



Virginia Herpetological Society Newsletter

Volume 22, Number 2

September 2012

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Common Five-lined Skink



Lots of Herp-related News This Season! Page 8!

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Home Page: <http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com>
 Online Store: <http://www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety>
 Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Virginia-Herpetological-Society/>

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Coming Events

EVENT	LOCATION	DATES
2013 Calendar Photo Submissions	Merchandise@vaherpsociety.com	Sept 20
VHS Annual Fall Meeting	Washington, DC	Oct 20

VHS BUSINESS

New VHS Officer (1)
VHS Annual Fall Meeting (2)
VHS Website Updates (3)

4) Proposals for Official State Herps
5) Need Photos for 2013 VHS Calendar!
6) REMINDERS!

1) New VHS Officer:

Please welcome Kelly Geer as the newest member of the VHS Advisory Committee! Kelly has been very active in almost all surveys and meetings in recent years. She is a Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She began her career with the Service 20 years ago as an endangered species biologist in the Service's Sacramento, California, Field Office, where she specialized in endangered and threatened reptiles and amphibians. Kelly also has a degree in Marketing Management and, for the last 10 years, has designed and developed websites and outreach materials for the Service's Environmental Contaminants and Endangered Species Programs. She currently works in the Service's Washington, D.C., Office.



Kelly catching an eastern fence lizard

Congratulations and a sincere thank you to Kelly for serving as a VHS Advisory Committee member!

2) VHS Annual Fall Meeting

Saturday, October 20

The VHS will hold its Annual Fall Meeting at a special location this year, the National Zoo in Washington, DC! This event will also be special in that all attendees will have the opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the Reptile Discovery Center. Even though this meeting will not actually be in Virginia, it is basically next door, will give us an opportunity to hear about and network with the exciting research the Smithsonian is involved in regarding Virginia's salamanders, and it was a location for meetings back in VHS's earliest years of existence, back in the late 50's and early 60's. The keynote speaker will be Anthony Leonardo (<http://janelia.org/lab/leonardo-lab>). Other speakers include Jason Osborne and Aaron Alford from PaleoQuest (<http://paleoquest.org>). Staff from the Zoo will also present information on the salamander work they are currently doing in Virginia. Please keep checking the VHS website, [events section](#), for further details about the event as we get closer to the date.

Location: The National Zoo/Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

Lodging: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Visit/PlanYourVisit/HotelPackages/> & keep checking the VHS website for potential updates on lodging options.

Host Website and Phone: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/>; 202-633-4888

Contact/ Leader: Larry Mendoza at president@vaherpsociety.com
Please RSVP to Larry, if you are planning to attend!



3) VHS Website Updates

a) This past May, we received 1 million + (1,087,402) hits on our website! This is the first time we have reached 1 million in a single month! The top 3 destinations were:



- i. [Copperhead Look-a-likes](#)
- ii. [Snakes of Virginia](#)
- iii. [Mitchell-Reay Atlas](#)

The Mitchell and Reay Atlas was downloaded 10,895 times. The Tobey Atlas was downloaded 4,347 times.

- b) Check out the updates to our webpage including the summaries to all of this year's survey events!

<http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/2012-events/2012-vhs-events/index.htm>

- c) The website also has the latest information on regulations regarding herpetofauna, such as what is threatened or endangered, what citizens are allowed to possess, what citizens are or are not allowed to do, what activities require permits, and so on:

<http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/herplaw/>

- d) The VHS Cafepress Store has added 2 new iPad cases with cool copperhead graphics! Check it out. Also, look for a new poster, "Snakes of the Northern Neck" coming soon. <http://www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety>



4) Proposals for Official State Herps (State Reptile and State Amphibian)

Several weeks ago, everyone should have received an email notice to go to a link with a special form to complete. This form served as a nomination form that members could complete with their own nominations for reptile species and/or amphibian species that they felt should become Virginia's official state reptile and/or official state amphibian. We received several nominations, representing many species (16 reptiles and 10 amphibians). The officers narrowed down the decision on what herps to propose to the legislator, based on number of votes as well as history and feasibility of getting the given herp passed through any steps toward the official state status. All our herp species deserve this special designation, but some may be more controversial (in a sense) than others. In the past, there have been efforts to have state reptiles and state amphibians designated. This all depends on the current politics. In some cases, if more pressing issues seemed to be taking up too much of the legislators' time and efforts, state symbol efforts are simply moved down the list and end up scrapped. In some of the past cases, the given animal had other issues that kept the legislators from wanting to adopt it as a symbol of the Commonwealth. For example, the eastern box turtle was tried, but failed since the scientific name is "*carolina*", plus it is already designated as North Carolina's state reptile (and is Tennessee's state reptile). This made the species unattractive as a Virginia symbol to enough legislators to scrap that effort.

Our finalists came down to the eastern (or black) ratsnake for the state reptile and the spotted salamander for the state amphibian. A bonus is that these two species already appear on the VHS logo, which is rather appropriate! These two species are also very widespread in distribution throughout the state, recognizable to most people, rather charismatic, and non-threatening. VHS President, Larry Mendoza, very recently sent communication to State Senator Dick Black, proposing these two species to be introduced into legislation as Virginia's Official State Reptile and Virginia's Official State Amphibian. As Larry said, "Let's cross our fingers!" in hopes that this will pass through the legislation. Plus, we hope this will help educate our legislators as well as many other Virginians about Virginia's wonderful herpetofauna!



5) NEED Photo Submissions for the VHS 2013 Calendar!!!

The VHS Store manager, Patricia Crane, needs high resolution pictures in good quality. Images should have the subject in focus and with very little background distraction. Photos will be required to be at least 2700x1800 pixels in landscape orientation. The next calendar will also show the proper credit for each photograph, without being cut off at the bottom of the calendar page as it has been in previous years. Images received by September 20th will be considered for the 2013 calendar, but any late submissions will be saved for consideration in the 2014 calendar. Please send your submissions to Merchandise@vaherpsociety.com

6) REMINDERS!

a. VHS Members Get Discounts at Zoos!

