



Virginia Herpetological Society Newsletter

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Electronic format for newsletter!

Please send any updated e-mail address information to Paul Sattler at psattler@liberty.edu

Mosquito control agreement reached between Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and York County
Curtis Hutto, Virginia Division of Natural Heritage

The Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) of the Department of Conservation and Recreation recently met with mosquito control officials from York County regarding larvicide application to coastal plain sinkhole ponds at Grafton Ponds Natural Area Preserve near the City of Newport News. Numerous seasonal ponds at the Preserve support populations of two state-threatened species, Mabee's salamander (*Ambystoma mabei*) and barking treefrog (*Hyla gratiosa*). These ponds have been treated for the last 15-17 years with the microbial larvicide Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis*), which is fairly target-specific while still being toxic to primitive Dipterans. During the development of a set of guidelines for mosquito control on State Parks and Natural Area Preserves, DNH stewardship staff found evidence in the literature of the possibility of non-target impacts to other aquatic invertebrates and asked York County officials to stop the using the larvicide. Although the guidelines were developed for public safety reasons (West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis), in this particular situation the issue was one of nuisance mosquitoes in a subdivision adjacent to the Preserve.

After several meetings between York County officials and DNH, a compromise was reached. A larval sampling protocol was agreed upon that will use a reference pond at the Preserve. The decision to apply Bti to individual ponds will be based on a sliding scale of mosquito larval abundance that is tied to the water level in the reference pond. It was also agreed that DNH will be notified when this larval sampling threshold is reached. York County officials have also agreed to use a faster-acting formulation of Bti that is designed to quickly reduce larval abundance during wet periods. Currently the extended severe drought in eastern Virginia has diminished the need for mosquito control, but it is anticipated that this scenario will become more common as state agencies and conservation organizations strive to protect isolated wetlands near urban areas.



VHS Fall Meeting featuring:

**Ambystoma Symposium and Teachers' Workshop
October 12th at Holiday Lake 4-H Center, Appomattox**

The VHS officers and some members have been at work preparing for a symposium on mole salamanders for the fall meeting in 2002. Virginia has six species of mole salamanders including Jefferson Salamander, Mabee's salamander, Spotted salamander, Marbled salamander, Mole salamander, and Eastern tiger salamander. The goal of this symposium is to bring together people conducting research on these animals to discuss current research, observations, sampling techniques, and status of these creatures in Virginia.

The date for this symposium has been set for October 12, 2002. It will be held at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center Appomattox, Virginia. Anyone interested in giving a presentation is welcome. Please contact Jason Gibson (434) 724-9034 or frogman31@earthlink.net as soon as possible.

A photo contest, with a theme of mole salamanders, will be held. Prizes will be awarded to top three photos. A silent auction will also occur during the paper session. Please bring any items that can be donated for the auction.

The Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center has accommodations for people traveling from a distance. Reservations can be made for Friday or Saturday night by calling Brenda Gion at 434-248-54444 or bgion@vt.edu. A fee of \$9.50 will be charged for each night.

A lunch will be provided at a nominal fee. Anyone interested in bringing a covered dish or other lunch item can contact Jason Gibson or John White (reptiles@erols.com). If you have been wondering how you can help, this is a good way.

The VHS will also sponsor a teacher's workshop from 8:00 to 12:00. Teachers from surrounding counties will be invited to participate. Anyone interested in helping can contact Jason or John. **More information and directions will appear in the next issue of *Catesbeiana* and on the VHS website.**

Wetland Project Celebrated

Mike Pinder, VDGIF

On June 27, 2002, a ceremony was held at the I.C. DeHart Memorial Park in Woolwine, Patrick County to celebrate the completion of the park's wetland educational project. The 1-acre restored wetland will be used as a living laboratory for local schools and other groups. The project includes an information kiosk, a boardwalk and observation platform, and interpretive signs telling visitors of the different wildlife and plant species known from wetlands. The Society sponsored the sign on wetland reptiles. Funding for the main project was from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Patrick and Skyline Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

VHS SPRING SURVEY MEETING 2002

Jason Gibson, VHS President

The spring survey was a complete success due to the efforts of employees of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). Betsy Stinson, Bill Bassinger, and Mike Mabe did an excellent job scouting places for VHS members to survey and for leading small groups to these areas.

