural underpinnings of animal behavior - has lately discovered a kind of sixth sense unique to crocodilians, which are often referred to generically as crocodiles.

She has determined that the mysterious little bumps found around the jaws of some crocodile species and across the entire bodies of others, which naturalists had long observed but never before understood, are sensory organs exquisitely suited to the demands of a semisubmerged ambush predator.

The pigmented nodules encase bundles of nerve fibers that respond to the slightest disturbance in surface water and thus allow a crocodile to detect the signature of a potential meal - an approaching fish, a bathing heron, a luckless fawn enjoying its last lick of water.

The discovery of a novel sensory system is just one of a host of new findings about the prowess and performance of an impressively ancient and resilient clan. Crocodilians have toughed it out in one guise or another for 230 million years, some by land, others by sea, most astraddle, but all the while, stylishly crocodile.

"Our primate ancestors were ratty little things that went around stealing eggs," said Dr. Perran Ross, a crocodile specialist and professor of wildlife ecology and

conservation at the University of Florida. "Ancestral crocodiles had basically the same body plan we see today, apparently because it works."

As scientists are just beginning to appreciate, that body plan is panzer, a tropical tank from the skin in. Beneath its scaly sheath and craggy osteoderms is another layer of armor, built of rows of bony overlapping shingles, or osteoscutes, that are both strong and flexible. And beneath that formidable barrier is an immune system that merits the modifier: it is virtually immune to defeat.

A crocodile wallows in mudholes, lagoons and other microbial Club Meds, yet it can suffer the most harrowing sort of injury - a limb torn off, its belly ripped open, its lower jaw sheared away - without so much as shedding a crocodile tear.

"Crocodiles have tremendous robustness against bacterial infection," Dr. Ross said. "The sort of wound that would leave any of us severely septicemic doesn't seem to touch them." That immunological ferocity has inspired researchers at the Johns Hopkins to begin screening crocodile blood in search of new antibiotics.

Crocodilians are also think tanks, and will engage in sophisticated behavior that leaves most reptiles in the cold. They vocalize to each other. They squabble over status and can distinguish between friendly hominid and annoying graduate student with dart gun. In caring for their young, they outcluck a mother hen, for what hen can protect her babies by carrying them in her jaw?

"They're not like big lizards," said Dr. George Amato, a geneticist at the Wildlife Conservation Society, a division of the Bronx Zoo. "It's clear when you spend time with them that they are quite complex."

They're not always like one another, either. Dr. Amato and his colleagues, including Dr. John Thorbjarnarson of the conservation society, are close to declaring that the so-called Nile crocodile, the giant meat eater renowned throughout

Africa for having the might and maw to prey on adult zebras, wildebeest and the occasional fisherman, may not be a single breed of crocodile after all, as has long been thought, but rather two distinct species, one in East Africa and Madagascar, the other adding zest to the rivers and watering holes of Central and West Africa.

The two populations look roughly the same - the same shade of dug-up artichoke, the same heavy but pointy snout that distinguishes it from the blunter, rounder muzzle of an alligator, the same jutting bottom teeth that can still be seen when the jaws are shut, again in contrast to alligators. Yet the DNA sequences of the two crocodile factions are so distinct, said Dr. Amato, "they may not even be each other's closest relative."

Given the fact that there are only about two dozen crocodilian species in the world today, the designation of a new family herald would be considered a major event in the annals of crocodilian research, and would probably take years to gain general acceptance and appropriate nomenclature.

The researchers also would like to know which of the two crocodiles is the "true" Nile crocodile, that is, the crocodile so-named by the ancient Egyptians, who worshiped the reptile, modeled their river god Sobek after it, and on occasion mummified specimens with all the thanatoptic reverence normally reserved for pharaohs or - wouldn't you know it - the pharaoh's favorite cat.

Dr. Thorbjarnarson and Dr. Amato hope to obtain DNA samples from a mummified crocodile and compare them with those of the living varieties of the Nile. -- Edited from TWPonline, February 14, 2005

MICH-HERP NEWS BRIEFS . . .

LEAPING INTO FROG BIOLOGY

Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia -- Scientists have been arguing for 30 years about whether amphibians can regulate their body temperature by sitting in the sun. One of the leaders of the Charles Darwin University research project, Keith Christian, said yesterday: "This is a basic aspect of amphibian biology. To understand the consequences of habitat or climate change on frog populations, we need to understand exactly how frogs interact with their environment." He said many reptiles controlled their body temperature by basking in the sun, but this was difficult for amphibians because they have wet skin. "A frog sitting in the sun will increase its rate of evaporation," Dr Christian said. "So, depending on the other conditions at the time, it's body temperature may either go up or go down."

