
Virginia Herpetological Society

NEWSLETTER

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Fish and Wildlife Diversity Initiative

A Bridge to the Future

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) representing public fish and wildlife agencies from all 50 states, Mexico, and Canada has launched a nationwide campaign on behalf of the nation's fish and wildlife entitled the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative. The Initiative's goals are to conserve the nation's fish and wildlife by preventing species and their habitats from becoming endangered, to give Americans more recreational opportunities to experience wildlife and nature, and to advance public education on wildlife and important wildlife issues. To implement these goals, the Fish and Wildlife Funding Initiative would provide a mechanism for generating adequate and dependable sources of funds specifically dedicated for the conservation and enjoyment of fish and wildlife diversity.

The present federal funding for wildlife is from Restoration Acts and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Federal Aid in Wildlife

Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) provides reliable, adequate funding and professional expertise for game animals such as deer, turkey, and bear. The same service to restore gamefish populations is provided through the the Federal Aid in Sport Fisheries

*The Initiative would
provide \$7.6 million
dollars annually to
Virginia.*

Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson). Both Acts are supported through a tax on hunting and fishing equipment which generates millions of dollars for essential conservation projects that support fish and wildlife restoration. The Sport Fish Account alone took in over \$263 million in 1992. The only other source of funding for wildlife is through the 1973 Endangered Species

Act. While the ESA is landmark environmental legislation, assistance can only given to species on the brink of extinction. Between those animals classified as game and those identified as endangered lies a vast array of over 1,800 different types of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish -- such diverse creatures as red-tailed hawks, burrowing owls, cardinals, river otters, flying squirrels, box turtles, and leopard frogs. Although this group comprises the majority of the nation's wildlife, less than 5% of the wildlife money goes toward their management (Figure 1).

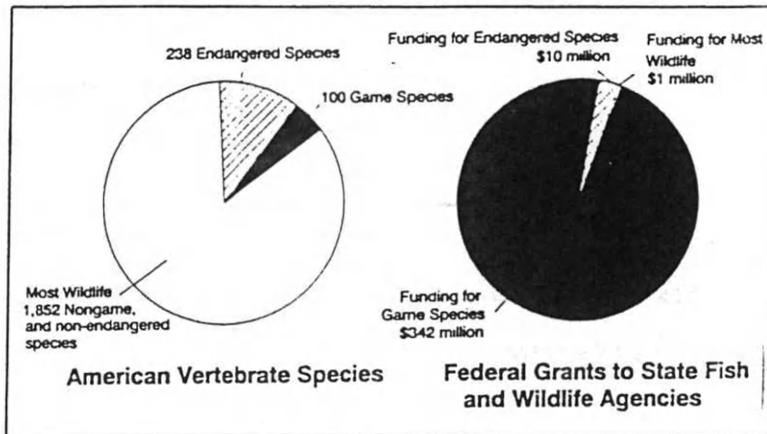
Hikers, backpackers, bird watchers, campers, bird feeders, nature photographers and many more of the 160 million Americans who savor the outdoors will have the opportunity to conserve the "watchable wildlife" they enjoy. Similar to those surcharges hunters and anglers have long paid on their equipment and accessories under the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts, the IAFWA strongly favors

adding a modest surcharge onto outdoor recreational equipment and wildlife materials. Items such as photography equipment and supplies, optical equipment, backyard wildlife supplies, various types of off-road vehicles, and field guides will all have the surcharge. Skeptics of the

million annually to the state's wildlife diversity program. Most funding for Virginia's nongame and endangered wildlife program is from the nongame and endangered species tax check-off and the Endangered Species Act. The current funding level is inadequate

Since the IAFWA hopes to introduce and pass legislation for the Initiative this Spring, your support and action is urgently needed. Write letters to the outdoor recreation equipment manufacturers and distributors (most have a Consumer Services Division) of the surcharged products and indicate your support of the Initiative and that you would continue buying their product even at an increased price. Most importantly, contact your congressperson and senator to indicate your support of the Initiative. Remember, making your support known is the first step in passing this landmark legislation.

Figure 1.