VHS is pleased to offer, as a membership benefit, discounts to select zoos and aquariums in Virginia! We hope that having an admission or membership discount will give you incentive to visit these facilities and give them your business. Although \$1 or \$2 off of the price of admission does not sound like a lot, most zoos, aquariums, and museums are expensive to maintain, and it represents a generous offer by the participating facilities. In order to facilitate these discounts, a VHS member must have proof of a current membership. We e-mail membership cards in PDF format, which will only need to be printed, copied and folded. Please have these cards handy when visiting:

Admission Discounts

Virginia Zoo	Norfolk, VA	\$2 discount	virginiazoo.org
Virginia Living Museum	Newport News, VA	\$1 discount	thevlm.org
Leesburg Animal Park	Leesburg, VA	\$2 discount	leesburganimalpark.com
Mill Mountain Zoo	Roanoke, VA	\$1 discount	mmzoo.org
Luray Zoo	Luray, VA	Half off regular admission	lurayzoo.com

Membership Discounts

Virginia Aquarium	Virginia Beach, VA	25% discount off membership levels of Crab, Otter, or Hedgehog	virginiaaquarium.com
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Booking Discounts

Reptiles Alive! LLC	Northern Virginia	\$20 discount off any live animal show	reptilesalive.com
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Now go to the Zoo Updates section (Pages 12-13) to find out the latest news on some of these facilities!

b. Help Support the VHS!

Your support is a beautiful thing!! With simple clicks on the internet you can help support the VHS and our mission to conserve, research, and educate the public on our native herps.

Not interested in a fundraiser, but still want to support the VHS? Donations are always accepted, in any monetary amount. 100% of your donation goes towards our cause and is tax deductible due to our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Donate online via PayPal or send your donation to our Treasurer.

Fundraisers that support our cause:

Bloomin' Bucks with Brent and Becky's Bulbs

It's simple...go to www.bloominbucks.com (with no 'g') and from a pull down menu of all of the organizations registered, select to support VHS! With one click, you are then sent to the Brent and Becky's Bulbs website where you can order whatever you want, in whatever quantity and color you want...books, bulbs, garden tools, plant supplements, gift certificates...ANYTHING...and a percentage of the order goes to support our cause!



GoodSearch and GoodShop

[GoodSearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) is a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue to the charities its users designate. Use it as you would any search engine, get quality search results from Yahoo, and watch the donations add up!

[GoodShop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) is a new online shopping mall which donates up to 30 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause! Hundreds of great stores including Amazon, Target, Gap, Best Buy, eBay, Macy's and Barnes & Noble have teamed up with GoodShop and every time you place an order, you'll be supporting your favorite cause.

And if you download the GoodSearch – Virginia Herpetological Society (NEWPORT NEWS VA) toolbar, our cause will earn money every time you shop and search online - even if you forget to go to GoodShop or GoodSearch first! Add the Virginia Herpetological Society (NEWPORT NEWS VA) toolbar at <http://www.goodsearch.com/toolbar/virginia-herpetological-society>

(New this year) GoodDining-You dine. They give.

The GoodDining Program allows members to discreetly earn donations for the VHS at thousands of participating restaurants, bars and clubs coast to coast. When you pay your bill for a qualified dine at a participating restaurant, bar or club using a credit/debit card you've registered with GoodDining, they track your total transaction amount and award donations based on your current Membership Level, which are automatically deposited into your GoodDining account. Sign up here, and don't forget to select the Virginia Herpetological Society as your charity of choice:

<https://www.goodsearch.com/gooddining-rn>

Cafe Press - The VHS Store

In this store you will find an assortment of high quality merchandise intended to celebrate the diversity of amphibians and reptiles native to Virginia. Eventually, we will branch out into other non-herp and non-Virginian related wildlife. If you are visiting this site from out of state, our products are not exclusive to Virginians. Many of the species we feature can be found throughout a large part of the country.

All proceeds from the sale of merchandise on this site go towards funding the VHS's mission.

EVENTS

	Northern Va Reptile Expo	Richmond Reptile Expo	Hampton Roads Reptile Expo
Dates	10/13, 12/8/2012	10/28/2012	10/7/2012
Location	Prince William County Fairgrounds Manassas, Virginia 20108	The Holiday Inn Select 1021 Koger Center Blvd. Richmond, VA 23235	Point Plaza Suite 950 J. Clyde Morris Blvd. Newport News, VA 23601
Admission	\$7 / \$3 child	\$8 / \$3 child	\$7/free for children under 3
Time	9 am to 3 pm	10 am to 3 pm	9 am to 4 pm
Contact	http://www.mdreptilefarm.com/shows/va/nva.asp	http://www.mdreptilefarm.com/shows/va/richmond.asp	Hampton Roads Reptile Expo Facebook Page

Also check: <http://www.rexpotracker.com/>

"All my life through, the new sights of nature made me rejoice like a child." - Marie Curie



HERP TRIVIA

The questions and answers in this edition of “Herp Trivia” are pulled from material that has been posted on the VHS Facebook Page in recent months. Check out the vast information that is being posted on our Facebook Page!

1. By volume, the eastern snapping turtle’s diet consists of what percentage of plant material?
 - A. 0%
 - B. 17%
 - C. 27%
 - D. 37%
 - E. 67%
 - F. 100%



2. Can you identify the salamanders?

3. What species of frog is this? And what is the “easiest” way to differentiate it from other similar looking frogs?



4. Can you identify the critters and the type of amplexus?



5. How many participants attended the VHS Annual Spring Survey at Shenandoah River State Park, the weekend of May 18-20, 2012?

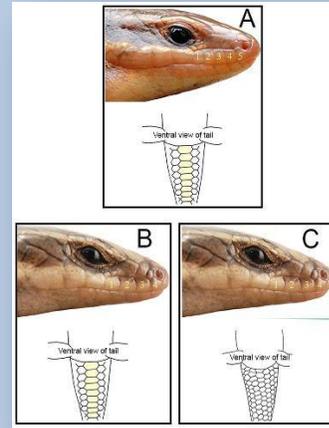


6. What species was found and documented at the VHS Annual Spring Survey, at Shenandoah River State Park, the weekend of May 18-20, 2012, which had not been found/documentated at a VHS survey in over 10 years?

