

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Editor's Den

By Grady Calhoun

The October Forked Tongue features an article by Al Winstel on corn snake breeding and an update on the University of Kentucky's herp collection by John Ferner .

Calendar of Events

11/5 Monthly Meeting at NKU Speaker and Topic TBD

11/28 & 29 Educational Program at Museum Center

Rescued Animals need Homes

We desperately need volunteers to adopt animals that are given to the society. If you are willing to provide a good home for iguanas, large boas or pythons, tortoises or crocodilians please contact Chris Bauer at (513) 451-1203 or Matt Fille at (513) 528-4452.

Dejavu at Boyd Hill (Florida)

By Al Winstel

This summer, our family vacation was split between Chicago and Florida---something for everyone. The Florida location was once again St. Pete's Beach and the Alden Hotel, a spot that my wife's family and our family has visited often on the past. Our last visit was three years ago, and, as usual, I attempted to sneak away from the beach for a few short field trips to the Boyd Hill Nature Center, just a few miles outside St. Pete's. Boyd Hill has been very good to me. The 5 or 6 interlocking trails meander through a variety of habitats from lake side to Palmetto scrub to marsh, tropical forest and pine flatlands. The area is usually good for several views of gopher tortoises, a few alligators, tropical butterflies like the yellow and black striped zebra, and an occasional osprey.

Presently a new nature center building is under construction. They used to charge a couple bucks to

walk the trails, but there was no charge this time, although I did drop off a small donation at the trailhead office. Also found out that they had a Brazilian Pepper control project in progress. I try to walk the trails in the morning and late afternoon to avoid the hot sun, although the area is only open 9-5. The staff wisely makes available water coolers with disposable paper cups throughout the preserve, along with easily found trash cans. A quick walk of part of the trail system failed to turn up anything except for an alligator nest with young sounding their "help" call and an osprey which seemed very accustomed to being observed and photographed. Possibly my favorite spot at Boyd Hill is the Island Trail which extends out to a 20 or 30 foot long bridge spanning a short wet area between the "mainland" and a small spit of land containing 4 or 5 live oak trees. The island is usually good for a number of wading birds. This time as I approached the island I saw a tricolored heron, some large alligators, and a common egret. Part of my plan in taking the island trail was to investigate the live oaks. Their leaves are simple and elliptical in shape, very different from most of our oaks in Ohio. The branches are relatively large in diameter and spread out from the tree at wide angles, running almost horizontal to the ground. They are also covered with Spanish moss and bromeliads of the genus Tillandsia.

As I searched the live oaks, hoping to spot a reptile basking in the morning sun, I noticed a serpentine shape looped about 25 feet up along one of the branches. The branch was covered in shade, but upon closer approach, I was able to identify the shape as a 4 foot yellow ratsnake. I took some barely identifiable photos with a short telephoto lens (too low a light level). When I approached the area beneath the snake, it disappeared as if by magic. The shape of the loop remained the same, but the snake's body slid into a knothole on the top of the branch. This ratsnake is probably the best herp I've seen on the island, although I have seen some other strange stuff, including large Plecostomus fish most likely pulled up on the bank by feeding herons. I walked several of the other trails that

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day, eventually finding a Florida mud turtle, another life herp, crossing a trail near a small stream, most likely due to the heavy and frequent rains that were currently moving across the Gulf.. No gophers today, but later in the trip I was able to see a couple. They seem to be very common, but their activity appears to be quite dependent upon weather conditions.

The mud turtle, alligators, and gopher tortoises were welcome sightings, but the yellow ratsnake held a special significance. This wasn't the first time I had scanned that live oak for herps. Three years earlier I had done the same thing, but been rewarded not by a live serpent but by a shed skin. I was able to pull down the skin with a long stick and check for pattern traces, scale rows, divided/undivided anal scale, and keeled scales in order to attempt an ID. My thought at the time was that this shed belonged to a yellow rat. Based on size, species, and location, I am confident that the animal found in 2003 was the same one that had shed the skin in the summer of 2000. It took me three years to meet that snake!

