



A PUBLICATION OF THE UPSTATE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2005

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 8

July's Speaker Presentation – Beaver Lake Naturalist

Greg Smith, the Senior Naturalist at Beaver Lake, was kind enough to share his knowledge and expertise of the indigenous reptile life found within the Beaver Lake area. Greg has spent more than 30 years guiding visitors and students through the trails.

He started the presentation by introducing the turtle species found in the lake. Recently, the staff found a large, deceased snapper turtle, and while the shell may have still smelled a little sharp, it was nonetheless, amazing to see. Greg is working on cleaning it up the rest of the way and preserving it. He also shared a few personal anecdotes about his experiences with large snapping turtles.



Greg Smith – photo by T. Norris

This was followed up with some interesting stories about the Midland Painted turtles, identified from the Eastern Painted turtles by the alignment of the scutes. Two empty painted carapaces were passed around for the members to examine. Apparently the turtles were essentially sucked out from inside their shells by some very intrepid raccoons (or something). A third shell, which wasn't sucked cleaned, but well chewed upon, showed the very visible spinal column and remainder of the turtle's rib cage. All the shells were really amazing to inspect.

Beaver Lake is home to about four species of turtles: the snapper, midland Paint, musk and spotted turtles. In addition to the turtles, the Beaver Lake reptiles include about 5 species of snakes. The most commonly found snakes are the Eastern Garter snake, and its cousin, the ribbon snake. Less likely to be commonly seen, more because they blend in so well, are the diminutive brown snakes. Populations of water snakes fluctuate with the health of the lake, and while numbers have dropped in the past, they may be on the rise again. Finally, sporadic sightings of the red bellied and the collared snakes make the list complete.

There is also a healthy population of amphibians, including a variety of frogs and salamanders. Greg's talk was a precursor to the UHA annual picnic and herp hike. Hopefully, we'll get to see some of these beautiful creatures during our hike. Let's hope the temperature is conducive.

The UHA is appreciative to Greg, Beaver Lake Nature Center and its staff for all they do to assist the Upstate Herpetological Association.

The Unclassifieds:

These are line ads are free for UHA members; for non-members the fee is \$2.50. Each ad will run for two months unless otherwise requested. (The date following each ad is the last issue it will run) UHA makes no warranty as to the quality of items advertised in the HerpBeat.

Ads should be sent by mail to Attn: HerpBeat, Diana Sleiertin, 980 Schaap Road, Jordan, NY 13080 or via email to uha_herpbeat@earthlink.net. The deadline is the 10th of the month.

Publication Correction!

Please note that on page 2 of the June's edition of the HerpBeat, regarding the article about the PAR presentation, it was incorrectly printed that ..".Linda offered that there are some "animal friendly" alternatives to scare away the deer, injuring the deer."

This should have correctly said "alternatives to scare away the deer, *WITHOUT* injuring the deer".

We are sorry for the misprint and regret any concern or inconvenience this may have caused for the Guest speaker or any member of the group.

For more information about the People For Animal Rights, please contact Linda DeStefano at PO Box 15358, Syracuse, NY 13215-0358 or by phone at 488-7877.

EMAIL Submissions To:
uha_herpbeat@earthlink.net



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Need to submit by Snail Mail? Please do!

Mail Submissions To:

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Editor's Corner Column

Summer time Concerns!

This summer has been heating up. As a matter of fact, Syracuse has not only hit record highs, but also had the record number of days in those high temps... qualifying us for a bonafide heat wave! So, what does that mean for herp owners?

Well, for some of us, that might mean lower electric bills, since we can turn off some of the heat lamps. For others, it may include interior redecorating as we move amphibian tanks to cooler rooms in the house. But one thing is for sure, it means we all have to be more vigilant about our animals water supply, husbandry and hygiene.

Please remember that all your reptiles (and all your pets) need to have fresh, clean water on a daily basis. The evaporation rate is significantly increased in high temps, so keep an eye on all your tanks. Even though it's quite humid for us, it may still not be humid enough for a few of your collections. Be sure snakes and lizards have a water dish deep and full enough to completely submerge and soak if need be, while still getting out safely. And make sure it's **clean**.

Cleanliness is next to godliness, so they say. And despite some religious beliefs that snakes are evil, we know better. Therefore, be sure to keep your reptile enclosures extra clean. Bacteria just love to propagate in these humid, sticky temps. Any soiled water or substrate is more likely to grow bacteria, and darned quickly too. Don't risk infections or illness in your animals or transmission to you and your household humans by letting the bacteria get the upper hand. A few extra minutes to grab clean substrate is definitely worthwhile. And an antibacterial wipe down is always a plus.