Scientists also believe frogs can thermo regulate -- control their temperature themselves. The grant from the Australian Research Council has been given to Charles Darwin's school of science and primary industries. -- *HerpDigest*, November 25, 2004

MORE THAN 200 SCIENTISTS SAY THEY'VE BEEN TOLD TO ALTER FINDINGS

Los Angeles, CA -- A survey released Wednesday stated that more than 200 scientists employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service say they have been directed to alter official findings to lessen protections for plants and animals. The survey of the agency's scientific staff of 1,400 had a 30% response rate and was conducted jointly by the Union of Concerned Scientists and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

A division of the Department of the Interior, the Fish and Wildlife Service is charged with determining which animals and plants should be placed on the endangered species list and designating areas where such species need to be protected. More than half of the biologists and other researchers who responded to the survey said they knew of cases in which commercial interests, including timber, grazing, development and energy companies, had applied political pressure to reverse scientific conclusions deemed harmful to their business. "The pressure to alter scientific reports for political reasons has become pervasive at Fish and Wildlife offices around the country," said Lexi Shultz of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Mitch Snow, a spokesman for the Fish and Wildlife Service, said the agency had no comment on the survey, except to say "some of the basic premises just aren't so."

The two groups that circulated the survey also made available memos from Fish and Wildlife officials that instructed employees not to respond to the survey, even if they did so on their own time. Snow said that agency employees could not use work time to respond to outside surveys. Fish and Wildlife scientists in 90 national offices were asked 42 questions and given space to respond in essay form in the mail-in survey sent in November.

One scientist working in the Pacific region, which includes California, wrote: "I have been through the reversal of two listing decisions due to political pressure. Science was ignored -- and worse, manipulated, to build a bogus rationale for reversal of these listing decisions." More than 20% of survey responders reported they had been "directed to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information." However, 69% said they had never been given such a directive. And, although more than half of the respondents said they had been ordered to alter findings to lessen protection of species, nearly 40% said they had never been required to do so.

Sally Stefferud, a biologist who retired in 2002 after 20 years with the agency, said Wednesday she was not surprised by the survey results, saying she had been ordered to change a finding on a biological opinion. "Political pressures influence the outcome of almost all the cases," she said. "As a scientist, I would probably say you really can't trust the science coming out of the agency." A biologist in Alaska wrote in response to the survey: "It is one thing for the department to dismiss our recommendations, it is quite another to be forced (under veiled threat of removal) to say something that is counter to our best professional judgment." -- *HerpDigest*, February 13, 2005. Originally reported by Julie Cart in *The LA Times*, February 11, 2005

DONALD B. HAMPER, OHIO REPTILE DEALER PLEADS GUILTY IN FEDERAL COURT

Columbus, OH -- Donald B. Hamper, a reptile dealer from Columbus, Ohio, pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio to a three-count Information charging him with the illegal purchase, sale and interstate transportation of Blanding's turtles-- and other wildlife protected by federal and state laws. By pleading guilty to the Information, Hamper waived his right to indictment and trial and agreed to serve one year and one day confinement, to pay a \$3,000 fine and \$7,000 restitution to the

State of Michigan Fish and Game Protection Fund, and pay a \$300 special assessment to the court.

In his plea agreement, Hamper admitted that between June 2001 and June 28, 2003, he knowingly participated in illegal interstate purchases and sales involving 53 Blanding's turtles and other wildlife including spotted turtles, wood turtles, and several species of snakes. Hamper's commercial trade in the rare turtles, valued between \$30,000 and \$70,000, is prohibited by various wildlife laws in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. The interstate trade in wildlife obtained in violation of state laws is a violation of the Lacey Act, the nation's oldest federal wildlife protection law. Maximum penalties for felony violations of the Act include imprisonment of up to five years, and fines of up to \$250,000 for each offense.

In addition, Hamper agreed to donate \$2,500 to the Wildlife Education Fund operated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and publish a statement in Reptile Magazine acknowledging his criminal conduct and describing his penalties. He also agreed to be placed on supervised probation following his release from prison during which time he is prohibited from possessing or handling any reptiles or amphibians. All of the agreed to will be evaluated by U.S. District Court Judge Algenon L. Marbley in Columbus, Ohio, prior to sentencing. No sentencing date has been set.

