

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXX, No. 1

www.cincyherps.com

January 2005

The Editor's Den

The January Forked Tongue features an article on reptile and amphibian conservation through pond management. This article was geared toward reptiles and amphibians of Missouri but is applicable to animals in this region as well.

Calendar of Events

2/5/05 Monthly Meeting featuring the GCHS' Jason Folt speaking on field herping in Ohio

2/26&27/05 Educational Program at Krohn Conservatory. We will be looking for volunteers.

3/2/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Greg Lipps Jr. speaking on Ohio Herp conservation.

4/06/05 Monthly Meeting featuring Jim Harrison speaking on envenomation.

4/16/04 GCHS day at the Cincinnati Zoo See details below

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

A GUIDE TO AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

By Tom R. Johnson, Natural History Section,
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Introduction

In recent years many landowners have shown increased interest in nongame animals, including frogs, turtles, lizards and salamanders. With the increased funding through Missouri's Design for Conservation new and progressive programs for nongame species public awareness, management, and conservation have been established.

Some may wonder: "Why should anyone care about such animals as turtles or salamanders ... what good are they?" Ten years ago this question would have

been more difficult to answer, but today there is a trend toward a compassion for *all* wildlife species, even those that have been misunderstood for so long. Due to habitat destruction there has been a decline in the abundance of many of our deer, turkey, or bluebirds. They are extremely important because they help control pest animals (rodent and insects) and they in turn serve as food for many other wild animals (mink, raccoons, skunks, owls, hawks, herons, and many fish species).

There is a growing concern that the wildlife, forestry, and fisheries resources of our state be conserved for future generations. Part of our natural heritage includes the interesting but little understood toads, frogs, salamanders, turtles, lizards and snakes that reside in the out-of-doors. Landowners who take special interest in all wildlife and strive to better conditions for them can be proud of their efforts and accomplishments. We are providing the following information to anyone interested in improving conditions for Missouri's amphibians and reptiles.

Tom R. Johnson
Herpetologist

PART I: THE POND

One of the many marvels of spring is the variety of frog calls coming from ponds and pools. They announce the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Many of us are lucky to remember carefree childhood days with summer visits to a pond where we tried to catch those wily frogs. Such memories are valuable, but who can put a price on them?

Most people agree that ponds on farms or country property add real, as well as esthetic value to the land. There are currently over 320,000 ponds of various sizes scattered about Missouri. These impoundments are vital to many amphibians and reptiles, as well as to a wide variety of other animals--from tiny aquatic insects to fish, shorebirds, doves, turkeys and deer.

These management tips are designed primarily for those small, shallow impoundments that are not suitable for

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fish production. Even though shallow ponds do not support fish, they do serve as valuable water holes for many forms of wildlife and as homes for a wide variety of toads, frogs, salamanders, turtles and beneficial snakes. Ponds that dry up in late summer are used by many amphibians during spring and early summer. A pond with a wide variety of plants and animals living in and around it usually is interesting to many people and is especially well-suited for nature study. It is important to retain the complex nature of such a pond because this habitat supports a greater number of animals.

Pond Management for Amphibians and Reptiles

A pond is basically easy to manage. Usually all that is necessary once the plants and animals have been established is to leave it alone and let nature take its course. There are, though, some things you can do to help improve and protect your pond to make it more attractive to many forms of wildlife.

Fencing around the pond and a portion of its watershed to eliminate livestock is a basic form of pond management. (A stock tank below the dam and outside the fence will satisfy the water needs of domestic livestock.) The quality of water entering the impoundment will improve. Protecting the watershed also helps to prevent soil in the immediate area from washing into the pond during a spring thaw or heavy rain. Soil conservation is important for preventing water turbidity caused by suspended clay or other soil particles. Furthermore, most aquatic plants and animals have a difficult time surviving in turbid water. If the area around the pond is protected from grazing and plowing, not only will the quality of water entering the pond improve, but also wildlife habitat will increase.

A new pond or one that has been open to livestock may not have many aquatic and marsh-type plants growing in and around it. Some landowners may want to introduce plants to the pond site, although this may not be necessary since many come up on their own. Adding certain plants not only will enhance the complex nature of a pond but will also provide food and/or shelter for tadpoles, salamanders and aquatic turtles.

Some beneficial plants you may wish to transplant are: arrowhead, pickerel weed, spikerush, wild celery, frogbit, pond lily, water starwort and lizard tail. Keep

in mind that several varieties of aquatic plants may quickly "take over" a pond--especially a shallow one. This can be of little concern in a pond being managed for amphibians and reptiles.

If you want turtles in your pond, you could furnish several logs for basking. Most of our smaller species of turtles have a biological need for sunning out of the water. Logs--especially red cedar--can be anchored in open water away from the bank to serve as secure basking sites. Providing a number of logs and rocks around a portion of the pond bank will furnish basking and/or hiding places for salamanders, frogs and snakes. If you place several small brush piles at the water's edge and on the bank, bullfrogs and other frogs, as well as harmless water snakes, will use them.

A note about the value of water snakes and turtles in a fish pond: Many people are under the impression that turtles and snakes eat large numbers of fish, destroying the fishing in a pond or river. Biologists have proven that these animals *enhance* fishing because they eat dead or diseased fish; this provides better conditions, which allows the remaining fish to prosper. Turtles eat a wide variety of aquatic plants, as well as dead animals and some fish. Although people may dislike seeing turtles in a pond, we should remember that even snapping turtles are a valuable resource--as human food--and should not be considered a pest.

It is surprising how many Missouri amphibians and reptiles will benefit from one or more ponds constructed on your property.

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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.

Classifieds

For Sale: Captive Bred albino boa constrictors, (Peter Kahl strain). These are 2004 babies, all feeding and looking great! \$1000.00 each. Partial stripes available for \$1600.00. Call Scott Kass at 513-779-8124

For Sale: 1.1 Captive bred grey-banded kingsnake. Eating live pinkies. \$50.00 each. Call Grady Calhoun at 513-564-6041

For Sale: 7.0 '03 Tiger Rat Snakes (*Spilote pullatus*) Very well started, nice black and yellow coloration. Approximately 30 inches or more. Feeding voraciously on live hoppers. \$60 each or two or more for \$50 each. Call Marc (859) 344-9626

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)

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.

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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