Same goes for the vegetarian food dish. For the iguana, tortoise or other vegan reptile owners, be sure to remove and clean those food dishes as soon as possible. Have you noticed how quickly those scrumptious strawberries turn to fuzzy science projects in 90f weather? Yikes.

Let's all enjoy what the summer has to offer. Keep yourselves and your pets, mammal and reptilian, happy and healthy in the summertime. Lots of fresh clean water is essential for us all. And we all love a clean house... so clean substrate and clean dinner dishes are a must.

Enjoy the heat wave!! Stay safe!

New York Herpetological Expo

Drumlins Country Club

Syracuse, NY

August 27, 2005

The NY Herpetological Expo has returned, backed by one of the original organizers, corporately supported by Brad Chambers and Animal Dreams. This year's show looks to be bigger and better than ever before.

Contact Brad Chambers at Animal Dreams (315)214-0340 for further information or mail to:
NY Herp Expo, 309 South Main St, North Syracuse, NY 13212

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!!!

Interested in selling your animals at a UHA table? Special Available ONLY to UHA Members!!

Contact Bob Cunningham immediately. Space is limited and time is of the essence 3

Opinion/Editorial Page

This page has been created to allow the members to voice opinions, concerns and ideas. The Op/Ed page is open to all members who would like to express themselves. The editor reserves the right to edit any submissions.

Please note the information here is strictly the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the UHA, its Board and/or its members.

WILL THE UPSTATE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION PROSPER?

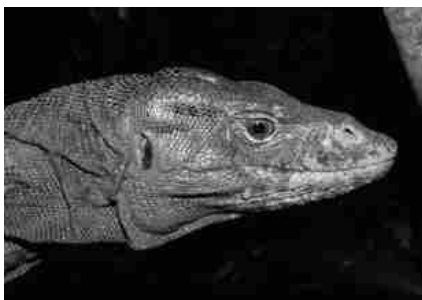
A proposal was recently announced in the June 18, 2005 issue of "Notes From Noah" (NOAH), the newsletter of The Northern Ohio Association of Herpetologists, which should be of interest to entire herpetological community.

It seems that in the past the typical attendance at the monthly NOAH meetings was 50 to 60 or more individuals. That attendance was sufficient to ensure that a quorum of 25 members in good standing would be present to conduct the business of that organization. However it appears that the attendance at their meetings has declined to such an extent that the executive committee of NOAH has proposed that the required number of members to constitute a quorum be reduced to fifteen.

This development should be a wakeup call to UHA, and indeed to all herpetological clubs throughout the country. It seems to me that interest in captive reptiles the Upstate New York has declined in recent years. It appears that the number of individuals in UHA with large collections of herps has declined. The size of the Syracuse reptile Expo has declined in recent years and was actually cancelled last year. The Albany chapter of UHA no longer holds regular meetings. Attendance at the meetings of the Syracuse Chapter have declined over the past 10 to 15 years and at this point we usually see less than 25 members at our meetings. We now have less than 150 paid members. That is a decline of 50 to 75 members during the past ten years or so.

Can we halt this decline in membership? I am not sure if this trend can be reversed but I do know that the present membership must lead the way if we are to arrest this trend. It is easy to sit back and let someone else arrange for speakers, write for the Herp Beat, and do all the other myriad number of chores necessary to run an organization such as ours. Please take a second look at the Editor's Corner Column in the July HB concerning the UHA elections in November. The Editor is still waiting to hear if any of our newer members are interested in running for offices in our organization. I am still waiting to hear if any members of UHA want the club to purchase a table for member sales at the upcoming newly reorganized Expo in August. I feel it is a matter of necessity that more members, particularly newer members, take a more active part in the day-to-day operations of the club. It is worth noting what happened to our Albany chapter when members failed to attend their meetings and failed to take an active part in the operations of that chapter.

Robert C. Cunningham, Treasurer, UHA



Conservation News

Check out this site for more information

Mampam Conservation

<http://www.mampam.50megs.com/>

Working to save the Buutan (or Gray's Monitor), the world's only true fruit eating lizard.

Board Member and Nominee Biographies

NOTE: Since biographies are provided by the members, they may or may not include reasons to consider your vote. Therefore, as editor, I may be providing a few extra insights that voting members may want to additionally consider.