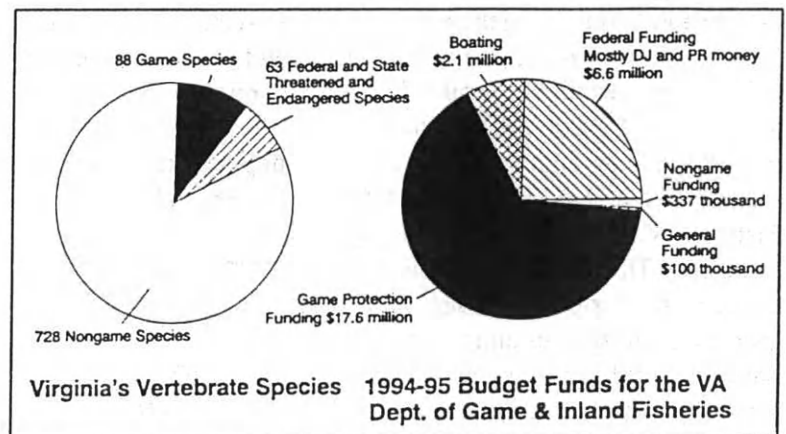
Initiative my argue that a surcharge puts an undue burden on outdoor industries; however, with over \$18 billion a year generated on wildlife-related recreation, outdoor industries should have a vested interest in supporting a healthy future for wildlife diversity.

The Initiative's goal would be to raise at least \$350 million each year to conserve nongame fish and wildlife species. The apportionment of these funds will be based on 1/3 land area and 2/3 on population. Revenue would be administered through a grant match similar to the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration monies: state 25% and federal 75%. While these funds would emphasize fish and wildlife conservation, they would also enhance hiking, canoeing, nature trails, wildlife viewing blinds and towers, nature centers, wildlife brochures, viewing guides, and other educational material.

In Virginia, the Initiative would provide approximately \$7.6

compared to the tremendous number of nongame species in Virginia, which results in sufficient protection for only a few species (Figure 2). Additional funding would allow for the conservation of more species and provide opportunities for the citizens of Virginia to view and enjoy their nongame wildlife. Best of all, adequate funding would be the first step in establishing a truly comprehensive wildlife program.

Figure 2.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INITIATIVE CONTACT NAOMI EDELSON, WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIRECTOR, IWFVA, 444 N. CAPITOL ST., NW, SUITE 544, WASHINGTON DC 20001; TEL: (202) 624-7890.

RESOLUTIONS

Virginia Herpetological Society

At the Fall meeting held on October 8, 1994, several resolutions were passed unanimously by members of the Virginia Herpetological Society. Two resolutions were in opposition to recommendations presented by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force and the other was to limit collection of amphibians and reptiles during spring surveys.

RESOLUTION 1: Virginia's Endangered and Threatened Species Program

Whereas the vast majority of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia Support endangered species, and

Whereas the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have been given regulatory authority over the Commonwealth's flora and fauna by the Virginia General Assembly, and

Whereas the Department of Game and Inland fisheries and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have historically been able to work with private landowners to work out difficulties involving endangered and threatened species, and

Whereas the division of Natural Heritage in the Department of Conservation and Recreation has no regulatory authority,

Therefore be it Resolved that the Virginia Herpetological Society at its annual meeting in Lynchburg, Virginia, on October 8, 1994 request that the Endangered and Threatened Species Programs in Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services remain in these

regulatory agencies, and

Be it Further Resolved that the Endangered and Threatened Species Programs be strengthened in ways to educate the citizens of Virginia about the value of these plants and animals to us and to our future generations.



RESOLUTION 2: The Virginia Museum of Natural History

Whereas prior to the establishment of the Virginia Museum of Natural History (henceforth VMNH) the natural resource specimens collected in Virginia during scientific studies have been sent to out-of-state museums, and

Whereas the VMNH is the only state museum that will house natural history specimens for future generations of Virginia citizens and scientists, and

Whereas no state or private university has the resources or commitment to properly curate Virginia's natural history specimens, and

Whereas many collections in the state's universities have been salvaged from loss and sent to out-of-state museums over the past several decades, and

Whereas the VMNH provides valuable educational services to Virginia's citizens about the natural history of the Commonwealth,

Therefore be it Resolved that the Virginia Herpetological Society at its annual meeting in Lynchburg, Virginia, on October 8, 1994 strongly support the continued maintenance of the VMNH as an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and

Be it Further Resolved that the state increase its financial support for the valuable research and education programs of the VMNH.

