President's Message
Jim Horton

Autumn is here! A chill is in the air, leaves are turning, and field herpers are switching to salamander mode. It’s also time to get our North American and other herps ready for their cooling period.
This month we will take nominations for 2010 officers and voting will take place in November. We are currently searching for ideas and venues for the annual holiday party. If you have any information you’d like to share on this subject, please let me know.
A big”hats off” to the Chicago Herpetological Society for hosting a great Midwest Herpetological Symposium. Next year this event will be in St. Louis. Mark your calendars now!

This issue covers a field trip to “Snake Road”, Herp of the Month, and more…

Go Paperless!!!
You now have the option to go paperless with your membership. The monitor will be sent via pdf/email to your inbox. This will help save money, paper, and time with folding, stapling, labeling, stamping, and sending the “hardcopy” newsletter. It’s as easy as visiting the HHS website clicking the “paperless button.

October HHS Meeting
Wednesday Oct. 21st 7:30 p.m.
Butler University Gallahue Center Room #108
Guest Speaker: John MacGregor,
State Herpetologist of Kentucky
Topic: "Herping Adventures throughout Kentucky"

The Hoosier Herpetological Society is proud to announce that our guest speaker for October is John MacGregor. John is the state herpetologist for Kentucky. Anyone who has attended the Herpetology Weekend at the Natural Bridge Ky. in the spring has witnessed his vast knowledge and experience regarding field herping in Kentucky. I have joined field trips and attended presentations by John and I was amazed by his knowledge of native reptiles and amphibians! This is a "CAN'T MISS" program! Be sure to mark your calendars for this special event!  SEE YOU THERE!
Welcome New Members!!!!

New members:
Matthew Murle
Becky Edington
K. Andrew Richards
Will Brown
Vanessa Schwoegler

Renewals:
Chris & Mitchell Wehrle
Martha Horton
Robert Hansen
Leonard Gray, sustaining
Kurt & Carter Ball, sustaining
Mark & Susan Henderson

A “Big” Hoosier Herp Thank You to Kurt and Carter Ball for their very generous donation to the club.

"SNAKE ROAD ADVENTURE"
by Ed Ferrer
Photos – Jim Horton

Whenever I get a chance to do any field herping in Indiana, I am always looking for the Pit vipers. I have been successful finding copperheads and timber rattlers but one venomous pit viper that has always eluded me was the Western cottonmouth or water moccasin, *Akistrodon piscivorus leucostoma*. This serpent is supposed to exist in a few isolated relic populations in Southwestern Indiana. I have explored these areas a couple of times but could not find any cottonmouths. In early September 2006, Wendell Zetterberg and I attended a PARC conference in Southern Illinois. We went down one day early to field herp along the famous "Snake Road". After spending half the day searching along the road unfortunately the only herp we found was a juvenile five-lined skink! I was told that we went too early in the fall before the snakes were moving from the swamp to their dens in the bluff.

This year we decided to conduct a field trip on the last weekend of September. I was so excited about this trip to Snake Road that I had a hard time getting to sleep the night before. We departed from Roger and Holly Carter's home in Zionsville at 5:00 a.m. After stopping for breakfast, we arrived at our first site along the swampy area. We hiked along a railroad track near the swamp. We looked under logs, metal scraps and other cover being careful to replace it as we found it. We first found a marbled salamander, a slimy salamander, a juvenile five-lined skink with its beautiful shades of blue stripes, a millipede and a centipede. Then Roger shouted "Moccasin!". We hurried over and found a neonate cottonmouth all coiled up under a metal plate. It stayed there allowing Roger to take several photos of it. We searched farther and found a couple of a couple of earth snakes, a large painted turtle, a dead Southern leopard frog on the tracks, and another young cottonmouth. This one slithered away showing its sulphur yellow tip of its tail which they use to lure frogs and toads. (The tail wiggles looking like a worm and when the unlucky frog, toad or lizard gets within striking range they become dinner for the young serpent.) As we were walking back, we found a larger cottonmouth close to the tracks. It was about 2 1/2 feet long and still had its beautiful dark crossband pattern contrasted with the bits of bright green vegetation as it apparently just came out of the nearby water. As it tried to escape, Holly and I worked it with our snake hooks back toward the railroad tracks so Roger
could take several photos of this attractive snake. Holly tried to get it to show its gape mouth
threat but all it did was vibrate its tail in protest. We also found parts of a snake vertebra, a
partial mammal skeleton and a dead vulture along the tracks. As we looked at the swamp, I
was impressed by its primitive, unspoiled beauty. It was very similar to post cards that I have
seen of the cyprus swamps from the Bayou. I was glad that there were still some true
wilderness areas still around supporting native wildlife.

We next went to Snake Road in the late afternoon. The weather was hot and humid and the
flying insects were intense. Even though we liberally applied insect repellent, we finally used
paw paw leaves as switches to keep them off our faces and ears. We did find two medium-sized
cottonmouths along the bluffs, one earth snake and a five-lined skink. We decided we would
have better luck if we returned earlier on Saturday.