7. Which species have “not” been found in the outdoors of Virginia?

- Eastern diamondback rattlesnake
- American alligator
- American crocodile
- Eastern coral snake

8. Can you identify these three species of skink?



9. In which species of native Virginia frogs can one determine gender, based on the size relationship between the eye and tympanum?

10. Can you identify this species? (Hint: Although this species was rather common at the site of this year's Annual HerpBlitz, Mattaponi WMA, it is a rather rare treat for most VHS members to see and/or hear this species!)



Answers can be found on pages 18-19.



NOTICE: Submissions for *Catesbeiana* Vol. 33 No. 1 are due March 1, 2013!

Please support the VHS by submitting any papers, field notes, or artwork for *Catesbeiana* to: Dr. Paul Sattler, Editor, *Catesbeiana*, pwsattler@liberty.edu.

NEWS

**In Memoriam: Dr. Richard Hoffman (1 | 3) Developer fined... on rare frog habitat
Lonesome George Dies (2 | 4) More Virginia Herp Stories in the News!**

1) In Memoriam: Renowned curator Dr. Richard Hoffman dies at age 84

From the news webpage of the Virginia Museum of Natural History: <http://www.vmnh.net/news.cfm?ID=386>

Dr. Richard L. Hoffman, curator emeritus of recent invertebrates at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, died at Roanoke Memorial Hospital on Sunday, June 10 following a recent heart surgery. Hoffman was a world-renowned scientist in the field of myriapodology, and was instrumental in the founding of the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

"We lost a true scholar, gentleman, and mentor," said Dr. Joe B. Keiper, executive director of VMNH. "However, his life's work will inspire us to learn more about the world around us, and teach others what we have learned."



Hoffman was a native Virginian who devoted most of his life to the natural history of Virginia and the southern Appalachians, while also earning an international reputation as the leading authority on the world's millipede fauna. Beginning in 1944 at the age of 16, he published over 500 scholarly papers and books, and more than 50 popular articles on such diverse taxa as millipedes, amphibians, reptiles, worms, mollusks, arachnids, beetles, and true bugs. He described more than 600 new taxa and had nearly 50 taxa named in his honor.

"I was deeply sorry to hear the news of Richard's death," said Dr. Nicholas Fraser, keeper of natural sciences at National Museums Scotland, and a VMNH research associate. "It is a great loss to the museum and of course to the natural science community in general. He was a formidable scientist with an extraordinary range of knowledge and while we shall all miss him greatly, we must also remember the warmth, kindness and richness he brought to all of our lives. His thirst for knowledge was infectious and he instilled a desire to better understand our natural heritage in all fortunate to be 'taught' by him. Mere words cannot convey our appreciation of his achievements: He has left a great legacy and if we can all carry on in the traditions and philosophy he followed, then VMNH will go from strength to strength."

Hoffman staunchly supported the concept of a Virginia Museum of Natural History for many years prior to its existence, and was appointed as curator emeritus in 2009 after his retirement as curator of recent invertebrates, a post he held for 20 years. Hoffman also served as director of research and collections from 2007 to 2009. Prior to working at VMNH, he was a professor of biology at Radford University for 29 years. Hoffman pursued undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia, and earned a master's degree in entomology from Cornell University, and a doctorate in zoology from Virginia Tech. "Richard was a real Virginia gentleman," said Dr. Judith Winston, curator of marine biology at VMNH. "He was a wonderful teacher and a great person, as well as a world-renowned scientist."

In celebration of his 80th birthday and his career achievements, a symposium and banquet was held in his honor at VMNH in September 2007. Numerous colleagues, co-workers, friends, and family participated in the event. In honor of the event, the museum produced the special publication "A Lifetime of Contributions to Myriapodology and the Natural History of Virginia: A Festschrift in Honor of Richard L. Hoffman's 80th Birthday". The publication honors the lifetime achievements of Dr. Hoffman. This collection of 32 papers from 41 authors on four continents is representative of Hoffman's broad taxonomic interests, and includes species ranging from salamanders, millipedes, centipedes, and crustaceans to insects, plants,



and fossil mammals. Several of these species occupy highly threatened habitats and are potentially threatened with extinction.

"VMNH has lost an irreplaceable icon," said VMNH Trustee Pamela A. Armstrong. "Dr. Richard Hoffman was more than an internationally renowned entomologist. He was a passionate advocate for the insect world and took every opportunity to teach children, interns, and adults their importance to our existence. Dr. Hoffman was horrified one day when I told him that I was disgusted by roaches and would kill one any chance that presented itself. I'll never forget that he looked at me and said to just remember, if the insects disappear, we're next. Enough said: he was the best."

2) Lonesome George Dies



from HerpDigest, June 24, 2012

Lonesome George, the last remaining tortoise of his kind and a conservation icon, has died of unknown causes in Ecuador's Galapagos Islands. The giant tortoise was found in 1972, and was thought to be about 100 years old.

Lonesome George was a symbol of Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, which attracted 180,000 visitors last year. The head of the Galapagos National Park, Edwin Naula, says "his life cycle came to an end" on Sunday (local time). "This morning the park ranger in charge of looking after the tortoises found Lonesome George, his body was motionless," he said.

Lonesome George was the last member of a species of giant tortoise from La Pinta, one of the smallest islands in the Galapagos. The giant Galapagos tortoises, which can live up to 200 years old, were among the species that helped Charles Darwin formulate his theory of evolution in

the 19th Century. Mr. Naula says the Galapagos National Park is considering embalming George's body so that it can be displayed in the park. The park plans to carry out a necropsy to determine what may have killed the tortoise.

Scientists had been trying to get George to mate since 1993, when they introduced two female tortoises of a different subspecies into his pen. They laid eggs twice, but they were infertile.