Bob Cunningham - Current Board Member

I am one of the two founding members of the Syracuse Chapter of UHA. Between June of 1991 and February of 1995 I was the Vice-President of the Syracuse Chapter. In 1996 I became the Treasurer of the Chapter and have remained in that position since. I have been on the Board of the Chapter since it's founding. I am 78 years old and have been collecting and keeping reptiles and amphibians since childhood. I graduated from the University of Louisville with a bachelor degree in biology. My undergraduate thesis was on the Amphibians of Bullitt County, Kentucky.

Due to the necessity of earning a living I was forced to give up my interest in herpetology until I retired in 1989. After retirement I volunteered as a part-time reptile keeper at the Burnett Park Zoo and worked in that capacity for seven years. While working there I began collecting the names of persons who were interested in starting a herpetology club. Those names belong to all the initial members of the Syracuse Chapter of UHA.

If you believe I am qualified and have the personal attributes necessary for a position on the UHA board, I urge you to vote for me.

Julie Hiscock - Nominee Member

My name is Julie Hiscock. I am a homemaker who lives in Cicero with my husband, 4 birds, 5 dogs and 17 tortoises. I have a love for animals great and small. I would go to the ends of the earth for any of the above. One of my red-footed tortoise just let me do that. One room in my house was converted into my tortoise room with tropical décor. My tortoises include juveniles and adults: sulcatas, leopard tortoises, Greek tortoise, with much excitement over my recent purchase of new additions – two Indian star tortoises. My newest adoption, “Nipper” is a 50 pound Sulcata is a pleasure to have in my home.

Editors' Note: Joyce is a new member, who has been encouraging new members to join, volunteering to help out at meetings, and eager to serve the group as a Board Member. Her enthusiasm and fresh attitude may be just the infusion the group and the Board need. Please consider the valuable input that Joyce can bring to the UHA's future success.

Ed Mahar - Current Board Member

I'm a lover of the natural world. I grew up with a swamp out back and Oneida Lake out front. I've been picking up and studying our local critters my whole life. And I'm still learning...I have my own little science project breeding turtles and tortoises. Yes, herpetaculture is farm work. I also accompany a few brave UHA members on walks into our Cicero swamp each year. I also have been a member of UHA Syracuse chapter from day one.

Editors' Note: Ed has been dutifully serving the group as a member of the Board for the last year. As he mentioned, he is one of the original members and undoubtedly has contributed to the success of the group during the last 15+ years.

**Don't forget to vote in November!
Your Board needs your support!
You can vote in person at the
Nov'ber meeting or by email/ mail.
Please don't forget!**

Herp Beat

Is a monthly publication of the Upstate Herpetological Association.

UHA is a 501(C)(3) Not-for-Profit organization dedicated to the practice of herpetoculture and herpetology. Membership is open to anyone who subscribes to the purposes of the Association.

Board Member and Nominee Biographies

Stephanie Heppler - Nominee Member

I am a new member, joining only a couple of months. I am very interested in reptiles and seem to have caught the "reptile" bug after getting my first lizard. I have owned iguanas, bearded dragons, leopard geckos and have just adopted a Uromastyx. I joined the UHA after I called to find a new iguana to adopt. I am very interested in volunteering to help reptiles, and have really been enjoying the volunteer work I have been doing lately, and look forward to doing presentations with the UHA.

Editors' Note: Stephanie is a good example of one of the group's younger members, few that they are. She is eager to serve the group as a Board member. Her input is crucial in knowing how to attract, interest and keep younger members to join the UHA. Having worked with her at various times, she is incredibly responsible, well educated and could be a huge help in increasing the youth membership. Please consider her valuable input when considering your votes for the Board.

Terry Norris - Current Board Member

I have a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts from Syracuse University, am retired after 33 years with the Onondaga County Health Dept. I've kept Herps on and off most of my life, but steadily since the early 80s. Although I've kept lizards, and frogs, my main interest is snakes. Over the last 4 years have been breeding various colubrids. I'm currently on the board of UHA and am active in my church's Men's Club. One of the activities I enjoy the most is presentations to small groups. Often, it brings more young people into the Herpetology field.

Editors' Note: Terry has been dutifully serving the group as a member of the Board for the last year. He has stepped up to cover extra duties in the absence of other Board members, regularly volunteered for UHA presentations and duties, volunteered to do meeting presentations and more.

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Name Tag Raffle Would BE Winner(s)!

Name Tag Raffle Prize was a \$25 Gift Certificate to Al's Owego Pet Store in Oswego.

Third time's a Charm!

