

VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY ENTERS THIRD YEAR

Founded in March, 1958, the VHS brings together all persons known to be interested in the reptiles and amphibians of Virginia and nearby states. Among our members are trained and experienced herpetologists, museum and zoological park staff, college and high school biologists, graduate and undergrad zoology students and high school and elementary grade students of science and biology with an avid interest in herps.

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THE SOCIETY'S PRESIDENT, JOHN THORNTON WOOD, MD, SENDS HIS PERSONAL GREETINGS IN A SPECIAL LETTER TO ALL VHS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS:

The decision to bring forth the first issue of the VHS BULLETIN in March seems to have caught us with most of our reptile and amphibian fauna still deep in hibernation! Who would have guessed that we would encounter such a reversal of seasons as we have seen in 1960? Our early spring weather occurred in December and January -- and the dependable Chorus frogs (Pseudacris species) were chanting in a weak and random chorus from January 1st to the first heavy snowfall in mid-February. On a warm night of heavy rain in early February I found several frog species on the road -- including the Green Frog (Rana clamitans), Leopard Frogs (Rana pipiens sp.), Bullfrogs (Rana catesbeiana), and both common Bufoid toads -- Fowler's and the American. I collected four of the Bufo a. americanus as food for son John's pet (and half-starved) Hog-nosed Snake (Heterodon platyrhinos). He ate with relish, and must have overdone at the banquet for not long after this he expired and our household was filled with gloom!

Then came the first heavy snow in February -- and the amphibians were heard from no more. Winter descended upon us -- my Jeep wallowed through snowdrifts to reach sick patients in isolated farmhouses --- and no frog songs could be heard. I kept careful watch upon my two breeding sites for the Spotted Salamanders (Ambystoma maculatum)-- I peered through the thin ice, and thoroughly checked the open-water areas. The late Dr. Sherman Bishop noted that in New York state these "Polar Bear Club" salamanders will start their nesting before the ice leaves the ponds. Virginia species, at least in my mid-Piedmont area, are not of such staunch mettle. They did not brave the arctic March climate and as of today (3-22-60) they have not arrived in the breeding pools. The timetable of amphibian and reptile activity will be most unusual this spring. Notes of the dates of egg-laying, chorus patterns of the frogs, and appearances of the first terrestrial reptiles should be most worth while this spring. I exclude the aquatic forms -- for the turtles are often active far before the ponds are ice free, and the larval Two-lined Salamanders (Eurycea b. bislineata), Mud and Red Salamanders (Pseudotriton sp.), and Marbled Salamanders (Ambystoma opacum), may be found on any warm winter day if ice and the snow doesn't conceal their "controlled temperature" aquatic environment.

The Two-line, Red, and Mud Salamander larvae inhabit areas of springs where an underground water supply that never freezes is available in their nurseries; the Marbled larvae hatch in temporary pools from eggs laid in sites that are dry in the fall, but will be flooded in winter and spring. Their quarters are less satisfactorily heated by deep masses of decaying vegetation in their ponds.

I hope this Bulletin reaches you when winter has finally departed --- and that you have the urge to get to work in the field observing and recording dates that will represent the adaptation of these

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Greetings from Dr. J.T.Wood, cont'd:

species to this unusual weather. MAKE A FIRM RESOLUTION THIS YEAR TO GET OUT MORE -- OBSERVE MORE -- AND RECORD MORE THINGS THAT YOU SEE! What one recalls after a field trip is poor indeed compared with the notes that an observer takes the time to prepare ON THE SPOT, while the action is going on. Good hunting --- good collecting --- good observing --- good recording and good luck to you all! Oh yes, and one parting word: Share the fun in the field with interested friends. If they find as much enjoyment in snake-hunting and salamander watching as we do, it won't be long before they join us in trying to solve some of the many riddles and mysteries of the Virginia herpetofauna.

(signed) John Thornton Wood (M.D.)
President (1958-1960)
Virginia Herpetological Society

EDITOR'S NOTE:

JOHN THORNTON WOOD, first president of the Virginia Herpetological Society, was -- not too many years ago -- a camper and junior staff member at a summer camp in the Kittatinny Mountains of northern New Jersey (Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco, BSA) when he did his first field work. In 1939 he returned to the camp for a "most enjoyable season" as the Camp's Naturalist. From 1943 to 1945 he served as acting director of the Dayton (Ohio) Public Museum of Natural History. In 1948, he joined the education staff of the American Museum of Natural History. This was followed by three years as a combination biologist-educator with the Virginia Fisheries Laboratory, Gloucester Point, Va. His undergrad work, if your editor recalls correctly, was accomplished at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va. Medicine attracted John T. Wood and for the years of his training (University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.) herpetology fit in well too. As a general practitioner, since receiving his M.D., time has not always permitted field work. As a result, material to work up and report has gathered and had to take spare moments. Collecting still provides a thrill, he admits. The treatment of snakebite from venomous snakes has naturally received much of his thought as doctor and herpetologist. Members who attended the second VHS statewide meeting will recall the incisive and well-conceived discussion he presented on this subject. We hope that it may be put down for publication in a scientific paper and, as such, be put before his colleagues in the medical profession and thereafter widely reprinted for the benefit of herpetologists, woodsmen, and first aiders.

Judging from a survey of scientific papers authored by John T. Wood (and associates) (1944 to date) it would be a safe bet that Dr. Wood has contributed more articles on herpetology to the scientific journals than any other individual Virginian. Of a total of 51 papers known to your editor, COPEIA published 11; HERPETOLOGICA, 10; and the VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, 15. There are few with such a record. It is easy to understand why the initial membership sought his leadership and why he has been re-elected to serve as Society President. It was only fitting that he became the first president of VHS.

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Franklin Tobey

GREETINGS TO THE ALASKAN HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Pt. Barrow, Alaska, on its recent organization and publication of an AHS Bulletin! HAIL!

CORRESPONDENCE TO VHS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO SECRETARY, SEE MAIL ADDRESS