The pen where George lived was visited by thousands of tourists every year, who often had to scramble with each other to take pictures of one of the rarest creatures on Earth.

Tortoises were hunted for their meat by sailors and fishermen to the point of extinction, while their habitat has been eaten away by goats introduced from the mainland. Some 20,000 giant tortoises still live on the Galapagos.

3) Developer fined for moving slowly on rare frog habitat

<http://hamptonroads.com/2012/05/developer-fined-moving-slowly-rarefrog-habitat>

By [Scott Harper](#)

The Virginian-Pilot

© May 21, 2012

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY

The barking tree frog is a threatened species in Virginia, known to live and breed in just five counties, including this rural one along the James River. It is the largest frog in Virginia - and quirky, too, with plate-like suckers on its fingers and a penchant for mating after heavy rains.

Now, the developer of a luxury subdivision in Isle of Wight County with its fair share of trouble must pay an environmental fine for an offense as rare as the frog: The company did not build a frog conservation zone as quickly or completely as required in state permits. The unusual protection project has since been completed, albeit years late and costing thousands of dollars. Still, state wildlife officials are not sure whether the finished product is actually helping the threatened species. One memo from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality suggests that the much more common American bullfrog, a competitor for food and shelter, may have muscled in instead.



State officials could not say whether any other developer has had to construct an artificial frog habitat before. But in 2005, regulators told the development company, VA Timberline LLC, that it must do so to compensate for potential losses of natural habitat within its proposed subdivision. "It was kind of a test, a trial," said Amy Ewing, who has monitored the project in recent years for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. "We wish things had turned out better. But we learned a lot, and the habitat is there."

Such is the latest twist in the tale of Lawnes Point on the James, an upscale housing getaway planned for 1,300 acres of waterfront land, scenic bluffs and dense forest. Historic Fort Huger, where cannonballs were shot at Union ships during the Civil War, is on the property. Dan Marino, the Hall of Fame football quarterback, helped advertise the development with an appearance here in 2006, when VA Timberline was promoting its latest destination as Virginia's Outer Banks.

The property, an old logging tract untouched for more than a century, was cut into 155 lots, each between 2 and 5 acres, with prices initially ranging from \$200,000 to \$1 million. Today, only six houses stand within Lawnes Point, which seems to have fallen victim to the real estate bust, bad timing and some poor decisions.

The developer portrayed itself as ecologically conscious, a green steward, but in 2006 it hired a subcontractor to bring in a piece of equipment known as the Marsh Buggy. The tank-like vehicle mowed grass and vegetation from dozens of acres of tidal wetlands to give prospective buyers a better view of the James. The work was done without state or federal permits.

At one point, the buggy got stuck in the waterfront muck, leaving tire tracks visible to airplanes flying overhead. In response, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission in June 2007 fined the developer \$100,000, one of the largest penalties meted out by the panel, and publicly chastised company officials for their callousness. The company also got in trouble with the state Department of Environmental Quality that year for poor sediment and erosion controls while working in wetlands. It was forced to take corrective actions, but without penalty.

Experts were not sure whether barking tree frogs existed on the property, only that their favored habitat did - seasonally wet sink holes, like miniponds, shaded by grasses and trees. When the company proposed roads and utility lines through some of these areas, the state insisted on the restoration plan. Four artificial ponds, each tiered liked a fancy cake, were to be dug within a 23-acre conservation area, which was supposed to be listed in the property deed as forever off-limits. Work was to begin immediately and the ponds monitored through 2008.

A year later, state inspectors saw the ponds in place, but they were barren and unplanted. VA Timberline said it would plant vegetation the following growing season, according to case records. In 2008, the state discovered that no monitoring reports had been submitted for the past year, that paperwork had not been filed in Isle of Wight County to deed the land as a nature sanctuary, and that no signs telling people of the frog zone had been erected. A violation notice was issued.

The developer then had to submit a corrective action plan and hired a consultant to help. By fall 2009, officials reported some progress, though questions remained. "It's hard to tell exactly what is coming up in the pond," wrote one state environmental official, "but it does look like grass." Another questioned whether the grass was actually lawn turf and asked the consultant for a list of grass seeds used at the site. In 2010, state agencies agreed the project was done and satisfactory, though few seemed excited at the finished habitat. "With the drought, it is a tough year to assess the productivity of these ponds," wrote state biologist J.D. Kleopfer. "All things considered, it looks OK."

Then negotiations started over how to penalize VA Timberline for missing its deadlines and other shortcomings with the project. Virginia does not simply tell violators what they owe; settlement talks are held, which can take months. The state initially wanted to fine the company about \$45,000. After a meeting last year, the suggested penalty was reduced to \$15,676, according to records. VA Timberline said it could not afford to pay that much and submitted papers to prove its financial woes. But officials rejected the claim and were poised to move ahead with the five-figure fine. An attorney for the developer, Michelle Manners, responded with a letter in March saying "the real estate crash has hurt us badly" and offered to pay \$2,500. Seven years after the frog habitat plan was approved, the state agreed to the \$2,500.

The proposed settlement still must be approved by the State Water Control Board, which will take up the matter next month.

Efforts to contact VA Timberline this week were unsuccessful, and Manners did not return calls seeking comment.

Scott Harper, 757-446-2340, scott.harper@pilotonline.com



4) More Virginia Herp Stories in the News!

VHS officers, other members, and colleagues were interviewed for several herp-related stories throughout Virginia in the spring and summer months.