The first name pulled was **Blake William**. Then, a familiar face who was absent that day, **Bill Woodruff**'s name was pulled next. Finally, **Bonnie Jo Carpenter**. We missed you all at the meeting. Maybe you can make the next one!

Don't miss the next Name Tag Raffle!
See you in August – BEAVER LAKE!

August's Guest Speaker

August's Speaker? How about it's **YOU!!**
Don't miss this great opportunity!

The August meeting is our annual picnic and we will not be having a guest speaker. Instead it will be a great opportunity for you to meet and hang with some of your fellow herpers. This is a family event – so bring the kiddies. Heck, bring the neighbors if they're into herping! But don't forget to bring your food!! Wanna share a dish to pass ... feel free to bring it along too!

Advertising Info:

If you would like to place an ad not covered in the "UnClassifieds" column, but aren't sure how to lay it out, send us your information with payment and we will create a custom ad for you or your business. A full-page ad is \$50 per month, ½ page ad - \$25, ¼ page ad - \$15 and business card size \$10.



Upcoming UHA Events



Please note there have been some changes to the UHA schedule and the date changes!

Aug 7, 2005 *Beaver Lake Monthly Meeting – Annual UHA Picnic* – Please bring your lunch and drinks, and maybe a dish to pass. Hike to follow the picnic! Be sure not to miss this chance to socialize in the sun with your fellow herpers!! See more information on Page 11.

Aug 27, 2005 *NY Herpetological Expo* – Drumlin's Country Club (sponsored by Animal Dreams)

Sept 18, 2005 *Beaver Lake Monthly Meeting* – Speaker: Brad Chambers – UHA member

Oct 2, 2005 *Annual UHA Open House* – be sure to book a table early to share your reptiles with the curious public! A Great opportunity to educate about and demystify our reptiles – Be a part of the Open House! Contact Janet Calp or Terry Norris to schedule your table!

(Contact info on Page 2)

Right around the Bend ... make that Big Bend, Texas

Here's another chance to live vicariously through the field tripping adventures of our fellow herper. For all of us who couldn't make the trip.... Let's thanks Brad and those that could!

UHA Big Bend Trip 2005

Brad Chambers

Like many questionable ideas, it was conceived in the deepest throes of a cold, dark upstate February. Why not spend a vacation in the fabled snake hunting Mecca of southwest Texas? After all, after the spectacular success of my previous trip to the Big Bend country almost 20 years ago, I'd vowed to return very soon. Well, 20 years is stretching any reasonable definition of "very soon"! Besides, it had been years since I'd had a decent vacation. It probably took me all of 15 minutes to make up my mind. I also decided to offer spaces on the trip to other interested UHA members. My friend (and the Manager of my store, Animal Dreams), Carl Ackerbauer, immediately agreed to come along. A couple of other members expressed interest, but were unable to make it.

That was the easy part. The logistics of the trip were a challenge. Since we wanted to bring some animals back with us, we decided to bite the bullet and drive down. But this meant an extra 32 hours tacked on to each end of the trip (Foolishly, we planned to drive straight through, nonstop). The most time I could, in good conscience, absent the both of us from the store was a bit over a week. So that left us with 6 nights of herping.

But WHEN to go? For this and other decisions I enlisted the help of the veteran snake hunters on KINGSNAKE.COM's Alterna Forum. High daytime temperatures, combined with the fact that the vast majority of the desert habitat is private ranch land or otherwise totally off limits, mean that you're pretty much limited to cruising the roads at night for crossing snakes. I already knew from past experience that the most propitious time to "road cruise" for desert snakes is the dark of the moon. My friends on the forum all seemed to agree that June is the top month, since at this time many desert snakes are quite actively searching for mates and/or foraging for food before the driest part of Summer sets in. This year the new moon fell on June 6, so we timed the trip to cover the three nights on either side of that date.

The next issue was finding a decent place to sleep away the hot desert days. We decided that the small town of Alpine was ideal-about equidistant from most of the best herping spots, with the bonus of being a bit cooler due to its location at fairly high altitude. A friend from the Alterna forum, Troy, recommended the La Loma Inn, where he would be staying, so that's where we made our reservations. Nothing fancy, it was very economical and served our needs nicely. I was particularly glad for the in-room refrigerator!

One final point - and one that should be taken into account by any herper heading for Texas - is legalities. In order to lawfully collect reptiles and amphibians in Texas, each member of a party must first obtain a non-resident small game-hunting license from Texas Parks and Wildlife. A full season cost is about \$130.00, but five - day permits are available for less than half that. Since we would be there for six nights, we saved a little bit by buying two consecutive five - day permits each. Permits can be conveniently ordered online at the TP & W website. Ours arrived in less than a week.