During the business meeting, three people gave presentations. John White presented slides of the potential herp species in the area. Betsy Stinson discussed the history of the VDGIF Big Survey Wildlife Management Area and discussed habitats and locations that were good for surveying. Gordon Wilson (Liberty University and George Mason University) presented a few aspects of his doctoral research on box turtles. The spring survey was very productive for finding salamander species but was a bust for snakes. The weather was extremely cold proving productive for salamander but a bust for snakes. A full report of the survey will appear in the spring 2003 edition of *Catesbeiana*.

Danville toddler bitten by copperhead

Adapted from article in REGISTER & BEE
Danville, Virginia; 22 June 02 by Ryan Barber

On June 12, John Seepe, 21 months of age, was playing in his family's front yard off of Vandola Road when his parents, Michael Seepe and Caroline

Seepe, heard him screaming. They thought the infant had been stung by a bee, but quickly realized it was more serious.

"It was obvious that John had been bitten by something, but we thought it was a bee or wasp at first," Michael Seepe said of the June 12 incident. "We knew it was more, though, when John kept crying, and his foot continued to swell for about 15-20 minutes."

The Seepes took him to Danville Regional Medical Center. He then was flown to Duke University Medical Center, where he was treated by specialists. He is expected to make a full recovery.

Michael Seepe is a veterinarian. His wife is a physician. Their medical training helped them to not panic when their son was bitten.

"We knew what not to do, as far as what you see on television, with the cutting and sucking," Seepe said. "We knew to stay calm, elevate the bite area and take John to the hospital immediately." Seepe said people often bring their pets to his clinic mistaking insect bites for snake bites.

"We often see dogs with what their owners believe are snake bites on their legs," Seepe said. "It usually turns out to be wasp or bee stings, although we do see occasional snake bites on people's pets."

Copperhead snakes can be found in any wooded areas or in Danville area yards, said Dr. Edward Fisher, chairman of the biology department at Averett University.

"These snakes aren't just in rural areas, and can often be found in people's flower beds," Fisher said. "They are docile animals for the most part, but if you get too close to one, they stop being shy pretty quickly."

Fisher recommends keeping small children away from wooded areas or bushes. He says adults should wear leather gloves and long-sleeved shirts while working in their gardens. Fisher also recommends going to an emergency room immediately if you are bitten by a venomous snake.

"Don't do what you see on television," Fisher said. "All you need to do is go directly to the emergency room. You don't need to do any treatment yourself."

Fisher says copperheads are easy to distinguish from other snakes because of their unique color and markings. They are usually a coppery brown color, with a light and dark hourglass pattern, and a light-pink underside.

Despite his son's injury, Seepe says he won't prevent his four children from playing outside. "Nothing has changed," Seepe said. "The odds are against it happening again, and there's really not much you can do to prevent it."

Timber Rattlesnakes in Luray!!
John White, VHS Vice President

The Virginia Herpetological Society is proud to sponsor the Timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus horridus*) exhibit at the Luray Zoo. Our timber rattlesnake exhibit is located within the main building, just inside the entranceway at eye level.

The origin of the zoo dates back to the late 1950's about the same time the VHS formed. Originally cated in the Virginia Beach area, Jungle Jim's Snake House was owned by Jim Martin. In 1982 the zoo was moved to Luray, Virginia, where it was renamed the Luray Reptile Center. This year, owner Mark Kilby has renamed the reptile center to the Luray Zoo.

The Luray Zoo is located at 1087 US Hwy 211 West, Luray, VA 22835 and on line at:
<http://www.lurayzoo.com/>

In the news of the nation...

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Adopts NatureServe Assessments of Conservation Status
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, Jul. 22 -/E-Wire/adapted

The sustainable forestry certification standard that is adhered to by most major timber companies has adopted the use of NatureServe conservation status assessments as the official standard for the protection of forests of exceptional conservation value.

The new Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards, adopted as of July 1, will affect the

management of some 60 million acres of forest lands in the United States and Canada.

The Sustainable Forestry Board, which oversees the SFI certification standards, approved the new standards on June 28. These standards must be followed by all SFI participants, including nearly all major timber companies in the United States and many in Canada. In order to receive SFI certification, the companies will develop and implement plans to protect sites on their forestlands that contain viable occurrences of imperiled plants, animals, and ecological communities.