RESOLUTION 3:

Because a major purpose of the VHS is conservation, it is proposed that an official no collection policy be adopted as follows for our spring meetings:

All specimens collected during the spring surveys will be returned to the original site of collection for release. The only exceptions would be one specimen per species taken as a museum voucher for state and county records. Individuals with their own collection permits and a valid research project could make their own collections, provided that they are done discreetly, out of the public's eye.

The adoption of this policy is intended to set the tone for all spring surveys and reinforce a conservation ethic for all VHS members.



Nest-Plundering Turtle

VHS member Tom Thorp and Libby Clark observed a common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) taking eggs from duck nests. While photographing wildlife at Three Lakes Park in western Herinco County, Virginia, they saw a single, large turtle (30-40cm carapace length) coming out of a small pond and onto an island where several ducks were nesting. The turtle proceeded to remove a single egg from a nest and carry it back unbroken to the water. The turtle repeated this behavior at least four times until darkness stopped further observations. A visit to the site the following day found that all nest were empty and abandoned. Three weeks later, several ducks attempted to nest again but abandoned their nest within a week. Snapping turtles have long been accused of duckling mortality; however, turtle predation of nests could be an important factor in nest failure in waterfowl.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE SUBMITTED IN THE WILSON BULLETIN
102(2):416, JUNE 1994.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Tom Debusk

Nathan Hollenbach

Mark Kenley

Jan C. Post

Sheila E. Tuttle

Jim Williams, Sr.

Jared Watts

John H. McLaughlin

Marlene Condon

David Pike

..... H e r p H a p p e n i n g s

The Fall Meeting of the VHS was held at Liberty University in Lynchburg on October 8th. In the morning, the Blue Ridge Herpetological Society held educational workshops on the reptiles and amphibians of Virginia. The VHS business meeting discussed officer positions, treasury balance, and new resolutions. The afternoon session consisted of several presentations and the awarding of appreciation certificates to Doug Eggleston, Toni Harrison, Mike Hayslett, Brian Dreyaw, Donna Williams, Mary Ann Snell, and Roland Carney. A book signing by Joe Mitchell and an auction capped off the day's activities.

VHS Spring Survey - Tentative plans are being made to conduct the spring herp collection trip at Fort A. P. Hill Military Reservation during the end of April. Fort A. P. Hill is located along the Rappahannock River southeast of Fredericksburg in Caroline County. The Fort is approximately 17,000 acres comprised of oak-pine forest in the Coastal Plain physiographic province. The numerous ponds, wetlands, and streams that occur at Fort A. P. Hill should make for an interesting herp collecting trip. Secretary/Treasurer Bob Hogan is now investigating the availability of cabins. The March issue of *Catesbeiana* will contain the date, cost, and other details of the trip.

Wood Turtle Survey - On the week of October 30th, fisheries biologists from the Va. Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted a survey for the state-threatened wood turtle, *Clemmys insculpta*, in Northern Virginia. Biologists sampled streams with known wood turtle occurrences and streams with suitable habitat but no known records of wood turtles. Many streams sampled during the 1993 VHS Spring Survey were revisited. Eighteen wood turtles were collected in 5 of 14 streams. Each turtle was sexed, weighed, measured, and marked with a unique identifier. Sites containing wood turtles will be resurveyed in the future to estimate population size.

New Book - VHS member Joe Mitchell has recently co-authored the book, *Amphibians and Reptiles of Assateague and Chincoteague Islands*. The book provides information on the identification, biology, and conservation of amphibians and reptiles and on these unique barrier islands. This is the second book for Joe, who has already authored *The Reptiles of Virginia*. Additional information and order forms for both books are found in this newsletter. Good job, Joe, and keep up the good work!