Hamper's guilty plea and penalties resulted from a negotiated, global agreement between the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio, the Department of Justice, and the Franklin County, Ohio, Prosecutor's Office. Hamper also faced prosecution in Franklin County, on violations of Ohio Revised Code and Columbus city codes involving record keeping, tagging and harboring numerous venomous Gila monsters and beaded lizards. As part of a separate plea agreement with Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, Hamper agreed to relinquish ownership of all wildlife seized from him during the course of the investigation including the venomous Gila monsters and beaded lizards.

Hamper's plea agreement is the result of Operation E & T, is a joint investigation into the illegal reptile trade conducted by special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and investigators of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, Michigan and Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Hamper, a co-organizer of the All Ohio Reptile Show held monthly in Columbus, bought and sold turtles and other reptiles during the All Ohio show and similar venues in Michigan and Indiana. He also sold reptiles over the Internet. -- *HerpDigest*, February 27, 2005. Originally a press release of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

\$26,000 ALLOCATED TO 'UN-THREATEN' LAKE ERIE WATERSNAKES

Port Clinton, OH -- Researchers have received more than \$26,000 to help remove a watersnake native to the Lake Erie islands from the federal threatened species list after the population has rebounded from once-dwindling numbers. This comes after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department allocated \$960,000 in 2003 for a plan to preserve shoreline habitat and to study the Lake Erie watersnake. The goal is to continue to increase the snake population to the point where the snakes, which are only found on the Lake Erie Islands and Catawba Island and Marblehead peninsulas, no longer need to be listed as federally threatened, said Northern Illinois Associate Professor Richard King, who is participating in the study. "These are a unique component of the wildlife biology of the Lake Erie Islands area," King said.

The recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife \$26,296 grant will allow King, NIU graduate student Kristin Stanford, a year-round South Bass Island resident who studies the animals at the Ohio State University Stone Lab, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife to continue to monitor, tag and study the snakes, King said. Federal wildlife biologist Megan Seymour said she did not have information about the grant, and ODNR spokeswoman Carolyn Caldwell and Stanford were not available for comment.

The snakes, considered by some locals to be a nuisance, are significant to the Lake Erie because 90 percent of their diet consists of the Round Goby. The Goby is an invasive fish brought in by ballast waters from the oceans that feeds on Lake Erie fish, causing problems in the lake's ecosystem, King said. "There's an important possible contribution being made there in perhaps slimming the Goby population in that region," King said.

Several factors have caused the snakes to rebound. Last year, the state acquired most of North Bass Island, which will be kept as natural habitat, and the former Lonz Winery property on Middle Bass Island, which is now a state park, King said. Both areas will provide nesting and homes to the reptiles. There have also been decreases in the amount of snakes humans have intentionally or accidentally killed, King said. The reptiles also adapt to some development, making homes under docks and other shoreline structures, he said. "A lot of human activities are compatible with the existence of the Lake Erie Watersnakes," he said. The watersnakes are the size of a pencil when born, but they can grow to more than 4 feet in length and a couple of inches in diameter, he said. They are active from May to October, mating in May and June and giving birth to 20-30 snakes in September. They have small, sharp teeth, but generally do not attack, he said. -- *HerpDigest*, February 27, 2005. Originally reported in the Port Clinton News Herald.

RECENT HERPETOLOGICAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Online Florida Snake Guide: An online Guide to the Snakes of Florida has been compiled, edited, and formatted by F. Wayne King and Kenneth L. Krysko, Division of Herpetology, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida, Gainesville. Access it at: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/natsci/herpetology/fl-guide/onlineguide.htm> The individual species accounts were authored by students who enrolled in the University of Florida Natural History of Reptiles and Amphibians class or who worked in the FLMNH Division of Herpetology.

Workshop On The Status, Threats And Research/Survey Needs Of The Massasauga With Emphasis On Midwestern Populations Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Mound City, MO -- March 26, 2005

Overview: The Massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*) has been steadily declining throughout its range. The primary reasons attributed to this decline are habitat loss and persecution. Recognition of the potential problems faced by Massasauga populations has led to a steady, notable increase in work related to the ecology and status of this species. Many research and survey projects have been both initiated and concluded throughout the range of the Massasauga over the past few years. This continued interest in Massasauga makes this an ideal time to bring together a variety of researchers, resource managers, and conservation biologists to discuss the current status and management of this unique resource during an intense, one-day workshop. We plan to focus our attention on a limited series of specific goals, and expect to conclude the workshop with a series of recommendations to be forwarded to state and federal management agencies.