First, there seemed to be a great deal of attention to snakes in May by Richmond's television media, when a few unusual encounters (or potential encounters) with snakes took place. Being in Richmond, the Virginia Department of Game Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) headquarters was tapped four times by local news, to elaborate on snakes. VHS Newsletter Editor (and VDGIF Biologist), Susan Watson, was present to handle two stories, while VDGIF Statewide Resources Director, Jeff Trollinger, was present for interviews in the other two stories. They both interviewed about one story, but for two different stations. This was the story of a potential encounter, never confirmed, where a boy was possibly bitten by a snake on an elementary school playground. No snake was found when adults reached the boy, and the bite or mark on him was examined by medical staff in case it was a snake bite. Another story that was a bit unusual was the case of ratsnakes causing power outages, when two different snakes entered two different substations at two different times on the same night in the Richmond area. It was not too unusual that a snake (or other small wildlife) might get into a substation and cause a power outage, but it was just unusual that it happened twice in the same night in close vicinity and caused by the same type of animal. Finally, a ratsnake caused problems at a local AM radio station, when it got into the equipment building at the base of the station's tower and caused the station to go off the air for some time that day. Here are the links to those stories:

<http://www.wric.com/global/Category.asp?c=190525&clipId=7136446&autostart=true>

<http://www.wric.com/story/18058995/snake-causes-west-end-power-outage>

<http://wtvr.com/2012/05/04/hanover-elementary-student-bitten-by-snake/>

<http://www.wric.com/global/Category.asp?c=190525&clipId=7177244&autostart=true>

<http://wtvr.com/2012/05/30/conspiracy-theory-gives-way-to-black-snake/>

VHS President, Larry Mendoza, was interviewed by The Daily Progress in reference to snakes. This newspaper article was done as a reaction by the reporter from personally being bitten by a copperhead. This is a great, informative article dispelling the myths about venomous and nonvenomous snakes in Virginia. Here is a link to this story:

<http://www2.dailyprogress.com/lifestyles/2012/jul/01/snakebite-part-3-healthy-respect-snakes-ar-2021385/>

Susan Watson was also interviewed via phone by The Rappahannock News for a general newspaper article on snakes. This is another story trying to inform the public and dispel the myths about all snakes. This article was good, except for another person that was interviewed, which Susan was not aware of until the article was published. Unfortunately, that person said they had been capturing and relocating snakes from neighbors' yards, placing them on or near National Park property. Once the article was published, the reporter was informed that the activity of relocating any wildlife was illegal. Along with a couple other small corrections, the reporter said he was going to try to run a follow-up article to this one. For now, here is the link to the article that was published:

<http://www.rappnews.com/2012/06/21/the-serpents-role-in-paradise/94810/>

VHS Member and VDGIF State Herpetologist, J.D. Kleopfer, was interviewed for an article in The Richmond Times-Dispatch about snapping turtles. This article highlights a study with Virginia Commonwealth University to see how snapping turtle populations are doing, and if harvesting snapping turtles for consumption is having a negative impact these populations. Here is a link to that newspaper article:

<http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2012/aug/13/tdmain01-virginia-study-to-determine-if-snapping-t-ar-2126638/>



ZOO UPDATES

Virginia Zoological Park

Norfolk

virginiazoo.org



Recent herp news at the Virginia Zoo:

- 1) Renovation of the pancake tortoise exhibit with the addition of 1.1 Egyptian uromastyx and 0.0.5 Gorongosa girdle-tail lizards.
- 2) Addition of an Oustalet's Chameleon exhibit; hope to be adding a "herd" of Madagascar giant day geckos as well to this exhibit.
- 3) Iranian newts (0.0.10)-new exhibit coming soon with these beautiful highly endangered newts
- 4) Future additions-3.0 Henkel's leaf-tail geckos, 0.0.8 Solomon Island leaf frogs, 0.0.2 Thai bamboo racers, 0.0.1 Nile monitor (looking to place a "wild-caught" from south Florida)
- 5) Virginia Zoo started a local/regional chapter of FrogWatchUSA, and is coordinating this citizen science project in SE Virginia. If interested, please contact Craig Pelke (craig.pelke@norfolk.gov) for more information on how you can get involved in your neighborhood with this simple but extremely productive project. Training will be provided every spring at the Virginia Zoo.
- 6) Staff has been getting more involved in regional field work. Participation has included surveying/sampling of local northern diamondback terrapins in the Hampton Roads area, and eastern hellbenders in western North Carolina with staff from the North Carolina Zoo and NC Wildlife Commission.
- 7) Hired a new lead keeper for herp department. Benefits of this new layer in the animal department have been evident immediately as numerous exhibits are being upgraded on a weekly basis. This is a challenging task due to the age and poor quality of the existing infrastructure, but improvement in aesthetics and animals' behavior has been evident already.

– *Craig Pelke*

Reptiles Alive!

Northern Virginia & DC Area

www.reptilealive.com



Reptiles Alive LLC Newsss-

Rain forest animals and creepy creatures will all be a part of fall at RA this year. We will be visiting many fall festivals including:

Saturday September 22 1:30-2:15 pm

"Rain Forests Alive!"

Fair Lakes Fall Festival

at the General Dynamics Parking Lot

Fairfax VA

Saturday October 27th 6:30-7:30 & 8-9 pm

"Creepy Creatures Alive! + Creepy Encounters"

Falls Church Halloween Carnival

Falls Church Community Center

Falls Church VA

Be sure to check out our public events page at www.reptilealive.com/events for more herpetological fun!

– *Caroline Seitz*





Virginia Living Museum

Newport News

thevlm.org



Herp news at the Virginia Living Museum

1) Albino Alligator on display
See a 4' albino female American Alligator on display during the summer DINOSAURS! exhibit. The alligator is part of a display showing how today's crocodilians look and behave eerily similar to their not-so-distant relatives that were around millions of years ago.



The alligator and robotic dinosaurs are on exhibit through Sept. 3. Admission is \$17 for adults and \$13 for children ages 3-12.

Get up close with the albino gator and enjoy pizza during Gator Bites, 5:15 p.m. on Tuesdays through August. \$15 for VLM members, \$25 for non-members. Purchase tickets in advance. Call [757-595-1900](tel:757-595-1900) or visit thevlm.org.