Carl and I had intended to get a good night's sleep and leave early on the morning of June 2. But Wednesday evening we were just too keyed up to sleep, so we jumped in the F-150 and took off for Texas. This was after we had both put in a full day's work at the Animal Dreams! While, in retrospect, I don't recommend this course of action, it did put us in "the right place at the right time" the next day. For the remainder of this narrative I'll describe our adventures day by day, starting with this story.....

Thursday, June 2

Our drive was uneventful, and we made good time as we passed through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. However, soon after we crossed into Arkansas that morning, we decided to stop and stretch our legs by an inviting – looking slough (inviting to reptiles, that is!) near I-40. Hurrying down to the water, we immediately found a newly raided nest of a common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*). Probably the work of one of the raccoons whose tracks were very much in evidence in the nearby mud.

Then I heard a shout of “snake!” from Carl, whom I found warily circling a very upset, and very beautiful, speckled kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula holbrooki*), which was coiled amid vines on top of a large rock pile. Carl, being unfamiliar with the local herpetofauna, had prudently waited for me to identify his find before grabbing it. I waded in and grabbed the highly upset serpent, receiving a strong dose of the all – too – familiar getula musk in the process. Although the delay in capture might have allowed the king to escape, I was reassured that Carl was being duly cautious when dealing with unfamiliar snakes. Or at least so I thought.

Well pleased with such a great find so early in our trip, I returned to the truck to retrieve a snake bag. No sooner had I bagged our first prize than I heard another shout from Carl. Running back to the slough, I found him busily engaged in trying to keep a small brownish snake from entering the water, using a small twig. This was all well and good, except for the fact that I immediately recognized his find as a juvenile western cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma*)! Not only that, but there was another coiled in the mud less than a meter behind him! So much for caution. I shouted for him to get away from both snakes, which then slid safely into the water. Carl then related how he’d seen two much larger individuals of the same species basking on a nearby brush pile. Wow! Just 15 minutes into the fieldwork portion of the trip and already we’d logged two snake species – and both totally unanticipated at that. We jumped back in the truck and continued on, hopeful that our initial success was a good omen.

Friday, June 3

We turned off I-20 toward Ft. Stockton, Texas, on Highway 18, at 1:30 AM. In the distance we could see numerous flashes of lighting as a line of storms approached from the West. This weather circumstance is usually favorable for snake activity, and tonight was no exception. With (*Crotalus atrox*) stretched out on the road. It was a male, which exhibited the normal *atrox* antisocial attitude by coiling and rattling angrily. This was Carl’s first encounter with a wild rattlesnake. We took several photos then hooked the serpent off the road and continued on. A few miles later we repeated the same ritual with an almost identical diamondback. Even though it was now 2 AM, the temperature was a balmy 84 degrees; in a few miles I spotted a small Western diamondback rattlesnake

Then the skies opened up. I grew up in the Midwest, so I’ve seen a few severe thunderstorms in my day, including a couple of tornadoes. But I have no hesitancy in calling that storm one of the worst I’ve ever seen. First came almost constant lightning strikes, many almost on top of us, then rain so heavy we could barely see the road. Finally, hail the size of ping - pong balls pelted the truck to the extent I felt obliged to pull over lest our windshield be shattered! Further, the temperature dropped from 84 to 55 degrees in just a little over 15 minutes (the truck is equipped with a very accurate in – cab readout of the outside temperature, a very handy feature for a herpetologist!)! This temperature drop was to prove to have profound implications for us over the next couple of days.

The storm ended snake activity, and we arrived in Alpine around 4 AM. Since we couldn’t check in to our room for several hours, we decided to cruise a nearby desert “ranch to market” road in hopes of seeing some diurnal reptiles. The temperature was still only 60 degrees at 6 AM, so reptile activity was scant. We saw only a DOR (dead on road) Western coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*), and a sunning whiptail of undetermined species. However, other desert animals were out in force. We observed pronghorn, javelina, mule deer, jackrabbits, and desert cottontail rabbits. Birds included scaled quail, roadrunners, white – necked raven, Swainson’s hawk, and burrowing owls. The tiny desert cottontails were at the peak of their population cycle, which was good news for the gopher snakes and rattlers, but bad news for motorists. It was difficult to avoid hitting them even at slow road cruising speeds. They seemed to be everywhere! All the above animals were new to Carl, so it was a productive morning. 9

Back at the motel we hooked up with Troy, who was staying in the room next to us. He had arrived a few days ahead of us, and we were delighted to find he'd saved a few choice animals he knew we would be looking for. Most notable were a nice adult female Mexican hognose (*Heterodon nasicus kennerlyi*) and a gorgeous juvenile trans-pecos ratsnake (*Bogertophis subocularis*).

