



Virginia Herpetological Society

NEWSLETTER

Vol. II, No. 4

P.O. Box 727, Brookneal, VA 24528

May 1992

Society Column

The BLUE RIDGE HERP. SOCIETY held elections in March for their new officers. They are: President - Brian Drewry, Vice-President - Don Weaver, Secretary - Doug Eggleston and Treasurer - Teresa Winston. The new President appointed various members to Chair committees and a Speaker's Bureau was established through the BRHS to assist local schools and other groups with speakers on herps.

Plans are being made to have some T-shirts and/or other promotional items printed for the BRHS. These will be available to the members and for sale to raise monies for various projects.

Brian Drewry and Doug Eggleston will Represent the BRHS on April 24th on "GOOD MORNING VIRGINIA" again. This program will be one on the venomous snakes and some that are regularly persecuted in VA due to myths. The show will air on 13-WSET-TV out of Lynchburg at 6 a.m.

The speaker for the April meeting was the VHS's own Dr. Paul Sattler. He presented a slide show and talk on The Distribution of the

Two-Lined Salamander in VA. The speaker for May will be Douglas Eggleston.

Members voted to participate in two education herp exhibits. One at Randolph-Macon Women's College in April and the other at the "Day-In-The-Park", (for the third year!). A work date for the "Adopt-A-Highway" project was also set.

Past-President, Doug Eggleston, was presented with a plaque of appreciation for his part in forming the BRHS and for two years of service as the president.

Both March and April had Raffle winners at each meeting. Prized included: T-shirts, a turtle book, a wooden holding box for herps and shoe-box containers. A raffle is held at each BRHS meeting, with tickets selling for \$1.00 each. All raffle money goes to the Educational/Grant Fund account.

The BRHS now has over 50 members on their roster!!

✎ Editor's ✎ Note

Spring has sprung, as the Peepers have sung and so the herping season begins!

It feels great to begin my comments with a cheery note for a change. I rather suspect that our readers had me pegged as an ole sour puss from my previous columns. As you will find in this issue though, my begging, pleading and whining for assistance has paid off.

A good number of our members have responded with articles and observations to be included in these pages. Two have even committed themselves to a regular column! You can look forward to **Veterinary Comments** with Dr. Mark R. Finkler, DVM and **Captive Corner** with Joel Shaner in future issues.

Dr. Finkler will address common problems he encounters in his own practice with the herps brought to him. He has also requested that our readers send in their questions about medical issues dealing with herps that he might answer in his column. You can send in those questions to Dr. Finkler x/o VHS NEWSLETTER, P.O. Box 727, Brookneal, VA. 24528.

Joel Shaner is a herpetoculturist and amateur herpetologist that is involved in various Herp. Societies around the country. He works with various large snakes and lizards as a keeper and breeder. His column will focus on specific species and their care and breeding in captivity.

Some of the other people that have responded will have their articles printed in this or future issues. I will promise to publish any pertinent materials submitted as space allows. I hope to balance each issue with a variety of information and attempt to print something of interest for all of our members.

With the Spring, comes the herps emerging from their Winter brumation and the breeding season. (con't - See **Note** on next page)

Virginia Herpetological Society

Joseph C. Mitchell-Pres.
Sue Bruenderman-Pres. Elect
Ron Southwick, Sec./Treasurer
Douglas W. Eggleston,
Newsletter Editor
Paul W. Sattler, *Catesbeiana*
Co-Editor
R. Terry Spohn, *Catesbeiana*
Co-Editor

HERP HAPPENINGS

THE HIGHLANDS CONFERENCE ON PLETHODONTID SALAMANDERS - May 31 - June 2, 1992. Highlands NC. Contact: Dr. R. Jaeger, U. of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, LA 70504 or (318) 231 - 5235.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ICHTHYOLOGISTS AND HERPETOLOGISTS ANNUAL MEETING - June 4-10, 1992. Champaign-Urbana, IL. Contact: Zoology Dept., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6501.

INTERNATIONAL HERPETOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM - June 25-28, 1992. St. Louis, MO. Contact: Ed Tunstall, 2320 W. Palomino Dr., Chandler, AZ 85224.

2ND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON TURTLES AND TORTOISES: CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT - August 1992. A 3-day event, including lectures and workshops. Vendors will be available. For information, call: (212) 459-4803; or write: 163 Amsterdam Ave., Route 365, New York, NY 10023.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY for the STUDY of AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES (SSAR) - August 2-6, 1992. U. of Texas, El Paso. Contact: Kraig Adler, Dept. of Neuro-Biology and Behavior, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-2702.

