

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Editor's Den

By Grady Calhoun

The September Forked Tongue features highlights of our last two meetings as well as an editorial comment regarding the fatal snakebite that recently occurred in Ohio.

Calendar of Events

9/13 Picnic at the Calhoun House - **CANCELLED**
10/1 Monthly Meeting Topic TBD

Elections

Ray Whitson served as the chairman of the nominating committee. His job was to seek out individuals that would run for office in the October election. The slate of nominees are as follows:

President	Grady Calhoun
Vice-President	Dean Alessandrini
Treasurer	Peggy Fille
Sargent	
At Arms	Bruce Fille
Secretary	Vacant

No additional nominations were received from the floor at the September meeting. The new officers will take office at the November meeting.

August Highlights

Pam Lyons of the Newport Aquarium shared a program about a recent study she had been involved in including radio tracking of Loggerhead sea turtles on the North Carolina coast. This is the northernmost limit of the Loggerhead nesting range. Most of tagging involved female turtles as the males generally do not come ashore. Turtles are fitted with radio-transmitters that are tracked by satellite. The researchers can check the location of turtles for about a year. The Newport Aquarium website, newportaquarium.com, provides a link to a website that can be accessed to see "Real Time" tracking of some of the turtles in this

program. This is the first year the program has been in effect in this part of the country. This study should provide valuable information on the habits of a species that has seen significant declines in populations and nest sites since 1990. As is often the case, there is conflict between real estate developers and the conservationists.

Pam reported that the residents of the area are quite cooperative regarding lights out policies. Residents near the beach are asked to keep their lights off so that the hatchling turtles are not confused and head toward the lights rather than to the ocean. The program has focused on adult turtles primarily because the transmitters are too large to fit to hatchlings.

September Highlights

Patrick Baker of the Department of Zoology at Miami University presented "Ecophysiology of Hibernating Reptiles and Amphibians." Basically this was a study of the physiological processes that allow reptiles and amphibians to hibernate at very low temperatures. One of the reasons for the study was that these animals may provide a key for cryobiology in humans. Studying hibernating reptiles and amphibians is difficult as they are typically under water or underground. Some turtles and most amphibians can take oxygen in through their skin while hibernating. He shared a photo of an American Alligator that had thrust its snout through the ice and allowed the ice to re-freeze around it. This would allow the animal to survive a little longer if the ice cover remains longer than usual. The oxygen content in the water in which the animals are hibernating is key in determining how long the hibernation can last. Thick ice followed by heavy snowfall can cause a very low oxygen content in the water. Although this may kill many fish, some turtles can live 3 to 5 months in oxygen depleted water. Some baby turtles such as box turtles and painted turtles will hatch and dig down into the soil to overwinter in the nest. These turtles have been found in soil or sand that is frozen solid! When thawed slowly the turtles are just fine.

The October Meeting is Wednesday, October 1st at 7:30 at the NKU

The wood frog is one of the most studied freeze-tolerant animals. These frogs have been known to freeze to a point that they are 66% ice. The hearts of wood frogs in the Ohio area can stop beating for more than a month. The freeze-tolerance of animals varies by their geographic range. Northern populations can tolerate freezing for a longer period than southern populations of the same species. One of the tricks for survival is that tissue glucose levels increase during freezing. This is thought to reduce tissue damage during the freezing and thawing process. There are a variety of other factors that influence an animals tolerance for cold temperatures such as the presence of ice crystals in the surrounding soil or water. Animals can super cool below freezing without freezing when these crystals are absent.

Editorial Opinion

by Grady Calhoun

Ohio Man dies of Snake Bite and Gives Reptile Keepers a Bad Name

Well, it happened again! An “expert snake handler” with years of experience gets bit by a venomous snake and its front page news. As if the bite itself weren’t bad enough, the guy died. I have to sound off a bit about the reports I had heard about this guy. A reported expert in snake handling supposedly gets bit by a Rhinoceros Viper while feeding the animal with metal tongs. Why do I find this a bit hard to believe? A reported responsible snake keeper with decades of experience does not have anti-venom to deal with the bite should it happen. Why do I find this completely expected?! As is typical, the press surrounding this incident was not good for the responsible reptile keeper. One of the articles included a quote by another supposed expert stating that 1 in 5 households contains an exotic animal. Given the fact that this was nestled in an article focusing primarily on the death of an individual by snakebite, it led the reader to believe that 1 in 5 households had venomous or dangerous animals. Responsible animal owners are not going to survive many more of these incidents. Although we can preach that we responsible reptile keepers should be allowed to keep whatever we want with no restrictions, its becoming a harder sell. All of the articles that I read indicated that the man who died was maintaining this animal as a hobby. It wasn’t part of his job. These types of incidents are going to increase rather than decrease. I am told that a recent expo in Daytona, FL had King Cobra babies, and just

about whatever else you could imagine, for sale at prices that any kid working in a fast food restaurant could afford. The security measures in place were that you would be escorted to your vehicle with the animal. As much as I love herps and as much as I hate legislation telling me what I can and can’t keep, especially when there is little bearing on the survival of wild populations, I think its time for widespread venomous animal regulations that are enforced. Not an all out ban but something that requires individuals to be prepared for bites. We are not going to be able to justify the keeping of these animals by saying that most of us do it responsibly. Given the current shortages of anti-venom and the fact that it is quite expensive, My “expert” opinion is that very few individuals with exotic venomous species are maintaining their animals responsibly. Planning on not getting bitten is a great, albeit short-sighted and irresponsible, goal especially when an exotic animal is involved. The responsible venomous animal keeper should maintain everything that is necessary in the event of a bite. It is not fair to count on hospitals or other venomous reptile owners to maintain the anti-venom you may need. If you can’t afford it, don’t get the animal. Am I all that worried about the owner suffering the pain and possible death of a bite? No. It’s the friends and family members that may get bitten and the resulting backlash of anti-herp public sentiment. The reason that this has struck such a nerve is that we all know that the legislation will not be focused on venomous animals. It will come out as wide sweeping exotic animal bans that will affect everything from corn snakes to parrots.

This is an editorial opinion which in no way reflects the views of the GCHS. Opposing opinions are welcome and should be forwarded to the editor.

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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: Aquariums-all shapes and sizes (5-90 gallons). Boa Constrictor(s) may be available, prices negotiable. Call Chris at (513) 451-1203.

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)

The August Meeting is Thursday, August 14th at 7:30 at the NKU

Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206 (513) 564-6041	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206 (513) 564-6041
Sargent-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452			
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842	Education Conservation Committee Co-Chairman		
				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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