

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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April 2005

The Editor's Den

The April Forked Tongue features an article on animals to avoid by Marc Frevola.

Calendar of Events

6/1/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Pete Strimple
Topic TBD

7/6/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Phil Peak and Will Byrd speaking on Snakes of Kentucky.

8/3/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Joe Collins
Speaking on "North American Herpetology, Problems and Perspectives"

9/7/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Brian Horne speaking on Adventures of a Tropical Herpetologist: Stories from Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, and Brazil

So, you want to get a reptile.....

by Marc Frevola

With the popularity of the internet increasing, almost any type of reptile imaginable can be purchased. Just because an animal is available, however, does not make it a good candidate for captivity. Every year, multitudes of reptiles are surrendered to volunteer groups due to the inability of an owner to properly care for them. In some cases, animals are actually confiscated by law enforcement agencies and disposed of because of this same problem. Being a member of a herpetological society and having worked with and kept reptiles for many years, I would like to present a list of difficult reptiles that a beginner should avoid at all cost. It is true that many of the animals listed are successfully kept by experienced people, but for the most part, they can all prove rather difficult for the average hobbyist. I based this list on the various requirements of the animals. Some are very aggressive, some grow very large in adulthood,

some are difficult to provide for, with extraordinary temperature and humidity requirements, and some are just plain dangerous.

8) Wild caught Ball Pythons (*Python regius*)

Ball pythons are very popular in pet stores because of their small size and relatively docile temperament. However, many adults are imported and come heavily parasitized. They are also notorious for going through very long fasting periods. If you choose to keep a Ball Python, make sure it is from a reputable breeder or dealer and make sure it is a captive hatched snake. For the most part, most problems you may experience with wild caught animals are not an issue with captive born snakes.

#7) Spur Thigh Tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*) It is difficult to resist one of these cute little tortoises as a baby. Be aware, they grow very large and require a large grazing area to keep healthy.

#6) Chameleons – These are readily available, but many have very specific demands which make their husbandry very difficult. They are also very fragile creatures that often have a difficult time in transit. If you absolutely must have a chameleon, the veiled chameleon is probably your best bet.

#5) Large Carnivorous Lizards – These include the monitors and the tegus. Once again, they are quite irresistible as young, but quickly grow into very large, very efficient predators equipped with large teeth and sharp claws. Care for these lizards, including feeding and cage cleaning is continuous, messy and expensive.

#4) Green Iguana – (*Iguana iguana*) These are sold literally by the dozens in most pet stores across the country to unsuspecting people who want a 'cool' lizard for their child. Little do they know these

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lizards can grow to six feet in length and males tend to be very aggressive and territorial during breeding season. Without a very carefully planned diet, cage/lighting set-up and cleaning schedule, vet bills will be your next problem. Most captive iguanas develop bone diseases due to improper nutrition and lighting.

#3) Large Boids and Pythons – These include, but are not limited to African Rock Pythons, Reticulated Pythons, Burmese Pythons and Anacondas. All these animals can grow extremely large to the point of being unmanageable, and with the exception of the Burmese Python, they all have a reputation of being very testy at best. Although few and far between, we are now getting into the realm of animals that have been known to be directly responsible for human fatalities.

#2) Crocodilians – These include American alligators, Caimans and any of the crocodiles that may be available. They can grow to very large size with attitudes to match. A cute 12 inch hatchling can grow to several feet within a few years. Powerful jaws sharp teeth and lightning reflexes make this a very dangerous captive in the wrong situation.

#1) Any Venomous reptiles – This encompasses entire families of animals. With the popularity of the internet, virtually any animal that exists can be bought from someone. Even snakes that are considered ‘mildly’ venomous are still venomous and could actually be deadly to a child, elderly person or sensitive individual. Even ‘venomoid’ snakes are still potentially deadly due to the spread of bacteria or lingering trace amounts of venom. Avoid these animals like the plague!!

Although I originally had thought of listing the ‘top ten’ reptiles to avoid, there are far too many reptiles available that make poor captives. Because of this, I wound up grouping some of the animals together, such as the large constrictors and large carnivorous lizards. I also eliminated, against my better judgment, some other animals that could very easily have made the list

depending on who you talk to so that the list was somewhat short and concise. The bottom line is this: Make sure you research in great detail any animal that you choose to purchase and make sure you understand all aspects of its husbandry not only as a juvenile but as an adult also. Are you prepared to provide for your captive over an extended time? Some reptiles have life spans that far exceed humans. Reptile care is often a lifetime commitment.