NATIONAL BREEDER'S EXPO - August 14-16, 1992. Twin Towers Hotel, Orlando, FL Organized by Wayne Hill and the Central Florida Herp. Society, P.O. Box 3277, Winter Haven, FL 33885.

EASTERN HERPETOLOGICAL EXPO - September 5, 1992. Sellersville, PA. Contact: G. Leonard Knapp, 215 Lawn Ave., Sellersville, PA 18960 or (215) 257-6088.

SECOND WORLD CONGRESS OF HERPETOLOGY - Dec. 29, 1993 - Jan. 5, 1994. Adelaide, South Australia. Contact: Dr. M.J. Taylor, U. of Adelaide, Dept. of Zoology, Box 498, GPO, Adelaide, South Australia 5001, Australia.

(Note con't)

Sympathy

As you are in the field or working with your captive specimens, note behaviors and other information relating to the herps and their breeding habits. Jot these notes down and send them to the Newsletter to be shared with our readers. Who knows? You may just spot some action that has not been seen before and make a valuable contribution to the rest of us interested in herps by sharing it.

Your contributions, in any form, to this newsletter will be greatly appreciated. You can make a difference in how this publication looks and reads. I continue to challenge our members to get and stay involved in herpetology and in the VHS NEWSLETTER. 🐸

We wish to offer our sympathy to the family of Robert N. Bader. Bob died on Feb. 28, 1992 in Bali, Indonesia as a result of a vehicle accident. Bob's contributions to the field of herpetology included his work with *Litoria caerulea* in captivity and as Co-author of AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES in CAPTIVITY, published by the St. Louis Herp. Society, 1975. He was the past President of the Thunder Ridge Seirra Club and associated with a numerous Herp. Societies around the U.S. He lectured throughout VA and NC for schools, colleges and scout and civic groups. Bob is survived by his wife, Mary Eva Bader of Brookneal; his sons, Mark Bader of Union, MO & Michael Bader of Brookneal; his daughters, Molly Bader of Union, MO & Sara Bader of Brookneal; one sister, Joyce V. Bader of Lynchburg & one brother, Kirkland J. Bader of Monticello, NY. A memorial service was held on March 10th in Charlotte Court House, VA.

Captive Corner

With Joel Shaner

The Reticulated Python in Captivity

The Reticulated Python (*Python reticulatus*) is the largest snake in the Old World. The only snake larger than the Reticulated Python, is the Green Anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*). Retics may match or even out measure the Anaconda in length, however the Anaconda attains a much greater weight. Retics occur naturally in Southeast Asia, where they feed on a variety of mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Reticulated Pythons are a challenge to keep in captivity. Before buying a Retic, the prospective buyer should be sure that he is going to be able to house a 15 to 20 foot long snake. If not, the person should investigate buying a smaller python. Retics are temperamental animals. No Reticulated Python should ever be

Mark R. Finkler, D.V.M.

ROANOKE ANIMAL HOSPITAL



2814 Franklin Rd. S.W.
Roanoke, VA 24014
(703) 343-8021

considered one hundred percent tame. Therefore, extreme care should be exercised when handling these animals. As with any large constrictor, two or more people should always be present during handling. Despite their uncertain dispositions, you will be hard pressed to find a hardier snake to keep in captivity. Retics thrive when kept at a temperature of 85 to 90 degrees and are provided with a high humidity. Retics like to bathe and soak, so if it is possible a large water bowl should be provided. Sometimes juveniles enjoy sturdy branches to climb on, however they will quickly outgrow them. Neonates measure approximately 30 inches in length and will feed readily on large mice or small rats. Retics can reach eight to ten feet in one year, so if you purchase a neonate also buy a large cage. A small cage will quickly be outgrown.

Reticulated Pythons are extremely aggressive feeders. Exercise extreme care when introducing or removing food from the cage. Despite their large size these snakes strike with remarkable speed. So devise a safe method to introduce and remove food or you may receive a painful bite.

Specimens usually become sexually mature by the age of three or four. Breeding occurs during the fall months. Captive bred hatchlings become available in the late spring.

Retics are not currently being bred in great numbers like some of the other large Boas and Pythons. However, there is a fairly good amount of hatchlings available each year. These vary in color and temperament, and should be purchased from a reliable breeder, reptile wholesaler or petshop. 🐍

Veterinary Comments

with Dr. Mark R. Finkler, DVM
First Aid for Reptiles

What should you do if you come across a box turtle with a cracked shell? What about a corn snake with a nasty bite wound near its head? Or a worm snake with an

obviously broken back?