That night we opted to head down to the "River Road" (Highway 170) running along the Rio Grande, since it promised to be warmer than the higher altitude areas nearer to Alpine. Even here, thanks to the previous night's cold front, the temperature was only in the mid 70s early, dropping quickly. Snake activity was scant, but we did find a spotted night snake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). These harmless rear-fanged snakes are among the most common serpents encountered while road cruising. Although mainly lizard and snake eaters, most can be switched over to pink mice fairly readily, if these are first scented with lizard. Our final find of the night was a nice young male checkered garter snake (*Thamnophis marcianus*), one of my favorites and another very common snake along the river road. We also collected a nice tarantula and a few giant desert millipedes. Falling temperatures forced us to quit early, which was actually welcome, since neither of us had had more than an hour or two of sleep for the previous 50 hours or so! On our return we found that Troy had done slightly better, coming up with another night snake, as well as a glossy (*Arizona elegans*) and a very nice great plains rat (*Elaphe emoryi*).

Saturday, June 4

I rose at dawn, ready to do some early morning herping, but Carl was dead to the world – so I headed out alone to the road we had dubbed the "Marfa road" due to its proximity to that small town. This road passes through almost perfect high desert habitat, surrounded by grassland and lechuguilla, agave and Joshua tree desert. My first find, barely outside of Marfa, was a freshly – dead male Mexican hognose. It had obviously been hit by the carload of ranch hands which had passed me a few moments before. I tossed it off the road to avoid any later confusion.

Not a mile further on I came upon a perfect female Mojave rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*) stretched out on the warming asphalt. This was indeed a rare find, and represents the first and only time I've seen a rattlesnake on a desert road in the daytime. I can only speculate the unseasonably cool nighttime temperatures had encouraged her to indulge herself with an early morning basking session. I estimated her length at a bit less than a meter, and she froze as I pulled the truck over, grabbed my hook and digital camera, and jumped out. She was still sluggish from the cold, and barely moved as I took several photos from various angles. She did take slight offense, rattling weakly, when I lifted her on the hook and carried her off the road. What a gorgeous animal! I must have stood there just admiring it for at least ten minutes before continuing on.

The final reptile find of the morning occurred 12 miles later as I rounded a curve and was faced with the trip's first Sonoran gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus affinis*). A large individual of about 5 feet, it reacted just like every subsequent gopher on our trip – freezing in place until picked up, then hissing loudly, but not offering to bite.

One other notable sighting occurred when I spotted a small falcon perched on a power pole. But on second look it wasn't small enough to be a kestrel, and the markings were all wrong for a prairie falcon, which is fairly common in the Big Bend area. I got the binoculars on it and was amazed and excited to see it was actually an Aplomado falcon! The birders reading this will attest that this bird is extremely rare and almost never seen north of Mexico. I was later to learn that a reintroduction program, similar to that which has been responsible for the return of peregrine falcons to New York cities (including Syracuse), is being undertaken for this species, and I wasn't the first to spot one of a pair, which had taken up residence near Marfa.

That evening, we left early to visit the Davis Mountains. On highway 118, about 5 miles south of Fort Davis, we came upon a large DOR western coachwhip. This one was a gorgeous "red phase" animal, and it got Carl very excited about possibly catching a living specimen. I informed him that, though we were almost certain to see crossing coachwhips, he should prepare himself for many disappointing experiences before

actually laying hands on one. The sheer speed of these ophidian cheetahs must truly be seen to be believed. As if to prove my point, just a few miles later, on Rt. 17 north of Ft. Davis, we rounded a curve and there, gliding unhurriedly across the road, was a huge adult red coachwhip! I whipped the truck off the road and Carl leapt out, sprinting toward the surprised serpent only about 30 yards away. Carl didn't even come close. All he saw was a scarlet streak disappearing in the brush and then, nothing. This scene proved typical of our subsequent encounters with this species. Both these snakes were active under sunny skies at temperatures in the mid 90s.