GOALS: 1) Provide an overview of the current status of Massasauga populations, with emphasis on populations in the Midwest. 2) Discuss specific threats to Massasauga populations, and possible solutions to those threats. 3) Provide current information on Massasauga genetics. 4) Provide a specific list of research, survey, and management needs, relative to the three previously listed goals, that can be forwarded to state and federal resource management agencies. Due to space constraints and security requirements at the meeting site, there will be no walk-in, on-site registration. All participants must be pre-registered. For more information please contact: Frank Durbian Refuge Wildlife Biologist Squaw Creek NWR PO Box 158 Mound City, Missouri 64470 Office: 660-442-5754 x 17 FAX: 660-442-5248 Frank_Durbian@fws.gov *Editor's note: Please be advised that all spaces for this event may be filled by the time you read this. -- From HerpDigest, February 13, 2005.*

Hoop-Snakes -- Interesting Challenge From The Houston Chronicle: *Editor's note: The following is from a recent article of Leon Hale's on some recent reports he has received of what are called urban myths. Or in this case a herp myth.*

"One of the customers, Joyce Denham, has sent me a hoop-snake-sighting report, the first I've received in almost two years. She was at Langtry, which is upstream from Del Rio on the Rio Grande, and she saw this hoop snake rolling across what she calls the desert. Nothing especially exciting in the report. Just that snake, making a circle of itself and rolling along, not bothering anybody.

I've been getting hoop-snake stories for I guess 50 years. A reptile of this kind puts its tail in its mouth, arranges itself in a circle, and travels by rolling like a hoop at impressive speeds. All the snake books I ever read, written by experts, say no such creature exists. Yet I keep getting these hoop-snake-sighting reports, from perfectly intelligent people. I ought to tell you that Denham saw that snake a long time ago, and is just now telling me about it. Most of the sightings I hear about happened a long time ago that way. I would be really interested in receiving a hoop-snake sighting made in recent times, say within the last couple of years. So if you see one, let me know. Don't hesitate to include lots of detail. Exactly when and where the sighting occurred. The estimated size of the snake. The direction of its travel, and its approximate speed. Did it seem to be chasing anything? Were there witnesses other than yourself?

Please don't try to fool me. You'll be wasting your effort. I know what a real hoop-snake sighting is like. A few days after the

last time I mentioned these interesting reptiles, I received a report about a hoop snake 12 feet long that had a luminous stinger on the end of its tail and it went around stinging cattle and trees and killing them. Come on, if we're to unravel this mystery, we must deal with real hoop snakes, not imaginary ones. I am holding out for a photograph of a hoop snake." leon.hale@chron.com
 LEON HALE P.O.Box 4260 Houston TX 77210 *Editor's note: Extra credit if you can get a photo of the rare hula-hoop snake. -- From HerpDigest, February 13, 2005*

NEWS RELEASE: The Center for North American Herpetology Lawrence, Kansas <http://www.cnah.org> 11 February 2005.

New Rattlesnake Exhibit The Wildlife Discovery Center at Elawa Farm, located at 1401 Middlefork Drive in Lake Forest, Illinois, 60045, received a generous grant from TAP Pharmaceuticals to build a new rattlesnake exhibit and develop a crotaline conservation education program for middle school students. This new exhibit, called "The Grass Is Rattling" is set to open in the Spring of 2005 and will feature over 25 species of rattlesnakes from North, Central and South America making this one of the country's largest public rattlesnake exhibits. From the diminutive Pigmy Rattlesnake to the impressively large Neotropical Rattlesnakes, there will be something for everyone. The central theme in this exhibit will be conservation education and the importance of rattlesnakes in the environment. One of the focus animals in this exhibit will be the endangered Eastern Massasauga, *Sistrurus catenatus*, and, the Timber Rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, who are both fast disappearing in Illinois. In addition to the live rattlesnake displays, there will be interactive displays including the "rattle box" and much more. Additionally, a curriculum is being written that will allow school groups to come and visit the exhibit to teach them about rattlesnake conservation. One of the unique aspects of this education program will provide opportunities for middle school students to apply technology to the learning experience by using GPS, Radio Telemetry and Pit Tagging devices. They will learn about the many advances taking place and the current research that is being done with Crotalines. This facility also has an extensive collection of non venomous reptiles and birds (raptors). There will be a nominal fee for entrance into this new exhibit, however, school programs are free of charge as a result of the generous grant from TAP. For more information, contact Rob Carmichael at: The Wildlife Discovery Center at Elawa Farm City of Lake Forest Parks & Recreation 1401 Middlefork Drive Lake Forest, Illinois 60045 847-615-4388 office 847-283-8563 fax carmichr@cityoflakeforest.com (work email) robertcarmichael@comcast.net (home email)