Since most people could care less about an injured reptile, those of us who are interested in herps have an obligation to have some knowledge about first aid. Such information may be useful in treating wild (native) herps as well as those in our private collections. This article will present some basic rules and cite specific examples of first aid for reptiles.

RULE #1. Always protect yourself first. Remember that a normally docile animal may become fractious if it is injured. Dropping a towel or shirt over the animal (to "blindfold" it) will probably allow you to pick it up.

RULE #2. Institute minimal care with minimal stress to the herp. An injured animal is already under much stress. Stress inhibits healing and compounds shock. Animals can die from stress alone. You can minimize stress by placing the herp in a darkened, quiet environment of the correct temperature. The "correct" temperature may vary with the species of herp as well as the season of the year. In general, a herp's body (immune system, digestive system, etc.) functions better at a warmer temperature.

By "minimal care" I mean that you should initially provide whatever minimal care is necessary to take it out of a life-threatening situation. This may mean applying pressure with a clean tissue to a bleeding wound, taking a nearly frostbitten herp to a warmer environment, or unplugging the water heater that has shorted out and is electrifying the turtle's water environment.

RULE #3. Know your medical limitations. Do not attempt to play "zoo doctor" if the reptiles clearly need professional help. Anyone can treat a minor skin abrasion on a green iguana, but a turtle with a broken shell infected with maggots will need professional care.

Professional help may be your local veterinarian (if he or she is interested in treating reptiles.) If he doesn't treat reptiles, he can probably refer you to someone who

does. Another source of assistance is the wildlife rehabilitation centers. Virginia has an excellent one: The Wildlife Center of Virginia, P.O. Box 98, Weyers Cave, VA 24486, 703-234-9453. There is a 24-hour turtle hotline sponsored by The New York Turtle and Tortoise Society, 163 Amsterdam Ave., Suite 365, New York, NY 10023. Just dial 212-459-4803 any time of the day, leave a detailed message, and a qualified turtle expert will call within 24 hours. If the expert does not know the answer, callers will be referred to someone who does.

RULE #4. Don't wait too long to seek additional help. Veterinarians are unable to raise reptiles from death (or near death.)

The following examples are provided to assist you in handling specific injuries.

ABRASIONS: clean with either hydrogen peroxide (diluted in half tap water) or diluted household bleach (one ounce Clorox mixed with 30 ounces of water.) Apply an antibiotic first aid cream (such as Neosporin.)

CUTS/LACERATIONS: Apply pressure with a clean cloth or tissue until bleeding stops; clean with diluted hydrogen peroxide or bleach; apply antibiotic cream. A deep or extensive cut will probably require stitches and antibiotics given by injection at a veterinary clinic. Extensive blood loss will require fluid replacement (intravenous or intracoelomic.)

An alternative to antibiotic cream is "New Skin", (by Medtech Laboratories, Inc.). This product, which is available without prescription at any pharmacy, serves as an antiseptic liquid bandage. It is an excellent product to use on small cuts and abrasions.

THERMAL BURNS: Cover the involved area with a tissue moistened with diluted Clorox or hydrogen peroxide. Seek professional help as these injuries are life threatening.

HYPERTHERMIA: Move the herp to a cooler environment. You may immerse the animal into cool (not cold) water.

HYPOTHERMIA: Gradually

rewarm the herp over 2 to 3 hours. Veterinarians will sometimes administer antibiotics to prevent infections.

CRACKED SHELLS: Clean with diluted Clorox or hydrogen peroxide. Do not cover the crack with Vaseline or antibiotic cream. Instead, place a strip of masking tape over the crack to prevent further contamination. Seek professional help for proper shell repair and antibiotic therapy.

BROKEN LEGS: Clean any exposed bones/muscles with diluted Clorox or hydrogen peroxide. Place the reptile in a small dark box and seek professional help.

PARALYSIS/FRACTURED SPINE: Place the herp in a dark box and seek professional help immediately. The prognosis is usually poor with these types of injuries; however, if medical therapy is going to help, such therapy must be instituted immediately.

PROLAPSES (ex: penis, cloaca, uterus): If you find something protruding from the cloacal vent, moisten it with water and seek professional help. If the prolapsed tissue is still healthy, it may be cleansed and pushed back in. If the tissue is not healthy, amputation by a veterinarian will be necessary.