We continued on, still in high spirits despite our defeat. We were heading for one of the most famous collecting localities in the area - "Boy Scout Road". Only about 10 miles in length and set in the picturesque northern foothills of the Davis Mountains, this isolated back road passes through a couple of private ranches before ending at the entrance to a Boy Scout camp. The entire length runs through excellent snake habitat, and is famous for the numbers and quality of the reptiles collected there over the past three decades.

Unfortunately for us, the Davis Mountains were still feeling the full effects of the cold front. When we arrived at dusk, the temperature had already dropped to 78 degrees. Wildlife other than reptiles was very much in evidence as we slowly drove the narrow blacktop. Kangaroo rats, tiny harvest mice, pack rats, jackrabbits, and skunks were seen. Barn owls swooped down on unsuspecting rodents at the edge of the glare from our headlights. But no reptiles.

We were almost to the end of the road when I spotted something that just didn't look quite right sticking out a couple of inches from the roadside grasses. I backed the truck up and Carl jumped out to investigate. But instead of grabbing whatever it was, he just bent over it, staring intently. I asked him what it was. "Umm...I dunno - I think it's some kind of baby rattlesnake." That was enough for me and I quickly joined him. It was indeed a rattlesnake, a perfect little yearling mottled rock rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*). I was overjoyed, since I'd had rock rattlers added to my NY venomous permit with the idea in the back of my mind that I might one day make a trip to the southwest and could field collect a pair. But catching it was another matter - suddenly, and predictably, we couldn't locate our small snake hook! And the little rattler decided the nearby rocky hillside was a far safer place at the moment, and tried to flee - forcing me to lightly hold it down with my tennis shoe - clad foot (I knew his fangs would be too short to penetrate the thick rubber soles). Luckily Carl was able to finally uncover the hook and the little lepidus was bagged with no further difficulty. We made one more pass up and down the road, but the temps were falling rapidly into the 60s. A small spotted night snake was the only other find of the night.

Heading back to Alpine, we were cheered by the weather forecast, which called for steadily rising day and night temperatures over the next few days.....

Stay tuned for what Brad and the Field trip hunters found over the next few days.

The final installment in the next issue of the HerpBeat

August Picnic –Aug 7th - High Noon

It's that time again – time for the Annual UHA Picnic!

Let's hope you all plan to be there. This will be a great opportunity to meet and visit with your fellow herpers.

We will be meeting at the **Beaver Lake Nature Center**, starting the **picnic at 12:00**, with a herp-hunting hike at **2:30**. Let's keep our eyes open for the many species that Greg Smith mentioned live within the boundaries.

You need to bring your own food, and if you'd like, a dish to pass. There is no cooking by visitors on the premises of BLNC, so cook in advance... or enjoy the yummy tasty hotdogs cooked right there at the BLNC.

Please make an effort to attend the picnic, show your support for the group and get to know your fellow members even a little better.

See you there!

October Open House –October 2nd

Let's get together and have a great Turnout.

Just as an FYI, the Chicago Herp Society holds a Two-day Reptilefest that is *Phenomenally* well attended, by both members and audience. Let's aspire to a similar turnout by our members. New efforts will be taken to widely publicize the Open House, so let's make sure we are all involved! It's not too early to plan to be there...

Mark your calendar and Plan your table!!

You need to book now to insure you have the electricity and space you might need.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE UHA

**Show your interest in educating the public,
Share your beautiful animals, your knowledge and your time!**

Contact Janet Calp or Terry Norris to schedule your table! (Contact info on Page 2)

Brennan Greens Land Sold

Reprinted with permission from the Post Standard, June 7, 2005

Submitted by Bob Cunningham

Chalk one up for the bog turtle. The tiny reptile recently triumphed over one of Richland's biggest developers.

After years of battling environmentalists and thumbing his nose at endangered wildlife, Richard Brennan, owner of the Brennan Greens golf course, agreed to sell a sizable chunk of wetland to the state.

"People are very pleased," said Joseph Heath, a lawyer for the environmentalists. "I think everyone feels good that the wetlands has been transferred to state ownership. It should be very effective in protecting the endangered species."

The state Department of Environmental Conservation took possession of 268 acres of marsh in Oswego County last month. Brennan agreed to sell the land to the state to end the court battles that had dragged on for almost two years.

Friends of the Salmon River, a non profit environmental group, filed a lawsuit against Brennan in August 2003, saying pesticides from his golf course were leaking into the wetlands and harming species that live there – including the bog turtle, listed on the state endangered and federal threatened species list.

Brennan Greens, a nine-hole golf course on state Route 3, butts up against Selkirk Fen and Deer Creek Marsh, both classified by the state as "significant costal fish and wildlife habitat" areas. The area is home to a handful of threatened and endangered plants and animals, including the bob buckmoth, the swamp smartweed and the black tern, all on the state's endangered species list.