Incidentally all the wildlife at Boyd Hill is protected. If you decide to go there, no collecting. Maybe I'll be lucky enough to see "my" ratsnake again another time. For those of you unimpressed by a yellow rat, this was the first one I'd seen in the wild (I have yet to see a wild cornsnake also, although I've captured some really usual tropical snakes in the West Indies).

Roger Barbour's University of Kentucky Collection Has Been Moved to Thomas More College

By John Ferner

In late April 2001 the herpetological collection of the University of Kentucky was moved to Thomas More College. This fluid collection was built by the late Roger W. Barbour and his students over a period of four decades and includes many important state geographic records. James Krupa of UK helped our group of volunteers from the greater Cincinnati area pack and move the specimens to their new home.

Orphaned collections are ones that are no longer being curated and used by institutions and are in need of another home. Limitations in space, funding and specialists in various academic areas are forcing many colleges and universities to relocate their collections. Unfortunately the time and effort required to find a new location for a collection may result in some

deterioration or damage to specimens. For example, many seals on jars may be broken resulting in evaporation of the fluid and the drying out of the preserved animals.

The collection is now housed at the Center for Ohio River Research and Education (CORRE) located in the Ohio River Field Station of Thomas More College. Over the past two years specimens have been salvaged by switching them to new jars and replacing the ethyl alcohol. It is estimated that twenty percent of the jars had dried out over the years making those specimens much less useful for science. These dry specimens are currently being stored since many are important geographic records and may some day be able to be rehydrated. The bulk of the collection, however, is now secure and being curated by faculty, staff and students at Thomas More. No catalog was available with the collection, so the next major project will be to record data from the jar labels into a database for reference purposes. In the meantime, the collection is available to visitors and for specimen loans to scientists. Loan requests have already been received from Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. If you have interest in this collection you may contact John Ferner, Professor of Biology, Thomas More College, Crestview Hills, KY 41017 (john.ferner@thomasmore.edu).

Many of the specimens found in the collection were never catalogued so these will add much new information for future study. In addition a good proportion of the historic Baker-Hunt Foundation Museum collection from Covington, Kentucky was found among the jars. John Ferner is currently trying to relocate the remaining specimens from the Baker-Hunt collection so anyone with information concerning them is asked to please contact John.

Thus far the salvage and housing of the UK collection is due to the generous support of Thomas More College Department of Biology, East Kentucky Power Company, The Marcus Thomas Memorial Fund and the Cincinnati Museum Center. Volunteers too numerous to mention have made this move and restoration possible and future volunteers are needed and always welcome to help with the collection

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Classified Advertizing 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 advertized. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.

Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

1. Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 4700.
2. Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gcalhoun@seidata.com.
3. 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.
4. All time dependent submissions must be in the editors possession no later than the meeting previous to the desired publication date.

Classifieds

For Sale: Feeder rabbits and rats. Call Rod Surber at (812) 637-0305 or e-mail me at Indianarockshop@aol.com.

For Sale: I will have baby corn snakes available in July, a few albino Okeetee corns and the offspring of a ghost X hypererythristic(red) cross. The latter will probably look normal, depending upon hidden traits, but breeding these offspring together should result in a variety of possibilities, including young with extra red, amelanistics, hypomelanistics, and ghost. Young are \$15 ea. and will be feeding. Al Winstel 513-729-2563. Could probably bring to meeting.

For Sale: Snakes, 2.0 CB ball pythons (*Python regius*), 1 baby (\$20), 1 yearling (\$30), both feeding; 1 baby Amazon tree boa (*Corallus hortulanus*), eating thawed pinks (\$25); 1 aberrant patterned Pueblan Milksnake (*Lampropeltis t. campbelli*) (\$25), 2 years old. eating thawed pinks, fuzzies. Call Al Winstel 513-729-2563.

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			
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
					(513) 564-6041
Sargent-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452			
			Education Conservation Committee Co-Chairman		
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842		Matt Fille	(513) 528-4452
				Chris Bauer	(513) 451-1203
Secretary	Polly Whittaker	(513) 321-1884			

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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