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Dates:

Dry Season (reptile focus): **March 15-24, 2005**

Wet Season (amphibian focus): **July 1-10, 2005**



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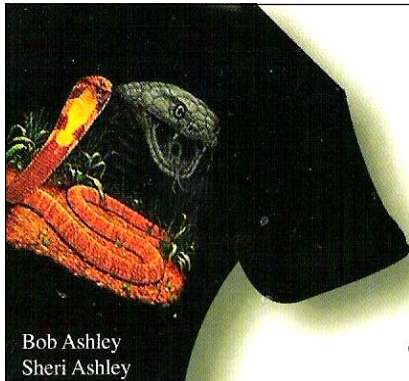
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THE TREE TOADS

A tree toad loved a she toad

That lived up in a tree;

She was a 3-toed tree toad,

But a 2-toed toad was he.

The 2-toed tree toad tried to win

The she toad's friendly nod;

For the 2-toed tree toad loved the ground

That the 3-toed tree toad trod.

But vainly the 2-toed tree toad tried --

He couldn't please her whim;

In her tree toad bower with her v-toe power,

The she toad vetoed him.

-- from *'Dopeia'*, a spoof on the very prestigious *Copeia* publication. It was published as part of an annual joint meeting in 1988.

WHEN IRIS' EYE ARE SMILING

BY HANK BAMBERGER, UTICA (NY) ZOO

She does not care for me at all
But still I can pretend
That, though she does not love me
Still she's glad that I'm her friend.

But truth is that her heart is cold,
Her sluggish blood is chill,
She does not care for me at all.
I know she never will.

I turn my tear-filled eyes to her
And whisper that I care.
And she returns my looks and words
With cold, unblinking stare.

She does not care the slightest bit
If my poor heart should break;
And I, alas, am not surprised,
For Iris is a snake.

So love a frog or finch, my friend,
In fields or zoo or house,
But always, *always*, ALWAYS
Choose a mammal as your spouse.

Reprinted from Symbiosis, the newsletter of the Association of Zoo and Aquarium Docents, January, 2005.

Submitted by Susan Owens



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Classified Ads

For Sale: baby corn snakes, 21 color varieties altogether; just a few examples: candy cane \$35, albino motley \$27, snow stripe \$45, snow hurricane \$65, creamsicle \$25. Also baby albino Leopard geckos \$25 ea. Contact **Rob Cook** at 517.819.2723 or greenfire2000@hotmail.com for more information.

AVT Enclosures at Wholesale Prices: Tobin Herpetological is now offering AVT Reptile Enclosures at Special prices to MSH members. We have all different sizes available. For more information contact **Eric Tobin** at 269.729.4623 or via his website at www.tobinherpetological.com.

Used Enclosures: 10 G Neodesha; \$25. Melamine Rack 12 unit (18x23x80), fits 12 28QT Rubbermaid; \$75 comes with two heat cables. 55 G Saltwater Tank; \$25. 20 G high (24x17x13); \$15. Also have three tanks that were used to house rodents One L30xW12xT18; \$10 with screen top. One L36xW12xT14; \$10 with screen top. One L36xW12.5xT17 with top; \$15. Contact **Eric Tobin** as above.

To a good home: Banded California Kingsnake: Dark, dark brown and white wide-banded. Female, 8 years old. Captive born & raised. \$50. Hasn't been handled for a while, but it's a pretty snake and tames down quickly. Contact Buster Cowton at busterbird53@comcast.net.

Free to a qualified MSH member: I have an 8 foot male albino Burmese Python and a 5 foot female Boa Constrictor. Both are very nice looking, healthy specimens that feed wonderfully. I will give them to an MSH member who would be willing to use them in educational programs, outreaches etc. Contact **Matt Lindstrom** at reptilian64@hotmail.com or 517.337.0946.

For Sale: Snake hooks, curved (cage style) or straight (field style). \$15 each or 2 for \$25. Can bring to MSH meetings. **Paul Suplinskas**; 231.834.7803.