..... Herp Happenings

Endangered Species Coalition - The VHS is now a member in the Endangered Species Coalition (ESC). The ESC's goals are to protect and strengthen the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) that is due for reauthorization this year. The coalition is a tax deductible organization whose members are mainly environmental and conservation groups. The coalition provides updates on all ESA-related press releases, hearings, education, and legislation. With membership into the coalition, the VHS will add its much needed support for ESA reauthorization.

New Regulations - During the past year, the Va. Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) developed regulations to better protect the Commonwealth's herp fauna. Virginia regulation 325-03-5 §6 was developed to prevent the exploitation of our native salamander species by commercial "fish bait" operations. With the exception of non-native newts (Salamandridae), salamanders can no longer be bought or sold in the Commonwealth. Personal collection of salamanders (50 individuals in aggregate) for use as fish bait is still permitted. Virginia Regulation 325-03-5 was developed to indicate that a permit is required to propagate and sell certain native amphibian and reptile species. Working with several herpetile breeder groups, certain species of native amphibians and reptiles can be propagated and sold in Virginia under a permit issued by the Department.



HERPS in Hand

The Mole kingsnake is one of only four members of the genus *Lampropeltis* found in Virginia. Also known as the mole snake, brown kingsnake, mole catcher, blotched kingsnake or brown snake, the mole kingsnake inhabits the eastern two-thirds of the Commonwealth. The total range of this snake extends from central Maryland to northern Florida, west to the Florida panhandle and central Tennessee and southern Mississippi. The mole king can be found inhabiting thickets, woodlots, cultivated fields and even suburban yards. Preferred habitats are pine and hardwood forests, fields undergoing succession, agricultural fields.

The Mole Kingsnake can be identified by having usually no more than 56 dorsal blotches of reddish-brown with dark edges. Many adults have a greatly diluted pattern or none at all, resulting in a brown or pinkish-brown appearance. Total length of adult mole kings range from 30 to 52 inches (76 - 132 cm). Total length of hatchlings are usually around 8 to 10 inches (20 - 28 cm). As with all kingsnakes, the mole king constricts its prey which consists of small mammals, birds, frogs, lizards and other snakes. Young mole kings have a preference for reptiles, frogs, and toads.

Because the mole king is both fossorial and nocturnal, people rarely get to see this secretive little snake. Some may be found under rocks, mulch, woodpiles, old stumps or the burrows of other animals. The mole king can also be found when they are turned up by the plow or when they cross roads during rainy nights in early spring and fall.

MOLE KINGSNAKE

Lampropeltis calligaster rhombomaculata



This is the last article by Doug Eggleston in his series on native snakes that can be propagated and sold in Virginia with a Captive Breeder's Permit. Thanks, Doug, for your efforts in this series. We will continue the "Herps in Hand" column and offer the opportunity to other members to submit articles on their favorite reptile or amphibian. The only requirement is that the species be native to Virginia. All you need to do is write the article, I'll do the editing - that's my job.

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JUNE 1991 BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

The defensive posture of the mole king is much like other kingsnakes. They will coil and strike so vigorously that they have been known to spring from the ground. The young are especially animated in this behavior. In captivity, some calm down and become extremely docile while others remain nervous and make very poor pets.

The breeding season extends from mid-spring to early summer. The oviparous female deposits approximately 10- 12 eggs in an earthen cavity. The eggs are oblong and about 1 3/4 to 2 inches long (44- 51 cm). With proper conditions, the young will hatch in 60-85 days, normally from July to September.

The Mole Kingsnake is a very attractive and relatively easy snake to maintain. Try to acquire a captive-bred specimen to start and provide an enclosure that will allow the snake to spread out completely. The enclosure should contain a "hide-box" and water dish. Captives seem to do very well at temperatures from 72 to 85°F. Weekly feedings of small rodents are eagerly accepted. I have noted that this snake seems to prefer multiples of smaller food offerings in preference to a larger single offering. Mole kingsnakes have been known to live 10-12 years in captivity. Up to five specimens can be kept in Virginia without a permit. Propagation and sale of this species requires a Captive Breeder's Permit that can be purchased from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Because the pattern of the mole king resembles that of the venomous Copperhead, people will

usually destroy the mole king before obtaining a closer identification. Other predators are hawks, owls, raccoons, skunks, opossums and other kingsnakes. In Virginia, the primary threat to mole king populations is loss of habitat along the urban crescent (the Washington-Richmond-Norfolk corridor). Educating the public on the value of snakes, and the protection of open and hardwood areas will ensure the continued survival of this interesting snake in the Commonwealth.