Herp Survey

As you may know the GCHS has begun participating in a survey of the reptiles and amphibians on recently acquired park land. We have made two official trips and have managed to turn up, European Wall Lizards, Cricket Frogs, Snapping Turtles, American Toads, Fowler’s Toads, Garter Snakes and Black Racers. It has been quite an interesting and fun adventure. We will keep you posted on future finds.

Classified Advertising Policy

GCHS Members may run a free classified ad of 7 lines or less at no charge for an unlimited time; however, the ad will be canceled after one month unless the editor is informed to continue it. Please include scientific names for the animals with your ad as well as your phone number and area code. Ads of up to 7 lines for non-member are \$2 per issue; ad charges for items more than 7 lines long are as follows:

Business card size	\$3 per issue
1/4 page	\$6 per issue
1/2 page	\$10 per issue
Full page	\$20 per issue

The GCHS is not liable for the quality of the merchandise advertised. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.

Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 47001.

Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gradycalhoun@earthlink.net.

Black and white photographs can be included with articles. Photo submissions should include your name, phone number, and description of photo on the back. Photos can be returned. All time dependent submissions must be in the editors possession no later than the meeting previous to the desired publication.

Classifieds

For Sale: 1.0.0 Carpet x Diamond Python (*Morelia spilotes*), 6 years old, tame, 8 ft +, eats pre-killed large rats. Has been in my collection for 4+ years. \$125 or trade. Call Mike McMullen (513) 753-1899.

Rats and Mice for sale. Reasonable price. Call Jesse or Tom (513) 876-0579.

For Sale: 3.3 Normal Adult Okeetee Corn Snakes \$50 each. 2.1 Banana California Kingsnakes, adult proven breeders, \$100 each. 0.0.10 Cornsnake hatchlings of last year, \$30 for amelanistic, \$25 for normals. Call Mike Matthews at (513) 734-1336.

For Sale: 3.3 South Carolina Corn Snakes(*elaphe guttata guttata*). These were bred by me, and are approx. 1.5 years old. All are nice looking, but a few have exceptional orange and red coloring, and all are feeding very aggressively on f/t mice. I am asking between \$40-\$50 each. Very healthy snakes. Feel free to call me at 228-0293 or e-mail at kdobrien76@aol.com with any questions. Ask for Kevin.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at *All Creatures Animal Hospital*. Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures, 1894 Ohio Pike, Amelia, OH 45102, 513-797-7387.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card carrying members of the GCHS at Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic, 5989 Meijer Dr., Suite 2, Milford, Ohio 513-576-0131

(Number to left of decimal indicates males; number to right of decimal indicates females; number to right of second decimal indicates number of unknown sex. For example, 3.2.1=3 males, 2 females, and 1 unsexed specimen)

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Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
		(513) 564-6041	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452			(513) 564-6041
Sergeant-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452	Education Committee Co-Chairman		
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842		Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452
Secretary	Vacant			Chris Bauer	(513) 424-5818

About the GCHS

The Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society holds monthly meetings which typically consist of a short business section, a refreshment intermission, and a program related to herpetology. Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in reptiles and amphibians. New members may sign up by mail or at the monthly meetings. Members receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue* and free classified advertising. Annual dues should be directed to the secretary at the society's mailing address, according to the rates below:

Student	\$10.00	Corresponding	
	\$10.00		
Individual	\$12.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$18.00	Institutional	\$30.00
Contributing	\$50.00		

Why Be a Member?

Receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue*

- Meet individuals knowledgeable about herpetoculture
- Have access to captive-bred herps and feeder animals
- Participate in society-sponsored field trips, and outings.
- Receive a 10 percent discount on herp-related items and services when you show a valid membership card at the following establishments:

Delhi Pet Center	(513) 451-4015
Kentucky Reptile Zoo	(606) 663-9160
Harrison Pet Center	(513) 367-1115
All Creatures Animal Hospital	(513) 797-7387
Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic	(513) 576-0131.

P.O. Box 14783
Cincinnati, OH 45250

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