About *The Michigan Herpetologist*

The Michigan Herpetologist is published monthly by the Michigan Society of Herpetologists, a non-profit organization "dedicated to member and public education about reptiles and amphibians."

"The mission of *The Michigan Herpetologist* is to inform the membership of Society events, to report on those events whenever possible, to provide interesting information about the herpetological community, and to provide members a platform to express their interests and views."

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Classified ads are free to MSH members. Others may contact the editor for rates. Articles by members and interested individuals are always welcome in almost any format. Please contact the editor.

This newsletter is now delivered in full color electronically as a PDF (adobe acrobat) file; e-mail the editor to start receiving it that way.

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MSH MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To join MSH, please complete the following application and return it,
with your membership fee, to:
Membership Secretary,
Michigan Society of Herpetologists,
321 W. Oakland Ave., Lansing, MI 48906

____ Individual (\$15.00) ____ New Member
____ Family (\$20.00) ____ Renewal
____ Junior (\$12.00) ____ Name or Address Change
____ Commercial (\$30.00)
____ Sponsorship (\$100)

Name(s) (Please Print): _____ Date: _____

Parent or Guardian (if member is a minor): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Herpetological Area of Interest: _____

Would you be willing to volunteer for any MSH events? Yes No

Would you like to be listed in the MSH Directory? Yes No

TMH

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Michigan Society of Herpetologists (MSH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to member and non-member education about reptiles and amphibians.

MEETING INFORMATION:

MSH holds its general meetings alternately in the cities of Lansing and Grand Rapids (see directions below). Meetings generally are held on the third Saturday of the month (but check the Calendar of Events). Meetings are open to the public and the society encourages anyone with an interest in herpetology to attend.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Michigan Society of Herpetologists,
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DIRECTIONS TO MSH MEETING PLACES

SCOTT CENTER - LANSING

The Scott Center is located at 125 W. Main Street where Capitol Avenue dead-ends at Main. Main Street is the freeway access road that runs immediately south of I-496 in downtown Lansing.

Eastbound I-496: Take Pine-Walnut Street exit. The third traffic light will be at the driveway to the Scott Center. Turn right into driveway.

Westbound I-496: Take the Downtown-Grand Ave. exit. Cross Grand Ave., cross first light at Washington Ave., turn left (south) at next light at Capitol Ave., and get in the right hand lane immediately. One block ahead is a light at Main. You must be in the right hand lane to drive straight across to the drive of the Scott Center.

The Scott Center phone number is 517.372.3232

JOHN BALL ZOO - GRAND RAPIDS

John Ball Zoo is located at the corner of Fulton and Valley (1300 W. Fulton), two miles west of downtown Grand Rapids, with easy access from I-196. Meetings are held in the lower level of the pavilion, located near the parking lot and outside of the perimeter fence.

From 196 East, exit at Lake Michigan Drive, and turn right to Fulton. Zoo entrance is to your right.

From 196 West, exit at Lane Street. Turn left on Lane. Turn right on Fulton. Proceed to corner of Fulton and Valley for Zoo entrance.

NO LIVE ANIMALS MAY BE BROUGHT TO MEETINGS HELD AT JOHN BALL ZOO.

THE MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF HERPETOLOGISTS
321 W. OAKLAND AVE.
LANSING, MI 48906



If this box is checked, your membership expires with this issue. When renewing, PLEASE fill out the membership form on the other side of this page. This will insure your newsletter delivery continues uninterrupted.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

CENTURY OLD TORTOISE ADOPTS ORPHANED HIPPO

One of the positive “little stories” that surfaced during the tsunami tragedy was aired on NBC’s Nightly News on January 8th. A baby hippopotamus that was swept into the Indian Ocean by the giant tidal wave is finally coming around thanks to the companionship of a 120-year-old tortoise.

Owen, a one-year-old hippo, was swept down the Sabaki River into the ocean and then back to shore when the giant waves struck the Kenyan coast. The dehydrated animal was found by wildlife rangers and taken to the Haller Park animal facility in the port city of Mombassa. The adult female hippo was never found and thought to be lost at sea. Pining for it’s lost mother, Owen befriended a giant male Aldabra tortoise named Mzee, Swahili for “old man.” Haller Park ecologist Paula Kahumbu said the pair are now inseparable. -- *Reprinted from Herp Alert, the newsletter of the Central Illinois Herpetological Society, January-February 2005.*



A baby Hippo that survived the Tsunami waves on the Kenyan coast snuggles close a giant century-old tortoise in an animal facility in Mombassa. (Photo by Peter Greste)