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the Virginia Natural History Society

The VNHS seeks input from new members about society activities and welcomes their participation in society affairs. Members wishing to contribute in any way should contact the Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Anne Lund, Box 62, Hampden-Sydney, Virginia 23943.

The Virginia Natural History Society (VNHS) was formed in 1992 to bring together all persons interested in the natural history of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The VNHS defines natural history in the broad sense, from the study of plants, animals, and other organisms to the geology and ecology of the state, to the natural history of the people who inhabit it. The goals of the VNHS are to promote research on the natural history of Virginia, educate the citizens of the Commonwealth about its natural history, and to conserve its natural resources.

The first goal of the VNHS is being met with the publication of the journal, *Banisteria*, named after the first university-trained naturalist to work in Virginia, John Banister (1650-1692). The first issue was published in 1992, commemorating the 300th anniversary of Banister's accidental death. Number 1 contains 10 original articles on various aspects of Virginia's natural history, including a brief biography of Banister. *Banisteria* is published twice a year in about April and October. Members of VNHS and others are welcome to submit manuscripts on any aspect of the natural history of Virginia. All members in good standing receive *Banisteria*.



Literature Review

The purpose of this column is to inform members of recent herpetological research which is pertinent to Virginia or of special interest to the Society's membership. Papers or notes from professional journals, new books, "grey literature" reports, and popular magazine articles are acceptable for inclusion in the column. Members are encouraged to send recently published items of interest to the editor. Submissions will be accepted subject to the approval of the editor.

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VHS updates

CITES

The proposal to include box turtles (*Terrepenne spp.*) in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was adopted by consensus of the CITES parties and will become effective February 16, 1995. The Appendix II listing will allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to assess the impacts of trade on box turtles, and will facilitate enforcement and other cooperative efforts between the States and the Service.

The proposal to list the box turtle in CITES Appendix II was based on both biological and trade information. There has been increasing international demand for box turtles as pets, concerns about population declines in some states and evidence that illegal trade in box turtles is a problem. Data from the USFWS has estimated that 20,000 box turtles per year were exported in 1992 and 1993. There is a serious concern whether box turtle populations can sustain this level of exploitation.

Endangered Species Reauthorization

Following recent elections, ESA advocates will have a new political environment to operate in. All of the Congressional committees and subcommittees which deal with endangered species issues will have a much more conservative majority. During the 104th Congress, challenges to the ESA and its effective implementation will come in many forms.

The initial threat will come under the auspices of the "Contract with America", which the majority leaders have promised to pass within the first 100 days of the new session. The Contract includes pledges to limit the implementation of federal mandates and provide compensation for the taking of private property. It also promotes the preparation of risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses. Such measures would create costly

bureaucratic obstacles to government efforts at endangered species protection.

A number of lawmakers have promised to introduce bills early in the congressional session that would drastically weaken the Endangered Species Act. In particular, majority lawmakers will concentrate on passing a "private property rights" bill. Such a law would require taxpayers to pay property owners not to pollute or destroy critical endangered species habitat. With 50% of threatened and endangered species existing on private land, these measures would essentially be "bills to bankrupt the American public."

The fight to save the Endangered Species Act will not be an easy one, but the situation is by no means hopeless. Now is the time to roll up our sleeves, sharpen our pencils and get to work. Through the mail, over the phone, through the media and face to face we must let every member of congress know that we think the ESA is a good law which protects all species interests, including that of human beings. Furthermore, we're going to need to reach beyond the environmental community and let our friends, relatives, and neighbors know what is at stake. We must speak to both political parties, business people, teachers, outdoor enthusiasts, construction workers, and homemakers - people from all walks of life. This issue affects every single one of us and our children and we will not save the ESA unless we are able to communicate that to the general public and move them to action.