Occasionally you may come across a herp which is so badly maimed (say, by a car) that death is imminent. You should proceed with euthanasia. The most humane way is death by hypothermia (i.e., place it in a container and place it in the freezer.) If this is not an option, then decapitation or a crushing blow to the head is acceptable. Always be aware of your audience - preferably there should not be an audience. ☞

Observations in Captivity

by Kenneth F. Brugger

I've acquired a two-foot long female, Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, while in the process of painting my house. When I caught her, she had a paint stain on her back, (apparently she was in the wrong place, at the wrong time).

However, the paint disappeared after the following shedding process. she gave birth to 13 young, one of which I kept to study the growth process, the others I set free in the wild. She thrives well on nightcrawlers, (3-4 per week), and an occasional toad or frog during the Summer. She now measures in at 27", an increase of 3" over 2½ years.

My observations reveal that newborn snakes do indeed grow rapidly. The young Garter snake grew 4" in 4 months. They apparently tend to require considerably more food than one would expect in an adult. The young Garter snake shares a cage with a Dekay Snake, *Storeria dekayi*, and together they finish off 20-25 garden worms on a weekly basis. They both cohabitate very well. The Dekay snake also grows rapidly, 4¼" in 4 months.

One lesson I've learned over the years is that, unlike lizards, snakes caught locally do not require a light. In the past, whenever I placed a snake in a lighted cage, the animal would die within a couple of weeks. None of my snakes are in a lighted cage and they have thrived over time showing no ill effects.

The other snake I have is a 24½" Rough Green Snake, *Ophedrys aestivus*, who shares the same cage with the 27" Garter snake. They seem to get along very well. The Rough Green snake is strictly an insectivore, (loves crickets) and is also an excellent actor. They are the most timid and gentle snakes I have ever come across. However, they do try to be intimidating. Whenever I approach the snake, he opens his mouth showing the black interior as if to bite at the least provocation. When I place my hand in the cage to grab him, he quickly turns tail and runs. Incidentally, these snakes are extremely fast moving animals. I acquired the Green snake 5 months ago and to date it has not shown any appreciable growth in length.

Editor's comment Simple observations made and reported about our native herpetofauna could possibly assist any of us in better understanding the creatures we

enjoy working with. Thanks to Kenneth for sharing these notes and others I will use in future issues. ☞

VHS Spring Business Meeting and Auction

Dateline: 4-11-92

Place: University of Richmond,
Richmond, VA.

This special Spring meeting was held on a beautiful day and most VHS members were obviously outside enjoying it. The attendance at this meeting was the lowest that I've seen at a recent Spring meeting. Possibly it was the day? Possibly it was the location? Or maybe it was the split-Spring? It couldn't be that so few members are interested in what the VHS will be or how it will get there???????

Enough scolding . . . on with what went on.

(I lied!)

After a brief delay for a hope of a better attendance, President, Joe Mitchell opened the meeting and greeted those that made it. Ron Southwick, Sec./Tres., ask that the minutes as written in the last issue of *Catesbeiana*, (Vol 12, No. 1 - 1992), be accepted. They were and his Tres. report was read. As of 4/10/02, only 105 members had paid their 1992 dues!

Paul Sattler gave a report on the last issues of *Catesbeiana*. 180 copies had been mailed. More materials are needed for future issues. All materials should be sent to Co-Editors *Catesbeiana*, Department of Biology, Liberty University, Box 20,000, Lynchburg, VA 24506. Consult past issues of *Catesbeiana* for format of submissions.

Doug Eggleston gave a report on the Newsletter. Doug will work with Paul to see if the Newsletter can be put on his computer and transferred for future printing. This is to reduce costs. Ron Southwick suggested that we

send out the Newsletter to all current and missing VHS members one more time. This in hopes that some that have left us or forgotten their dues were due, will take a last hint to re-join! There were a number of suggestions submitted to make the Newsletter more interesting to all members. These included: listing meetings of Regional Herp Societies, a recently released literature review, "cannabilizing" from other Society Newsletters, and cutting back to two issues per year and adding one page to the Newsletter. It was decided by a vote that the Newsletter will go to a June and December release. This will balance out the calendar year with the two publication dates of *Catesbeiana*.

The Constitution was ratified as written in the last issue of *Catesbeiana*.

Nominations were accepted for the President-Elect office. Sue Bruenderman, Aquatic Nongame Biologist with the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries won the vote as the new Pres.-Elect. She will serve for two years in this office and then become the VHS President for two years. [It's complicated, but it will work].

