

The Maine Herpetological Society

Newsletter



Volume 15 Number 8

September 2007

Upcoming MHS Meetings and Regional Events Mark Your Calendar!

- Sept 15 Regular Meeting—Island Apartments.
Doug Kranich - Costa Rica
- Sept 15-16 Mid-Atlantic Reptile Show—Timonium,
MD (aka Baltimore show)
- Oct. 6 New England Reptile Show
Radisson Hotel
Manchester, NH
<http://www.reptileexpo.com/>
- Oct 20 **NO REGULAR MEETING**
Because of Manchester Show
- Oct 27-28 NARBC Chantilly VA
<http://www.narbc.com/>

Memberships

*And we thank the following for renewing
their MHS membership:*

Gerry Rogers- South Portland - Ind

**If this is your last issue
PLEASE RENEW TODAY!**

Very Important

If anybody expects to use the rooms or table space, we need to know beforehand. Members need to call Jason Patterson, or Doug Kranich. If you don't call beforehand don't expect a spot at either. We need to be able to tell the show director how many people we will have ahead of time and how many passes we will need, there's a limit. We've had issues with this before

Society Notes

First off I would like to thank everyone that sent in pictures of the Portland Reptile Expo for me to use in the newsletter. Dave Coombs sent in this one that is more what I had in mind. This is picture of Dave at his table. Black and white pictures of herps don't really do them justice. I am still looking for more member pics if anyone has any.



Coming up is the New England Reptile Show in Manchester, NH (aka Manchester Show). As before the society has reserved two rooms at the Radisson Hotel and 3 tables for members to use. Please read the box regarding the rooms and tables.

Doug Kranich will be giving a talk at the September meeting on his trip to Costa Rica. Please plan on attending.

In this Issue we have the 2nd half of Doug's article on Costa Rica and a member's bio. Also you'll notice there is a list of our membership except for a few that didn't want their information published. I put membership list front and back on one sheet so you could pull it out. You'll also notice that the membership expiration date is on the address labels. Please let me know if you don't agree with the date.

Thanks, Editor.

A Costa Rican Adventure

Part Two by Douglas Kranich

We finally arrived at Rara Avis, a lodge like no other (meaning A rare or unique person or thing). It was here where we truly interfaced with the unspoiled rain forest. The flora and fauna surrounding us were magnificent. The food was wonderful, the guides were all knowing. It was also the place where I learned the true meaning of "rain forest". The hovering clouds poured rain on us over and over, rarely revealing stars or blue sky. My rain jacket was my constant companion; I was either wearing it or had it tied around my waist the entire visit. The rubber boots they issued us before arriving were worn 100% of the time while exploring the surroundings.

We spent most of our time there wandering the trails, which radiated out from the lodge. We were warned about crossing the river and the possibility of getting stranded in the event of a flash flood. We walked slowly on the muddy trails in our rubber boots, sometimes with guides, sometimes by ourselves, examining everything and searching for unique life. All life was worthy of our interest but our main goal of course was "herp" life and especially snakes. We were not disappointed.

Guides stated often that the most common serpent in the forest was the venomous and deadly fer de lance (locally known as terciopelo). Due to their extremely nocturnal habits though, we never saw one. They have a habit of spending their daytime hours coiled and resting on the forest floor and often do not move for days at a time. Their cryptic coloration perfectly camouflages them with their surroundings.

The second most common snake was reputed to be the tiny eyelash viper, also highly venomous, but far less aggressive and dangerous than the fer de lance. We were thrilled to have found two in the time we were there, but I have to give the credit to our guide Wilbreth for spying both. We had been told that the bright yellow phase existed in the area but we were never lucky enough to encounter one.

Chuck understood the eyelash viper very well since he kept and bred them in captivity about fifteen

years ago. After photographing them where they were discovered in their natural setting, he craftily used his snake hook to remove each of the individuals we found, which allowed for closer photography. I was amazed at how gentle they were despite the manipulation and nothing he did ever elicited any strikes.