2) Exhibit changes

Over the next few months, the Virginia Living Museum plans to renovate two exhibits.

a) Salamanders will replace cave crickets in the Virginia Underground Gallery. The new exhibit will include several salamanders:

- Cave Salamanders (*Eurycea lucifuga*)
- Northern Slimy Salamanders (*Plethodon glutinosus*)
- Northern Red Salamanders (*Pseudotriton ruber*)
- Black Mountain Dusky Salamanders (*Desmognathus welteri*)
- Four-Toed Salamanders (*Hemidactylium scutatum*)

b) A Two-Toed Amphiuma will be displayed in a Discovery Center.

"These fascinating and hardy salamanders are often over-looked and misunderstood. With a nickname like the 'congo eel,' it's no wonder people don't know much about them," says Herpetology Curator Travis Land.

– Virginia Gabriele

Mill Mountain Zoo

Roanoke

www.mmzoo.org



We haven't added any new herps, but we are supporting a conservation initiative. We are collecting coins from our front pond to donate to this project.

Hello All, Please visit Rocket Hub <http://www.rockethub.com/projects/7853-chopsticks-for-salamanders> and support the Chopsticks for Salamanders initiative! Contact Lauren Augustine AugustineL@si.edu if you would like to learn more about this innovative project. Thanks!

– Robin Lentz



"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets, which it must turn over to the next generation increased; and not impaired in value."

–Theodore Roosevelt



CONSERVATION KEY Ethics and Snake Conservation

By Tim Christensen

The articles presented in the Conservation Key section typically address various aspects of herpetofauna conservation. Conservation often focuses on habitat preservation and managing for various threats that impact populations or species. However, “ethics” specifically regarding the intentional destruction of snakes is not typically included in this context. The most recent case in point concerns a one Eddie Peters who claimed to have intentionally shot 44 snakes as reported in the Roanoke Time on June 8, 2012 (<http://www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/309925>). His amoral conduct was devoid of both rationale and authorization; this is merely wanton destruction of natural resources. At the time of the Roanoke Times article, he was under investigation for his actions but I was unable to obtain a current status or outcome. Personally, I hope he is (or was) prosecuted to the full extent of the law. After all how was it *his* decision to damage *our* ecological resources? The bottom line is that such unethical conduct runs rampant more than we may realize and poses as a major threat to snake populations.

Hollywood’s portrayal of snakes hardly encourages tolerance (ie, Snakes On a Plane) but television reality shows follow a nonfictional format that allows for destruction and skews perspectives even more. Have you ever seen the program Duck Dynasty? If you are not familiar with this show, it’s an A&E television program focusing hunting and fishing from a flaky redneck perspective - or that’s my best guess anyway. This program depicts shooting snakes (at least one episode involved watersnakes) that seems hardly different from Peters’ actions. Admittedly, I’m unsure whether this was done because of misconceptions over watersnakes competing with humans for fishing rights or just wanton killing. Regardless, ethical conduct was lacking here as well. Killing watersnakes for sport or “improving” fishing is not anything new. This is best

portrayed by a 1960 photograph of “Snake Bounty Hunters” in the Dorcas and Gibbons book, North American Watersnakes: A Natural History.

Recently, I noted a Facebook post where a homeowner photographed an Eastern ratsnake in their yard. Two responding posts stated:

“OK, getting that close to a snake is just not right! Give me a shovel and I’d kill that thing.”

“I would definitely kill that thing before he eats up all of your birds!”

It is difficult to understand these negative perspectives. Many people have no conception of ecology and simply consider snakes as destructive. I suppose biblical connections have some sort of origin. That snakes are legless, move strangely, unable to close their eyes and consume prey whole contributes to phobias or hatred in general. In Virginia, we have 30 native snake species of which 3 are venomous. Despite this, nearly any snake observed is thought to be venomous. Indeed, I was sent a photograph of an escaped ball python that had been pummeled into oblivion out of fear or hatred. Other people consider snakes a nuisance and for the moment let’s assume we are discussing only nonvenomous snakes. What possible nuisance can they pose? They can’t damage property, they cannot transmit disease, and they cannot cause serious injury.

I’m sure statistics are lacking in terms of how much wanton/intentional destruction occurs. However, our readers can probably articulate fairly accurate figures based on their own observations. Is there a solution? Many people consider education as the solution. I can say from personal experience that I’ve seen some improvement over time. However, there are limitations; there will always be close-minded individuals like Peters that who are not receptive.

This edition of the Conservation Key was inspired by a story that first appeared in a column of The Franklin News-Post, on June 6, 2012. Apparently, this original story has since been pulled from the newspaper’s website, since the subject of killing several harmless snakes is actually not a good deed, but an act of ignorance, a disservice to our natural environment, and an illegal action on top of that. A Letter to the Editor



appeared in this newspaper on June 8, which was a great response to the original story, and is still posted on the newspaper's website:

<http://www.thefranklinnewspost.com/article.cfm?ID=22392&back=archives>

As mentioned in the Roanoke Times article on June 8th, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) did begin an investigation of this case, and all parties have been contacted by VDGIF officials. Since this is still an open case, any actions and charges cannot be divulged at this time. As a response to all of the public, VDGIF issued a press release on June 21st, titled "Snakes Alive! Leave Snakes Alone":

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/news/release.asp?id=342>

On a related note, this is an interesting article about an experiment regarding people's feelings and actions towards snakes, showing how often drivers swerve to intentionally kill a snake:

<http://now.msn.com/mark-rober-conducts-an-experiment-showing-how-often-drivers-swerve-to-intentionally-kill-an-animal>

HERPCETERA

PhD Research Assistantship... (1 | 2) Vernal Pool Construction Workshop

1) PhD Research Assistantship, Turtle Ecology and Conservation

Ph.D. research assistantship available in Turtle Ecology and Conservation at University of Rhode Island on a USDA-funded project that will examine how forest fragmentation and creation of early-successional habitats affect turtle demography and movements. Field research includes trapping, marking, and conducting radio-telemetry on turtles at numerous wetlands in Rhode Island. "Laboratory" work will include using a geographic information system to identify suitable wetlands and model turtle movements relative to proximity and size of forest fragments, as well as quantifying the demographic consequences of forest loss near wetlands for turtle populations.