On Saturday morning we first herped a tin site. All we found there was a slimy salamander, a
fence lizard, and a beautiful rough green snake. We then returned to Snake Road. We had
about 10-12 in our group and that would prove to be very important to our success. The more
sets of eyes we had was a big advantage as everyone contributed to spotting herps that would
have probably gone unnoticed if we had fewer people! Among the snakes we found were a
large Northern black racer (which had just eaten a meal), an adult yellowbelly water snake, a
Western ribbon snake, another water snake swimming in the swamp that was either a
yellowbelly or copperbelly or intergrade (Because we only saw its dorsal side in the water we
couldn't make a positive identification.) and seven cottonmouths of all sizes. The last
cottonmouth we saw was a large adult on a log.
It had mostly a plain black or dark olive coloring with a few very faint crossbands on its side. As
members of our party tried to move vegetation away to get a better shot it quickly slithered
under the log among a bunch of branches. We saw a large turtle out in the swamp on a log
that was too far away to identify. We also found a green tree frog, a green frog, a cricket frog,
and a Southern leopard frog. On our way back toward the cars as rain was fast approaching we
found a juvenile copperhead and an adult black rat snake on the road. It was a great day!!

On Sunday morning we explored another bluff a few miles away. After a lot of hiking and
over turning some tin we did find a slimy salamander, a few fence lizards, a Fowler's toad, and
a shed of skin of a black rat snake. A member of our group got an unexpected surprise. While
over turning a rock he uncovered a bee nest and received several stings. Jim Horton did find an
adult cottonmouth along the bluff but it slithered into a hole before it could be
photographed. After a delicious home cooked at Dolly's restaurant I went home with Jim Horton
and Pat Hammond. We left about 2:45 and I got home about 8:15. I was tired but the weekend
was well worth the travel and time. We found a large variety of herps and most importantly I
found my first cottonmouths in the wild! After seeing these snakes in their natural habitat I
 gained a greater respect for this amazing pit viper. I hope that the area continues to be a safe
haven for this awesome serpent. I hope to return next year for another herping field trip and I
would encourage any other herper to consider exploring this area.

Got Rodents?
Hoosier Mouse Supply can take your orders for rodents and they will
deliver to the monthly meeting on Wednesday, the 16th. (317) 831-1219
The racerunner is arguably the fastest lizard in our state. This lizard is a member of the whiptail family (Teiidae) which consists of over 55 species. This large family is confined to North and South America. The many species in the U.S. are difficult to distinguish due to the similarities among them.

Six tan or yellow stripes sit along dark sides dorsally from behind the eye extend to the tail. Limbs, head and central of back is gray/brown to cinnamon in color. The young have a have a blue tail similar to the five-line skink.

Rough granule scales make up the sides and dorsum. Smooth rectangular scales on belly. These are medium size lizards (7 – 9 ½ inches total length). Whiptails are very much alert and spend the majority of their time in the sun during the summer months.

They are called racerunners for good reason. Long slender toes aid this lizard in its quick locomotion. They are incredibly fast and are continually on the move. When alerted, they make quick dashes to safe cover. In fact, they are very difficult to capture during the daylight hours.

Racerunners are terrestrial dwellers that often excavate small burrows under logs, rocks and other debris. They may also utilize small mammal burrows as well. They will retreat to these burrows at night and on cool or cloudy days.

They are found in the upper northwest in the Lake Michigan dunes area and surrounding sand prairies. It also occurs in southwestern counties of Knox, Gibson, and Posey. A small but declining population is found in two southern counties near the Kentucky state border.

Activity is from mid-May to October in Indiana.

Race runners and some other whiptails are unisexual, meaning they may reproduce through parthenogenesis (development of an unfertilized egg). Males may be completely absent in some whiptail species.

Indiana racerunners feed upon most insects and spiders. Land snails have been reported as occasional prey items.

There are confusing reports of two types of racerunners occurring in Indiana. The Peterson’s field guide to Amphibians and Reptiles recognizes six-lines in the north and prairie racerunners (Cnemidophorus s. viridis) in the southern portion of the state. The Amphibians and Reptiles of
Indiana (Minton) reports that six-lines naturally occur but mentions a study on the variation of the two. However, Minton does mention that Indiana Cnemidophorus are of dual origin.

A trip to Indiana’s sand regions isn’t complete without seeing racerunners. It is a treat to see and photograph them in the wild – if you can keep them in one spot.

“No other Indiana reptile is quite so sun-loving; even a moderate overcast causes it to remain under cover.” - Sherman Minton

**Sources:** Minton, Sherman A, Jr. 2001. Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana, Indianapolis, Indiana Academy of Science


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**Board Meeting Minutes (September 9)**

The HHS Board has decided to order more T shirts. The last batch sold quite well and there are requests for more.

Also, the HHS has purchased a new computer along with the latest version of Office. We needed to update our system to keep up with technology.

The HHS will donate an Indiana field guide by the late Sherman Minton along with an HHS shirt to the auction at the Midwest Symposium.

The Holiday party was discussed briefly. We are looking for a venue and ideas. Officers for 2009 will be nominated in October for voting in November.

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**EVENTS**


November 8 – Midwest Reptile Show, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Southwest Pavilion, Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis. $5.00 admission, reptiles, amphibians, books, cages, feeder animals, and other supplies. Sell your herps and dry goods free of charge at our H.H.S. information booth. For info: (317) 861-5550, [www.midwestreptile.com](http://www.midwestreptile.com)

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Slimy salamander (snake road)  
Southern Leopard Frog (Snake road)
The Hoosier Herpetological Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the conservation of all reptiles and amphibians. General monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Butler University, Gallahue Hall, Room 105 or 108. Membership is open to all interested individuals. **No venomous animals are allowed at the General Meetings.**

**Your HHS OFFICERS for 2009**

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Suggestions, submissions and articles for *The Monitor* are welcome. Submit your typed or legibly hand written articles by the first Wednesday of each month to: PO. Box 40544, Indianapolis, IN 4620-0544 or 7712 Miracle road, Indianapolis, IN, 46237. Email articles to: stardali84@hotmail.com

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