The other venomous species we found was a tiny hog-nosed viper, which I was told was a species that was also fairly common. The single animal we found was perfectly camouflaged directly on our trail. It could have easily been stepped on but our guide pointed it out before anyone reached it. We were told by our guide that as a rule, non-venomous snakes were diurnal and moved around during daylight hours, venomous species were nocturnal and only moved at night. In my ten day experience there, I found that to be true.

Our exit from the Rara Avis lodge was one I'll never forget. As stated in my opening paragraph, I endured a sleepless night of relentless, pouring rain. As we walked to breakfast that morning, Chuck shared his concerns about the rain, the river, and our scheduled departure, to which I replied, "I'm sure they're prepared with a plan B."

That optimistic thought was dashed when we arrived at the dining area. The first words out of the manager's mouth was "how badly do you guys need to go today?" At that point, the pit in my stomach seemed bottomless. If we missed our one-chance scheduled exit, we would miss our flights out of San Jose the next morning. Then I would miss my flight to Bangor, then I would miss flights with my family to San Antonio the following day. To further complicate the matter, I had no communication to the outside to deal with any of the changes that would be required.

To get "out" that day meant crossing the rising, raging river. Only six weeks before, there had been a bridge, which had been in place over fifteen years. Unfortunately it had been wiped out by a huge flash flood and not yet replaced. When we had arrived three days before, the river had been much lower

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and we easily walked across in our boots with the water only 6" deep. Now, it was wild at that location and was over two feet deep. Oh, and one more added complication....about 40ft. downstream from the crossing point was a waterfall that fell nearly 60 ft. I figured that if we slipped while crossing, we were dead.

The scheduled departure time on the tractor-pulled wagon was 1pm, so if it was going to happen, we had about four hours to figure it out. It only came once a day, so there was only one opportunity to get back out. The river was scouted up and down for safe crossings. The dense forest which lined both sides of the river made accessibility very difficult. Nothing looked easy or safe. The knot in my stomach remained all morning.

It wasn't a very pretty picture, but fortunately the story ended well. By mid morning, the weather made a miraculous turn. It stopped raining! The skies began to brighten, the sun showed its face and the skies turned blue. The river height stabilized and we were able to cross on time. I must say though, I was scared to death crossing the river with the waterfall roaring just below me.

I wanted to list a few travel notes on Costa Rica about the weather, biodiversity, and the people I discovered.

Weather- Since Costa Rica is only 10° north of the equator, "hot" is all that needs to be said for temperature. The combination of heat (90°) and high humidity was almost unbearable at times. The higher elevations where we stayed (2000 ft. +) were much cooler (70-80°) and more comfortable. The rainy season begins in May/June, particularly in the mountains. The first serious rain we received occurred during the third night. It roared as it pounded the roof of our Selva Verde cabin and I woke up scared to death since I had no idea what was happening!

People- I found the people of Costa Rica to be very happy and satisfied with life. They enjoy a high standard of living due mostly to ecotourism and agriculture. I found them to be very friendly, particularly at the school we visited. The teachers and students had lots of smiles.

Biodiversity- This was the most amazing part of my experience and the main purpose for going. I was not disappointed. There is no place on Earth that has more variety of plant and animal species than Costa Rica. The mammals, insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and plants I observed were stunning to me. Of course, my greatest interest was the reptiles and amphibians and I personally observed and identified 9 species of snakes (2 venomous), 11

species of lizards, 2 species of crocodilians, and 10 species of frogs and toads. I saw others but wasn't able to get good enough looks to key them out. The snakes were the toughest sightings but certainly the most exciting.

Perhaps the only negative of the whole trip was my own inability to deal with the Spanish language. I felt very awkward when it came to communication. Fortunately, our guides and people associated with the lodges and transportation spoke excellent English. As luck would have it, one of the fathers from the Trenton, FL group was born and raised in Mexico City, so he served as a capable interpreter on many occasions.

It was this lack of understanding Spanish that has inspired me to return to Costa Rica again next summer with a better grasp of the language. I have told my daughter Amanda that I would like her to go with me also...but under one condition....that she switches her freshmen language at Stearns High School from French to Spanish.....and teaches me everything she's learning!

