

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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May 2005

The Editor's Den

The May Forked Tongue features an article on the Eastern Wormsnake. I recently acquired one so I figured I let you know about it. In addition there is an article regarding road kill in Arizona.

Calendar of Events

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

Eastern Worm Snake printed from www.menunkatuck.org/pages/wormsn.html

The eastern worm snake (*Carphophis a. amoenus*) is a burrowing reptile that has been found sporadically in Connecticut, with southern Massachusetts being the northernmost limit to its range. Averaging ten to twelve inches in length, this diminutive snake with tiny eyes, a tan back and a pale pink belly initially resembles an earthworm when seen. But when held, its firm, smooth body confirms that this is, indeed, a snake. Its burrowing instinct compels the worm snake to push its head, as well as its pointed tail, between one's fingers.

Worm snakes are secretive and rarely discovered. They require well-drained, sandy soils in which to burrow. When a worm snake is found, it is usually near second growth deciduous woodlands under rocks and forest debris that is slightly imbedded in the soil. But during dry seasons they may stay several feet below ground, living in a world we know little about. Since worm snakes eat mainly earthworms, it is hypothesized that they follow their food source up to the surface during the damper seasons when earthworms are busy breaking down leaf litter.

The recent discovery of two worm snakes in Madison during Menunkatuck's Biodiversity Day was exciting not only because these are fascinating creatures, but also because worm snakes had not previously been documented in Madison. This causes one to wonder how

many dozens of other species can live right under our noses without us ever being aware of their existence.

Arizona Roadkill: Huge Toll on Park-Area Highways (A. E. Araiza, Arizona Daily Star (Tucson) 16 May 2005) More than 50,000 wild animals are run over on roads in and around Saguaro National Park each year, park researchers say. Taking a fresh look at old data, researchers have concluded that an earlier survey of park-area roadkills understated by roughly seven times the true casualty figures for toads, snakes, rabbits, lizards, javelina and other critters.

After five years of weekly surveys of 50 miles of roads that ended in 1999, National Park Service officials determined back then that about 7,100 animals were killed annually in and around the east and west units of Saguaro National Park. But researchers decided the original count was too low after reanalyzing the data to account for surveyor error, for animals that get taken off the road after they're killed and for the limitations of hunting for roadkills by car. "We weren't seeing everything," said Natasha Kline, who has worked as a Saguaro Park biologist nearly 13 years.

But while more animals are apparently dying on park roads than originally had been thought, some changes in road design are slowly occurring to make these and other thoroughfares more wildlife-friendly in the future. The changes will be aimed not just at preventing roadkills but at preserving connections for wild animals crossing roads from one large block of desert to another. As much as \$10 million would be spent over the next 20 years on making roads safer for wildlife under a plan that appears to be headed to the May 2006 ballot. The Regional Transportation Authority's 20-year plan would require voter approval of a half-cent sales tax increase to raise \$1.9 billion total for a host of other transportation improvements, including widened roads, transit, sidewalks and bike paths. Pima County and state highway planners are looking for other ways to better design roads for wildlife, and the Park Service and county last year collaborated on a large \$78,000 culvert project to provide more space for javelina and other animals crossing Sandario Road in Saguaro National Park West. A major concern stemming from the roadkill study is the effect of the kills on populations of toads and larger animals, including Desert Tortoises, Gila Monsters,

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badgers and rattlesnakes, said Kline, who worked on the roadkill study.

The park is experiencing "massive" roadkill of three [amphibian] species - the Red-spotted Toad, Sonoran [Green] Toad and Couch's Spadefoot, she said. Researchers have, for instance, found that Sonoran [Green] Toads taken from East Speedway north of the park were significantly smaller than those taken from loop roads within the park that close after dark. This is very suggestive" that the toads' populations are affected by roadkill - not just individual toads, Kline said. Although no statistics exist directly linking roadkills to declines of larger animals, biologists are concerned about them because they have both low reproductive rates and low adult mortality rates, Kline said. Because they have low adult mortality rates, those creatures tend to live long lives. But because their birthrates are low, "once you start taking adults out of the population, you'll affect it very quickly," said Kline, who has emerged as Saguaro Park's spokeswoman for a study that involves many researchers and volunteers.

The operator of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center just north of Saguaro National Park East said she's not surprised by the Park Service study's conclusions, because she regularly sees live wild animals in her center that were brought in after somebody found them lying on the road. "It's our No. 1 problem with animals that come in - that they're hit by cars," said Lisa Bates, who gets 300 to 350 injured animals each year at her Tucson Wildlife Center at 13275 E. Speedway, just north of Saguaro Park East. "I would guess that a majority of animals admitted here were hit by cars." When center volunteers go out to rescue wild animals, they're all over the highways every day. Volunteers see a huge amount of roadkill, Bates said.

The sight of wild animals sprawled dead along roads or shoulders makes Rincon Valley Farmers Market executive director Molly Eglin truly sad, she said last week. But while she sees roadkill regularly on the roads, the 50,000-a-year figure shocked her, she said. "I go to town practically every day, and I usually see something practically every day off to the side of the road. But I never imagined it was that many," said Eglin, whose market lies about one mile south of the park's southern border at 12500 E. Old Spanish Trail. "What's worse is the people who drive down Old Spanish Trail like a maniac," Eglin said. "They drive really fast around the curves, the double lines. It's really, really dangerous." One morning last week, as she drove down Freeman Road and then Speedway abutting Saguaro Park East, Kline said that she had already seen six dead animals along park-area roads: a Longnose Snake and a Coachwhip, two ground squirrels, a curved-bill thrasher and a rabbit. Then she stopped at a large

wash along Speedway, about 16 miles east of Downtown Tucson, where she said she hopes to get grant money for a series of culverts to accommodate the toads and other animals so they can cross under Speedway instead of into the path of cars. Two years ago, the Park Service and the Pima County Department of Transportation applied for a \$500,000 state grant to install two large box culverts and several smaller ones that would accommodate toads. The application failed, but Kline said she expects to seek the grant again. The area along Speedway where the culvert system would go had heavy concentrations of roadkills, ranging 85 to 1,000 in a small area, during the five-year study period ending in 1999, according to a Park Service map of the area.

A County Transportation Department official said he has not heard yet from the service about any effort to try again for the grant. But the department now has a written policy calling for more environmentally sensitive roads in areas known for their wildlife populations, said Rick Ellis, the department's engineering division manager. The county has had the policy since December 2003 and has used it twice. One project, connected with the county's Thornydale Road widening, was to build a higher, wider shoulder with taller trees along Thornydale to accommodate cactus ferruginous pigmy owls trying to cross the road. The second project was the Sandario Road culvert.

Four major state highways in Southern Arizona could also be in line for new, wildlife-friendly design in the next few years because of a grant just obtained by a Flagstaff researcher. That study will focus on how to make those and other roads in the state more hospitable to birds and mammals.

The tally

Estimated annual wildlife roadkills in and around Saguaro National Park East and West (Source: National Park Service)

Reptiles [& Turtles]: 27,000.

Amphibians: 17,000.

Mammals: 6,000.

Birds: 1,000.

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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.

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: 40 gallon long aquarium with custom made wooden lid, and wrought iron stand. \$75. Call Grady at (513)564-6041

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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