Selected student must be able to start by January 2013. Applicants should be hard-working, self-motivated field biologists with a strong interest in wetlands and turtle conservation. Field experience with turtles and radio-telemetry, and proficiency in the use of geographic information systems are required. Experience in handling snapping turtles will be looked upon favorably. Driver's license is necessary. Applicants must have successfully completed a research master's degree in ecology or related field, have at least a 3.0 undergraduate GPA, and must have taken the GRE. International students for whom English is not their first language will need to have taken the TOEFL. Strong writing, oral communication, and statistical skills are required. Research assistantship provides a stipend of approximately \$25,000/yr (3 years of RA support guaranteed; potential for two additional years of TA support), health insurance, and a tuition waiver.

To apply submit the following by email: a letter stating your qualifications and research interests, CV, copies of college transcripts and GRE scores, and contact information for three references (not letters) by no later than 5 September 2012 (early application is encouraged!) to Dr. Nancy E. Karraker, Department of Natural Resources Science, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881 (401-874-2916; nkarraker@mail.uri.edu). See the following websites for further information about the research and training program of the Department (<http://nrs.uri.edu/>), of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences (<http://www.uri.edu/cels/>), and of the University of Rhode Island (<http://www.uri.edu/>).



2) Vernal Pool Construction Workshop at Morven Park

Saturday and Sunday, October 27 & 28, (rain date November 17 & 18) Morven Park, a 1,200-acre historic site just outside Leesburg, is partnering with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in a project to teach people how to restore or construct vernal pool habitats. Two of the Eastern seaboard's leading experts in vernal pool habitats will lead the workshop: Mike Hayslett, director of the Virginia Vernal Pools Program and Marc Seelinger, director of The Swamp School in Raleigh, N.C. The workshop at Morven Park begins with a classroom session, followed by a day and a half of outdoor, "hands-on" experience. Participants will visit educational stations to learn about vernal pool habitats and amphibians, see the equipment and techniques for constructing a pool, and support the pool restoration itself by helping shape clay pool base of sufficient depth and slope to support amphibian life, and reposition plants and natural material to help the pool flourish. Educational handouts will be provided. **Registration required:** A limited number of scholarships are available for educators, while the fee for all other participants is \$80. Pre-registration is required by going to <http://vernalpools.eventbrite.com>. Educators should apply by calling 703-777-2414, ext. 6617.

*Look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.
~Albert Einstein*

NEW BOOK

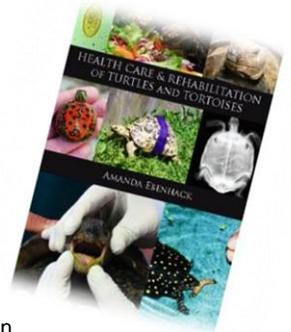
Title: **Health Care and Rehabilitation of Turtles and Tortoises (Softcover)**

Author: Amanda Ebenhack

Price: \$39.85 plus \$6.00 S&H (through HerpDigest) (Overseas, including Canada, email us at asalzberg@herpdigest.org for S&H price.)

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- 3) By credit card, Master or Visa, Discover and Amex, only, send us your credit card number, expiration date, billing and shipping address to asalzberg@nyc.rr.com. (Though I haven't heard of this happening, a credit card number stolen from an email, I'm told to prevent this send card number divided into two emails.) And, don't forget to include those 3 numbers from the back of the credit card.



Description from HerpDigest: An excellent, must have for every turtle owner and every turtle & wildlife rehabilitator. This book covers everything from general information such as: turtle anatomy, diet, stress, hibernation, brumation, outdoor and indoor enclosures and more --- to over 250 pages on shell fractures, tube feeding, bacterial and viral diseases, parasites,



diagnostics, antibiotics in chelonians, and with supporting photographs. The author took great time and care to translate her and others experiences in turtle rehabilitation without the jargon, so all turtle owners enthusiasts can understand.

Full-color photographs. (2012) 393 pp.

VIRGINIA LITERATURE

These selections represent articles published or in press during the period August to December 2011. Included articles are focused on (1) studies performed within Virginia, (2) studies on reptiles or amphibians native to Virginia, or (3) additional herpetological topics that are of general interest. Compiled by Susan Watson.

Smith, Geoffrey R. and Christopher J. Dibble. Jun 2012. Effects of an invasive fish (*Gambusia affinis*) and anthropogenic nutrient enrichment on American toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*) tadpoles. *Journal of Herpetology*. Vol. 46(2): 198-202.

Kerby, Jacob L., Anja Wehrmann, and Andrew Sih. Jun 2012. Impacts of the insecticide Diazinon on the behavior of predatory fish and amphibian prey. *Journal of Herpetology*. Vol. 46(2): 171-176.

Cotton, Taylor B., Matthew A. Kwiatkowski, Daniel Saenz, and Michael Collyer. Jun 2012. Effects of an invasive plant, Chinese tallow (*Triadica sebifera*), on development and survival of anuran larvae. *Journal of Herpetology*. Vol. 46(2): 186-193.

Rosier, R. L., and T. Langkilde. Jun 2012. Absence of climbing-induced limb length plasticity in the eastern fence lizard, *Sceloporus undulatus*. *Journal of Herpetology*. Vol. 46(2): 162-166.

Siegel, Dustin S., Christopher M. Murray, Emily R. Wilson, Emily R. Puleo, Keith A. True,

and Robert D. Aldridge. Mar 2012. Sexual kidneys in the red-spotted newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*). *Journal of Herpetology*. Vol. 46(1): 136-144.

Schwarzkopf, Lin, and Robin M. Andrews. Jun 2012. Are moms manipulative or just selfish? Evaluating the "Maternal Manipulation Hypothesis" and implications for life-history studies of reptiles. *Herpetologica*. Vol. 68(2): 147-159.

Gratwicke, Brian, Thomas E. Lovejoy, and David E. Wildt. Feb 2012. Will amphibians croak under the Endangered Species Act? *BioScience*. Vol. 62(2): 197-202.