A report on the educational poster was given by Joe. A turn of events may now have the poster nearer reality. The Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries is willing to split the cost on having the poster printed with the Society. We will, in essence, pay for a portion of the posters to be distributed or sold. The DGIF will distribute or sell the balance. The subject will be on the venomous snakes of Virginia, with some "Look-Alike" species featured. The poster will have both, the DGIF and VHS information printed in the margin. The cost has been estimated at around \$6,000.00 to produce. The VHS presently has \$975.00 in the Tres. specifically toward this project. If you would like to contribute to this project, [And the VHS' involvement in it], there are two ways you can help. One is through your monetary contribution to the VHS via the Tres. The other is by donating the use of your "good shots" of the

Cottonmouth, Canebrake Rattler, Copperhead, Scarlet King, Cornsnake, Scarlet Snake, Baby Black Ratsnake, Eastern Milksnake, "Blothed-Phase" Hognose or Timber Rattler to Dr. Joseph Mitchell. Send your slides ASAP! This poster is ready to be put together and photos are needed!!

The death of Bob Bader was mentioned during the meeting and his contributions to the VHS and the herping community were reported by Joe, Doug, and Ben Greishaw.

Two publishers are interested in Joe Mitchell's upcoming book, The Reptiles of Virginia. This should be completed and available by the Fall of 1993. The book is 600-plus pages and includes maps and illustrations.

Ron reported that the Board of the DGIF has approved the new regulations as written. The Commission will vote in May. If approved by them, these regulations would go into effect on July 1, 1992. The regulations deal with what can and can not be maintained in captivity in VA.

The chapter on Reptiles and Amphibians from the McDonald/Woodward book, Virginia's Endangered Species, has been purchased by the VHS for resale. If you would be interested in obtaining a copy of the text and color plates, contact Ron Southwick. The cost is \$4.00 for the chapter.

The VHS Fall meeting was briefly discussed. The site may be the Science Museum in Martinsville, VA in early October. More information on this will be forthcoming in the Newsletter and *Catesbeiana*.

A photo album put together by Joe was circulated among the members attending. Joe requests contributions from members of their photos of VHS meetings of the past. There are a lot of blank pages to fill!

The Auction part of this meeting got underway shortly after Wendy Mitchell and the kids arrived with refreshments. [If you missed her Spinach Balls and Brownies . . . Too Bad!!! p.s. - I'm still waiting for that recipe Wendy!!!] \$301.00 was raised through the auction! Highest bids went for the Journal of

Herpetology, (Donated by Ben Greishaw) - \$80.00, a copy of Virginia's Endangered Species, (Donated by McDonald and Woodward Publishing) - \$27.00, and Copeia issues - \$25.00!!! Three items were won through sealed-bids, totaling \$59.00. Ron won the bid on the "Turtle Pot" filled with Wendy's Sausage Balls - only \$10.00, [A real steal! Don't miss a chance at the next VHS Auction or Raffle. ATTEND the Spring and Fall meetings! Donations will be gladly accepted for future raffles and auctions].

As reported and with Editorial comments by Doug Eggleston. £

Prepublication Announcement

A Revised Checklist with Distribution Maps of the Turtles of the World

by John B. Iverson

Publication date: April 1992

This is a substantial revision of Iverson's 1986 Turtle Checklist. At approximately 370 pages, it is 33% longer than the earlier version, and is now the most comprehensive guide available to the scientific nomenclature of the turtles of the world. The Checklist includes updated distribution dot maps (nearly 270 total) for all species, and information on the original citations, type specimens, type localities, distribution, and pertinent literature for all recognized species AND subspecies. Dichotomous keys modified from the scientific literature are also included for identification down to the species level. Phylogenetic relationships are also illustrated for most taxa. This edition is currently available only in soft cover. Cost is \$25.00 prepaid (including surface shipping; foreign airmail shipping is \$10.00 extra). All payments must be in U.S. dollars, drawn on U.S. banks, or on an international money order.

Address order to

John B. Iverson
Dept. of Biology
Earlham College
Richmond IN 47374 USA

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Please send me _____ copies of the Checklist

Name _____

Address _____





A. Pies



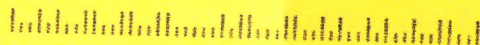
VHS Newsletter

P.O. Box 727
Brookneal, VA 24528



Robert Hogan
P.O. Box 603
Troutville, VA 24175

59/62/50 BPPT 1002571YET ED9A9D1H
HOGAN
33A FIELD STONE LN #102
NEUFORT NEWS VA 23602-7888



marked, your
don't allow
your membership in the **VHS**
to become extinct!