Currently more than 115 forest product companies adhere to SFI certification standards. The Sustainable Forestry Board itself, which oversees the SFI standards, is an independent body comprised of SFI program participants, conservation and environmental leaders, and forestry community representatives.

LITTLE EVIDENCE OF REGULATIONS DELAYING TRAINING

According to a recent report by the General Accounting Office (GAO), the Defense Department has little evidence to support its claims that environmental regulations were hampering training on military bases. The Bush Administration has been asking Congress to exempt the US military from some environmental regulations, such as the 1973 Endangered Species Act and the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Military officials have complained that regulations threaten the testing of weapons and training personnel, while environmentalists have complained the military is harming particular species. The GAO recommended the Defense Department improve its documentation of possible conflicts if it plans to argue about environmental encroachment on military training ranges.

Superfund Aids Cut

The Bush administration plans to cut the funding for 33 toxic waste sites in the Superfund program. The fund has been running out of money ever since Congress failed to extend the collection of taxes from industry that originally funded the program. In a report to Congress by the inspector general of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the outlined plan calls for the program to reduce clean-ups and eventually shift the funding of the program to taxpayers. Sites included in the cuts include five in New Jersey and Florida, three in Texas, and one or two in several other states

Other meetings:**The 4th Annual Northeast PARC Meeting!!**

The Northeast Regional Working Group meeting of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) is excited to announce its fourth meeting on **August 13-14, 2002** at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania.

New Jersey Audubon Society and NJ Endangered & Nongame Species Program will be hosting the event. For more info on PARC, check their website (www.parcplace.org)

2nd International Congress on Chelonian Conservation will be held June 18 - 22, 2003 in Senegal.

Abstracts are requested as soon as possible, but the deadline is September 31, 2002. The conference will be held in English with French translations. Regular registration is \$180 US while students are \$90 US. For further information visit www.tortues.com, E-mail: soptom@soptom.com, call (33) 04 94 78 36 41 or fax (33) 04 94 78 24 27.

Noteworthy websites:

World Chelonia Trust, Care Sheets

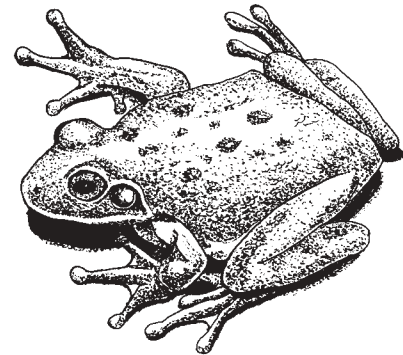
<http://www.chelonia.org/care.htm>

-This site gives fact sheets on caring for various herp species

Herps of Europe

<http://www.herp.it/>

-This site maintains lists of herps in Europe with some great photos.



Barking treefrog by Mike Pinder

Publications:*State Conservation Incentives Report Out:*

A new report by Defenders of Wildlife examines the wide range of state government incentives available to private landowners for habitat conservation.

"Conservation in America," provides information on the different incentives, types of land and species protected, benefits to landowners, strengths and weaknesses of the various programs and is available at www.biodiversitypartners.org

The full report is available in a PDF file that can be sent upon request to asalzberg@herpdigest.org

The Alligator Snapping Turtle

[*Macrochelys (Macrochelys) temminckii*]:

A review of ecology, life history, and conservation, with demographic analyses of the sustainability of take from wild populations

A Report to: Division of Scientific Authority
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
prepared by: Robert N. Reed, PhD, Justin Congdon, PhD

J. Whitfield Gibbons, PhD

Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, Drawer E
Aiken SC 29802 USA

Isolated Wetlands Report Out

The first in a series of planned reports about the importance of various types of wetlands is now out says the USFWS. The report on the ecological importance of geographically isolated wetlands includes maps, describes 19 types of isolated wetlands such as Nebraska Sandhill's wetlands, Delmarva potholes and Carolina Bay wetlands, and provides ecological profiles of their fish and wildlife conservation values.

The report is online at:

<http://wetlands.fws.gov>

Entire file might soon be available on a CD.

"Applied Herpetology" A New Journal

Information available at:

<http://www.ahailey.f9.co.uk/appliedherpetology/aims.htm>.

