

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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The Editor's Den

We need articles! You'll see that I borrowed a couple of articles from the web.

Calendar of Events

10/5/05 Monthly meeting featuring Gary Gerald speaking on Ecology of the Rare Northern Pine Snake.

11/05/05 Monthly meeting featuring our own Polly Whittaker speaking on Alternative Habitat Design.

Rattlesnake Round-ups

I'm singing to the choir here but I found this info on the website

www.hsus.org/wildlife/issues_facing_wildlife/rattlesnake_roundups/

Rattlesnake roundups take place from January through July in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Alabama, and Georgia. Roundups started as a misguided attempt to rid areas of rattlesnakes, but they have evolved into commercial events that promote animal cruelty and environmentally damaging behavior. Thousands of rattlesnakes are captured and slaughtered, or mistreated in competitive events that violate the basic principles of wildlife management and humane treatment of animals.

Depleted Rattlesnake Populations

No other wild animal in the United States is as extensively exploited and traded without regulation or oversight as the rattlesnake. Several species could become extinct just as we are beginning to understand their ecological importance. Rattlesnakes are important to their ecosystems. They prey on rodents, keeping the populations naturally in check so that the rodents do not cause crop damage or spread disease. Rattlesnakes are also important prey for raptors and other animals. Four species commonly found in roundups are the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, the western diamondback rattlesnake, the timber rattlesnake, and the western or prairie rattlesnake.

The timber rattlesnake is listed as endangered or threatened in several states, but no federal or international laws currently protect this species. The

western diamondback rattlesnake, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, and the western or prairie rattlesnake are not protected anywhere in their ranges, nor are they protected by any federal or international laws. We must act now to save remaining rattlesnake populations and gather the knowledge necessary for developing long-term conservation strategies.

Cruelty

Most rattlesnakes in roundups are driven out of their dens with gasoline, then stored without water or food in unhygienic conditions, and crammed tightly into containers for transport to and display at roundup events. Many snakes arrive at these events starved, dehydrated, or crushed to death. Those who survive may be used in public demonstrations and daredevil acts. The rattlesnakes are eventually decapitated, a cruel and inefficient method of slaughter for reptiles.

Environmental Damage

Rattlesnake collection methods are highly destructive to the habitats of rattlesnakes and other burrow dwellers such as gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, box turtles, coachwhip snakes, pine snakes, southern toads, and gopher frogs, along with burrowing owls, raccoons, opossums, and at least 32 species of invertebrates. The most popular collection method is to spray gasoline or other toxic chemicals into rattlesnake dens and resting places, which can render a burrow uninhabitable for years. Once introduced into the soil, gasoline could contaminate groundwater—the primary water source for many rural communities—thus poisoning wildlife, livestock, and humans.

Human Health Hazards

Roundups pose other threats to human health, too. Contrary to claims of organizers, roundups increase the number of snake-bite incidents in the host communities. This is due to collection activities and competitive events that bring humans with little or no experience into direct contact with rattlesnakes. The bites that result must be treated with antivenin, thereby depleting the local supply of antivenin available to treat bites that are genuinely accidental and unavoidable. Another hazard is the snake meat sold at roundups for human consumption. Rattlesnakes at roundups are typically killed under unhygienic conditions, and their

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meat, often improperly prepared, may be contaminated with salmonella or other bacteria.

Antivenin

Organizers often attempt to legitimize roundups by claiming that they provide a supply of venom for antivenin, but their venom collection methods do not meet the strict guidelines required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. No U.S. producer of antivenin would knowingly purchase venom collected at rattlesnake roundups. Rather than add to the nation's supply of antivenin, roundups deplete it by encouraging behavior that leads to snake bites.

Misinforming the Public

Many rattlesnake handlers and roundup organizers attempt to influence public perceptions about snakes with negative misinformation such as false bite statistics. Rattlesnake handlers typically promote their acts as "safety talks" or other sorts of public education. What the public actually sees, however, are demonstrations of extremely unsafe practices, which audience members may try later on their own. Permanent disfigurement or even death could result.

Liability

Roundups are a liability to the communities and corporations that sponsor them, as well as to the nonprofit organizations that benefit from them. Hosting communities, sponsoring corporations, and charities that accept proceeds from roundups unwittingly lend these cruel and ecologically unsound events undue credibility. Communities place themselves at financial risk because they may have to cover the cost of medical care for uninsured visitors who may be bitten; they may also face lawsuits or increased criminal activity as unintended outcomes of hosting roundups.

We hope that communities, corporations, and charities will end their affiliations with roundups once they learn all the facts.

Hellbender Status In the United States

I found a really good website on Hellbenders.
<http://hellbenders.sanwalddesigns.com/index.shtml>

The following status listing was obtained from the Nature Conservancy's Natural Heritage Database in each state. Thanks to Barbara Sargent at the WVNHP for help with obtaining this information. "Tracked" indicates that hellbender distribution records are kept in a database and that information is continually being gathered on this species. Basically, "tracked" means that there is concern for the species, but not enough

surveys have been done to determine how rare hellbenders are in that particular state. On the other hand, sometimes it is hard to change laws in some states, and even though the hellbender may be declining or on the verge of being lost completely, laws may not reflect the actual status of the species. The extent of "protection" the hellbender receives in a state is debatable depending on state policies and enforcement of laws. Permits are often required to collect hellbenders, but this does not necessarily mean the species is protected. Important: This list should not be taken as the "final word" on hellbender status. Information changes quickly. Consult with the specific state Natural Heritage Program or US Fish and Wildlife Service to find out if the status has changed.

State	State Rank
Alabama	S3
Arkansas	S1
Georgia	S3
Indiana	S1
Illinois	S1
Kentucky	S3S4
Maryland	S1
Missouri	S1
Mississippi	S1
North Carolina	S3
New York	S2
Ohio	S2
Pennsylvania	S3S4
South Carolina	SU (unranked)
Tennessee	S3
Virginia	S2S3
West Virginia	S2
<p><u>Key:</u> S1 - Critically imperiled state-wide because of extreme rarity or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation S2 - Imperiled state-wide because of rarity or factor(s) making it vulnerable S3 - Rare or uncommon in state S4 - Apparently secure in state</p>	

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 demaled publication.

Classifieds

Lost a Beloved Reptile? Any Species: We can find it! Guaranteed results. Call Wolf 513-659-9616.

For Sale: 0.0.6 captive bred and born **Northern** Blue Tongue skinks. Born 7/2/05. All eating great! Come from dynamite parents. \$100 each, \$175/2. Call Grady at (812) 926 1206.

For Sale: 0.2 Captive bred and hatched grey-banded king snakes, Blair's phase. \$75 each. Hatched 7/19/05. Eating live pinkies. Call Grady at (812) 926-1206.

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 Chairman		
Advisor	Vacant		Peggy Fille		(513) 528-4452
Secretary	Vacant				

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	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$20.00	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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