Smargiassi, M., G. Daghfous, B. Leroy, P. Legreneur, G. Toubeau, V. Bels, and R. Wattiez. Jan 2012. Chemical basis of prey recognition in *Thamnophiine* snakes: the unexpected new roles of parvalbumins. *PLoS One*. Vol 7(6): e39560. <http://highwire.stanford.edu/cgi/medline/pmid:22761824>





Answers from pages 6-7.

TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. By volume, the eastern snapping turtle's diet consists of what percentage of plant material?
- **The correct answer is D. 37%.** (Although, the further south you go in their range, this percentage typically increases.)

2. Can you identify the salamanders?

- **The salamander on the left is an eastern tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*) and the salamander on the right is a spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*).**



3. What species of frog is this? And what is the "easiest" way to differentiate it from other similar looking frogs?

- **Pickerel frog (*Lithobates palustris*).** At a glance, the yellow on the inside of the legs is a good way to differentiate them from similar looking northern green and southern leopard frogs. (Of course, if the frogs are calling, you can also differentiate them by their different advertisement calls.)



4. Can you identify the critters and the type of amplexus?

- **The upper photo is a pair of wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) in axillary amplexus. The lower photo is a pair of eastern spadefoots (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*) in inguinal amplexus.**



5. How many participants attended the VHS Annual Spring Survey at Shenandoah River State Park, the weekend of May 18-20, 2012?

- **Over 40! (There were also over 40 at the Annual HerpBlitz, June 23-24!).**

6. What species was found and documented at the VHS Annual Spring Survey, at Shenandoah River State Park, the weekend of May 18-20, 2012, which had not been found/documentated at a VHS survey in over 10 years?

- **Red cornsnake (*Pantherophis guttatus*)!**





7. Which species have “not” been found in Virginia’s outdoors?

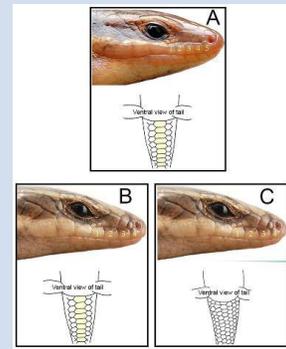
- Eastern diamondback rattlesnake
- American alligator
- American crocodile
- Eastern coral snake

- **None of these species are native to Virginia. However, cases of released or escaped captive animals have occurred in Virginia over the years:**

- The closest population of American alligators to Virginia is the southern portion of the Albemarle Sound, North Carolina. Alligators have been sighted and captured or killed in various parts of the state over the years. All these incidents represent escaped or liberated pets.
- In 1964, an eastern diamondback rattlesnake was found in Dickerson County. This was determined to be an escaped or released captive animal from a religious snake-handling group.
- In 1979, a one meter long American crocodile was captured in the Dismal Swamp. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigation determined that the croc had been illegally transported to Virginia and illegally released.
- In 1892, Barringer reported finding a coral snake in southern Virginia, but this turned out to be a scarlet kingsnake. **Thus, the eastern coral snake is the only species of the above four species that has never been documented as being found in Virginia’s outdoors.**

8. Can you identify these three species of skink?

- A. **Broad-headed skink (*Plestiodon laticeps*)**
- B. **Common five-lined skink (*Plestiodon fasciatus*)**
- C. **Southeastern five-lined skink (*Plestiodon inexpectatus*)**



9. In which species of native Virginia frogs can one determine gender, based on the size relationship between the eye and tympanum?

- **American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), northern green frog (*Lithobates clamitans melanota*), and carpenter frog (*Lithobates virgatipes*).**



10. What Can you identify this species? (Hint: Although this species was rather common at the site of this year’s Annual HerpBlitz, Mattaponi WMA, it is a rather rare treat for most VHS member to see and hear this species!)

- **Carpenter frog (*Lithobates virgatipes*).**



Send ideas for Herp Trivia to newsletter editor, Susan Watson, newsletter@vaherpsociety.com.



VIRGINIA NATIVE

The purpose of **Virginia Native** is to highlight native species that are deserving of recognition. Additional information can be found on the website of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/information>.

Common Five-lined Skink (*Plestiodon fasciatus*)



Characteristics

This is a medium-sized skink that grows to a maximum snout-vent length of 3.4 inches (86 mm) and a maximum total length of 8.5 inches (215 mm). The body scales are smooth, overlapping, and glossy. This skink has five white to cream stripes on a dark brown to brownish-gray background color. The stripes go half-way onto the original tail. Mating occurs in May, 6-12 eggs are laid in June, and hatching occurs 4-6 weeks later. The female guards the nest and turns the eggs daily. No parental care is given after hatching and one or more of the eggs may be eaten while the female broods them. Juveniles are similar to adults but have a bright blue tail, which serves to attract predators' attention away from the body. The tail breaks off when the skink is attacked, and it continues to wriggle for some time to distract the predator further. This skink will enter water, crawl into crevices, or hide under objects or leaf litter to escape predators.



Distribution

This species is found in all areas of Virginia. It inhabits a variety of habitats in the eastern deciduous and southeastern evergreen forests. It prefers moist habitats and is often found under objects such as logs and boards, or in standing snags. This skink will lay its eggs in decaying logs and stumps. It may be observed near urban and suburban buildings.

Foods

This skink feeds predominantly on spiders, with the specific choice dependent on the size of the lizard and the availability of the prey. Large items such as big spiders, crickets, grasshoppers, beetles, harvestmen, and snails are preferred.

Common Name: Common Five-lined Skink

Scientific Name: *Plestiodon fasciatus* (formerly *Eumeces fasciatus*)

Genus: *Plestiodon* is derived from the Greek words *pleistos* meaning "most" and *odontos* meaning "teeth". Plestiodon = Toothy Skinks.

Species: *fasciatus* is derived from the Latin word *fascia* meaning "stripe" and the Latin suffix *inus* meaning "pertaining to"

Average Length: 5 - 8.5 in. (12.5 - 21.5 cm)

Virginia Record Length: 7.5 in. (18.8 cm)

Record length: 8.5 in. (21.5 cm)