Christopher Amato, lawyer for Friends of the Salmon Rover, said those species will have a better chance for survival; now that the state has taken over.

As part of the settlements, Brennan agreed to let consultants sample surface and ground water around the golf course for the next seven years. He also agreed to stop using pesticides on the links and destroy any stock of the chemicals.

The settlement also required Brennan to allow Peter A. Rosenbaum, a biology professor at the State University College ay Oswego, to conduct habitat studies at Selkirk Fen. Rosenbaum has been searching for the rare bog turtle in the wetlands near the golf course for years.

Amato said Brennan agreed to the settlement at the urging of the DEC and the state attorney general's office. Brennan employees said he is less than with the terms.

"The settlement puts an awful lot of restrictions on the way we can treat the course," said Barbara Hillenbrand, office manager for Brennan Greens. "A burden has been placed on this golf course that no other golf course has to live up to. It will put a financial burden on us to some degree, but we'll manage. Business is good."

Hillenbrand said Brennan was unavailable for comment.

August Meeting!

Did we miss you at the interesting July Meeting? Be sure not to miss the August picnic!

HIGHLIGHTS:

**Presentation by Guest Speaker –
Summer Picnic, followed by Herp Hike**

**Name Tag Raffle:
Zoo Med Gift basket**

**Socialize:
Afternoon Picnic**

When: August 7, 2005

Time: 12:00 pm

**Where: Beaver Lake Nature Center,
Baldwinsville**



Directions From I-81 or I-90 - Take I-690 W. (changes to N. at NYS Thruway) to second Baldwinsville exit, 370 W. Proceed west on Rte. 370, 2 miles, turn right onto E. Mud Lake Rd.

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- \$30 Business Member
(includes special listing in the directory)

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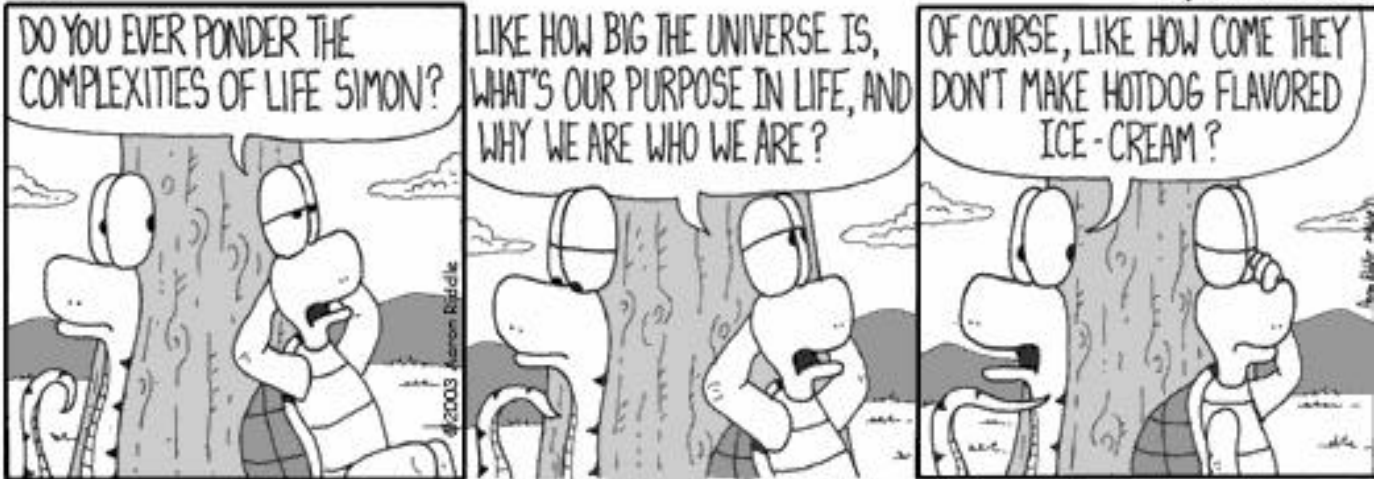
Upstate Herpetological Association

Mail to: Bob Cunningham

409 Waldorf Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13224

Aford

by Aaron Riddle



DON'T FORGET!!!

August Meeting will be on August 7, 2005!!!

~ Be at Beaver Lake!

Don't Miss a Fantastic Afternoon in the Sun!

(Details Inside – Read All about it)



Herp Beat

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