

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXXII, No. VII

www.cincyherps.com

July 2007

The Editor's Den

This month's *Forked Tongue* includes an article on the GCHS' participation in a Lake Erie Water Snake conservation effort and an update on GCHS conservation efforts on critical amphibian habitat.

Calendar of Events

August 1, 2007 – Monthly Meeting featuring Dan Meakin, DVM, speaking on snake anatomy.

September 5, 2007-Monthly Meeting featuring Marc Frevola speaking on “Using herps for Learning in the Classroom.”

October 3, 2007- Monthly Meeting featuring Jeff Davis speaking on the Eastern Massasauga, an Ohio Endangered Species.

Lake Erie Watersnake Survey

By Todd Rosenhoffer

On the weekend of April 10th, myself, Barney McClelland, Kyle Becker, and Mike and Cheryl Schornak, traveled to South Bass Island in Lake Erie to assist Kristin Stanford with her yearly survey of the Lake Erie watersnake.

The Lake Erie watersnake (*Nerodia sipedon isularum*) was first described by Conant and Clay in 1937. They average about 150 centimeters in length. They are pale gray to olive, and usually lack a dorsal pattern, with a cream colored venter. On occasion, the dorsal cross band pattern is evident when the snake is wet, with a pattern similar to the northern watersnake. It is found only on the islands of the Put-In-Bay Archipelago. It is listed Federally as a threatened species, and listed by Ohio as an endangered species.

We met at the Stone Research Laboratory on Saturday, for a briefing on the days events from

Kristen Stanford. It would prove to be a full day. In addition to the field observations, all found specimens were to be collected, and returned to the lab. There, pertinent data would be collected, and the animals would be marked and PIT tagged. Concurrently, a public education offering was taking place. The data collection area was open to public view, and a separate area was set up for the display and handling of reptiles that were brought in by the research participants.

We set out for the research area in the South Bass Islands State Park at about 9:00 a.m. There were about seven of us in the group, including Kristin's assistant. Numerous large rubber mats, made from conveyor belts, had been previously placed along the shoreline, along with large sections of PVC drain pipes.

We picked up the first pipe, and shook it out. A couple of balls of about 10 watersnakes came out.. Since it was still cool, the snakes were not particularly aggressive. We picked them up by the handful, and bagged them. The first mat we flipped had even more under it- approximately 20. This is the first time that I have ever been able to pick snakes up by the handful!

Nearly all of the hides proved to be as plentiful. As the morning warmed up, the snakes became more active, and aggressive. I think everyone in the group, including Cheryl Schornak, was bitten at least once.

In addition to the hides, we were able to wade out into the water, and capture the snakes by hand as they returned to shore.

We returned to the lab by noon, and were treated to a box lunch. Mike Schornak manned one of the data collection stations. He took measurements, marked, and helped to PIT tag the specimens. Afterwards, he helped return the snakes to the collection area.

Barney, Kyle, and myself manned the public education area for the rest of the day. We had a

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

large number of people pass through, and the hands on portion of the presentations were a success. Besides snakes, we also had several lizards that Barney had brought.

We had a great time, and South Bass Island was beautiful. If you have the opportunity to go up next year, it is well worth it.

Thanks to Barney McClelland and Kyle Becker for providing animals for the display area.

Protecting Local Critical Amphibian Habitat

By Dean Alessandrini

As many of you are aware, a critical habitat in Crosby Township, OH (northwest Hamilton county) is under threat to become a major drag-race track / tractor-pull facility.

This property is known to be one of the most critical breeding sites for ambystomid salamanders in Ohio. Four species of ambystomids breed there, including what may be the only population of marbled salamanders in SW Ohio. At least 12 species of amphibians live and breed in the wetlands, vernal pools and surrounding forests. Construction of this race-track will certainly prove devastating to the amphibian populations.

As you may know I attended this meeting and spoke on behalf of the Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society. John Homer and several other biologists and representatives from Fernald and "Fernald Community Alliance" spoke on behalf of the wildlife and fragile ecosystems.

As it turns out, there was more to this story than I was initially aware of. GCHS members had been working to conserve this area for some time, and had been given information that the new property owner (who wanted to remain nameless at the time) was going to "*eventually build a single house on the property to live in his retirement.*" As it turns out, the new owner of this property (who we now know to be Mr. Steve Engle) bought it without (at least initially) making his plans to build a race track known to the sellers or to the community. The sellers, upon finding out that he had plans to build a major race-strip that would be devastating (in their opinion) to the community, attempted to buy the property back. Mr. Engle refused.

Engle attempted to (quickly) attain a zoning permit to build the track. His initial attempt was turned down by the zoning board. Engle then hired a lawyer to take on the zoning board, claiming that there was nothing on the books stating specifically that this type of facility was not permitted. Mr. Engle is so confident, in fact, that he is already distributing flyers that advertise his future race track.

A few weeks ago as information about the track became public knowledge, members of the community banded together to form a coalition to take on Engle. For obvious reasons, they do not want this in their "backyards".

It is time to act. We are respectfully asking that you take the time to write a letter, however brief or detailed, and as soon as possible, to support our efforts.

WE NEED HELP!

As mentioned, the zoning permit appeal hearing has been continued until August 7. NOW is the time to act. We would like to flood the zoning board office with letters (sent via US mail), voicing your plea to protect the area by refusing the zoning permit for the race track.

SEND YOUR LETTER TO:

Crosby Township Board of Zoning Appeals

8910 Willey Road

Harrison, OH 45030

Attn: Teri Hannon

GCHS message board under development

Jason Folt is working on a GCHS message board. I have seen the prototype and think it can be a great tool for GCHS members to share information, stories, photos etc. We will also use the site to provide Society information such as changes in schedule or upcoming events. The site can be as good as we want it to be and it depends primarily on the memberships usage of the site. More detailed information regarding how to access and the use the site is forthcoming.

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

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
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 CD 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 editor's possession no later than the meeting previous to the publication.

Classifieds

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)

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center

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	Kyle Becker	(513) 831-4898			

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

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 1st at 7:00 pm at the Cincinnati Nature Center