It is up to us to begin the drumbeat of support for the Endangered Species Act that will drown out the rhetoric of its detractors. Start now by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and to each of your legislators demanding that the ESA be strengthened. Working together, we'll make sure the Endangered Species Act itself does not become extinct.

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY THE ENDANGERED SPECIES
COALITION, 666 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., S.E.,
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003

BOOKS

Reptiles of Virginia

by Joseph C. Mitchell

Beginning with Captain John Smith's observations of the region's reptilian fauna in 1607, this book offers the first complete catalog of the reptiles of Virginia, from the sea turtles of the Atlantic Coast to the snakes, turtles, and lizards of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge Mountains.

Including full-color illustrations of numerous habitats and thirty-two of the species, distribution maps for each species, and easy-to-use keys for quick identification (with a separate key for young snakes), *The Reptiles of Virginia* is a practical resource and an essential overview of this faunal groups and its habitats. The book is based on data

derived from examination of some 10,000 Virginia specimens, yielding a wealth of new information on the ecology, life histories, and biogeography of reptiles in the state. Each of the sixty-two individual species accounts provides local common names, the historical context for scientific names, present habitat affinities, and information about geographic variation in color, pattern, and morphology, as well as reproduction, predators, and prey. The book also explores the human impact on Virginia's natural habitats and species' distribution patterns, presenting a historical perspective on the conservation of these animals.

Amphibians and Reptiles of Assateague and Chincoteague Islands

Joseph C. Mitchell and John M. Anderson

Assateague and Chincoteague islands are among the best-known barrier islands off the Atlantic coast of North America. Millions of people visit them every year for recreation. Most visitors are well acquainted with the famous Assateague ponies, but few know that these islands are home to unique assemblages of plants and animals.

This book provides information on some of the islands most secretive inhabitants, the amphibians and reptiles. Most of the frogs, salamanders, turtles, lizards, and snakes have occupied these islands since they were formed thousands of years ago. The reptiles and amphibians have learned to live in a harsh environment characterized by hot

About the Authors

Joseph C. Mitchell is an adjunct professor of environmental and conservation biology at the University of Richmond and is a research associate of the Virginia Museum of Natural History. John M. Anderson, a curatorial assistant at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, participated in a herpetological survey of Assateague Island funded by the National Park Service.

and dry sand, scarcity of fresh water, and periodic overwash by salt water. Each of the seven species of amphibians and eighteen species of reptiles can be readily identified using the keys, color photographs, and descriptions in this book. Many interesting aspects of their biology are summarized in highly readable form.

Within these pages we discover why the island is inhabited by far fewer species than are known to occupy the Delmarva mainland. We also learn about measures proposed to insure their long-term conservation, and how to observe these animals in their natural habitats. This book is the only source available that provides a window into the biology and ecology of two fascinating groups of animals on these barrier islands.

Order Form for Reptiles of Virginia and Amphibians and Reptiles of Assateague and Chincoteague Islands

All books purchased through the VHS are 20% discounted from the list price. This offer is open to everyone, members and nonmembers, as quantities last.

_____ copies of *Reptiles of Virginia*
@ \$32.00 each. Postage \$2.25 for
the first book; \$1.00 each additional
book.

\$ _____ Total

_____ copies of *Amphibians and
Reptiles of Assateague &
Chincoteague Islands* @ \$11.96
each. Postage \$1.00 for the first book;
\$0.50 each additional book.

\$ _____ Total

Subtotal: _____

Sales Tax: _____

(4.5% VA. Residents only)

Total: \$ _____

Send order to: Treasurer, P.O. Box 603, Troutville, VA 24175

SHIP TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Make checks payable to: Virginia Herp Society

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

ITS TIME TO RENEW YOUR VHS MEMBERSHIP FOR 1995

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

CHECK MEMBERSHIP TYPE

YOUTH \$6.00 _____

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MAIL TO: BOB HOGAN, SECRETARY/TREASURER
 P.O. Box 603
 TROUTVILLE, VA 24175

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO: VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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 2206 S. Main St., Suite C
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