The site is brand new and will be added to in time, but the journal is now accepting papers for publication.

Applied Herpetology is an international journal addressing research on amphibians and reptiles with a focus on biodiversity, conservation, environmental monitoring, farming, natural products development and wildlife management. A main objective of the journal is to enhance communication between academic scientists, researchers in industry, governmental bodies, international agencies and others involved in applied research involving herpetofauna.

Job Opportunity

Visiting Scholar Program In Amphibian Biology
The National Amphibian Conservation Center (NACC) is currently accepting applications for a newly created Visiting Scholar position, which supports top researchers from around the world for three-month terms to complement the continuous research programs of permanent staff. Qualified applicants will be amphibian biologists from diverse disciplines, including academia (professors, postdocs, advanced graduate students, exceptional undergrads), fellow zoo biologists, or governmental and other conservation-oriented amphibian biologists interested in performing non-invasive research on our captive amphibian collection and wetlands.

Mail, FAX, or e-mail application materials, requests for

species list, or other questions to:

Kevin Zippel, Ph.D.

Curator, National Amphibian Conservation Center

Detroit Zoological Institute

8450 West Ten Mile Road

Royal Oak, MI 48067

PH: (248) 398-0903 ex. 3224

FX: (248) 691-4194

ZippelK@zoo.ci.detroit.mi.us (email of choice)

Virginia Native

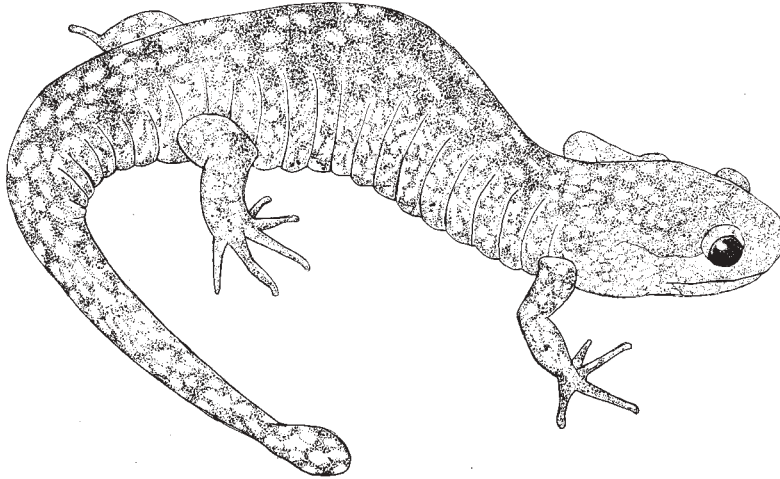


Illustration by Mike Pinder, Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries

Mabee's salamander (*Ambystoma mabeei*)

Status: State threatened. Habitat threatened by urbanization, some forestry practices, and hydrologic alteration affecting amount and quality of breeding habitat. It is considered stable in the Carolinas.

Description: The Mabee's salamander is one of the mole salamanders. It is small and stout. Its tail comprises approximately 2/3 of the total length. The rounded snout projects beyond the lower jaw. Eyes are small yet prominent. The toes are characteristically long. Costal grooves total 13. Tail is compressed in the distal half of its length. Dorsal coloration is dark brown to grayish brown; ventral coloration is lighter. Whitish flecks occur laterally and may be so abundant that a mottled pattern appears. Flecks may travel onto the dorsum and along the length of the tail.

Habitat: This species has been documented from pine flatwoods and hardwood river bottoms. In Virginia, breeding sites are fish-free vernal ponds. Ponds are typically shallow (up to 1.5 m) and surrounded by mixed bottomland hardwood/pine forests. Adults are sometimes found buried in dry pond bottoms.

Please sign me up for membership in the Virginia Herpetological Society for the year(s) of _____.
Membership begins and ends on a calendar year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime phone: (____) _____

E-mail address: _____

Be sure to include e-mail address to receive newsletter electronically.

Make check or money order payable to:

Virginia Herpetological Society

Check Membership Type:

Under 18 \$8.00 _____

Regular \$15.00 _____

Family \$20.00 _____

Life \$225.00 _____

Mail Payment to:

Paul Sattler, Secretary/Treasurer

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