The End

Here are some interesting links the a found:

The first is the *Partners; Amphibian and Reptile Conservation - PARC*. I really haven't looked around too much in this site. According the their missions statement they are "dedicated to the conservation of the herpetofauna--reptiles and amphibians--and their habitats." Joining appears to be free.

<http://www.parcplace.org/northeast.html>

Another is the York Center for Wildlife. They appear to be an animal rescue organization. All animals not just herps. I ran into them because I found an article about their cleaning and caring for several hundred turtles after an oil spill in South Portland this summer. I was going to put the article in the newsletter but it seemed odd to have an article about something that occurred 2 months ago. According to their site they are always looking for volunteers, items they can use and donations. I don't know how the reception would be regarding someone that kept exotic reptiles so you may want to tread lightly.

<http://www.yorkcenterforwildlife.org/>

Member Bios:

Kevin Murphy - Auburn

It was pretty frustrating to grow in Maine in the 50s and be a reptile enthusiast. A friend and I would spend a lot of our time catching garter snakes or going "turtle hunting". Even though it was pretty easy and pretty much the same thing time after time we never seemed to tire of it. A highlight was when we caught a black racer in Auburn. We never saw it again and never saw another but I still remember how excited we were.

There was many a time we would come home late for dinner because we were out snake hunting. Seems crazy now because all there were was garter snakes but we still looked for them often. Since my summer job was with the forest service I was still looking for snakes in high school. It just seemed like to thing to do if you're in the woods in the summer time.

It wasn't until I went to University of Miami that things really took off. I can still remember the first time I saw a boa constrictor in a pet shop, you would have thought I just entered the Amazon. Of course I bought it and 3 others throughout the school year. I also got a few Florida kings, scarlet kings and rat snakes. My father wasn't too pleased when I returned for the summer with a dozen snakes but he resigned himself to the fact that they weren't going away and eventually was pretty encouraging. On the other hand, my mother was right into it and I have a number of humorous stories involving her and my snakes. I kept most of those snakes and a few new acquisitions (Indigo snake, Burmese and Reticulated Pythons, Anacondas) until I got married in 1975. I was considered the snake man, or nut, depending on who you spoke with. I only knew a few people that had snakes and even I thought they were a little weird. I ended up giving my collection away to the Staten Island Zoo and took about 10 years off. They took them all but I think they only really wanted the indigos which by then had been listed as endangered.

I got the bug again in 1985. By then herp societies had come into existence in a big way so I joined several and started acquiring snakes again. For about 5 years I transcribed the meeting talks for "Notes from NOAH" This the newsletter for the Northern Ohio Ass. of Herpetologists. This was just grunt work but I liked it because I got to listen to all their talks and there was some pretty good ones.

At this time Maine restricted all snakes except for a few colubrids so I kept a low profile. I traveled the country to International Herpetological Symposiums which was as close as you could come to a National Expo in those days. Officially animals were not sold at these conven-

tions but many of the breeders had animals in their rooms. Imagine trying to squeeze into a hotel room with about 100 other guys and gals. You had time for a quick peek at best. The IHS conventions were geared to zoo and animal park people but it was through the people that attended them that the National Breeders Expo in Florida was started as well as one of the first herp magazines (The Vivarium).

The State meetings in the early 90s that were held by the legislature to discuss allowing more herps to be kept as pets in Maine brought quite a few enthusiasts together that may have never met otherwise. Clint Smith and I hatched the idea for the Maine Herp Society at this time and shortly afterwards we had about 15 members many of which were at the State meetings. Somehow the word got out and the "northern Maine crew" joined in. There's still a number of founding members left in the society today including Clint and myself.

I do have a few regrets. I wish I had taken more advantage of my time in Florida in the late 60s. As anyone that has been to Florida knows it looses more and more herp territory each year. The edge of the Everglades was literally 10 minutes from campus in 1967. I wish I had gone out much more often than I did. Karl Caulfield in his book "The Keeper and the Kept" has a few chapters on herping in Florida in the late 60's and it bugs me that I was there at the same time and only went out occasionally. The Miami Serpentarium (of Bill Haast fame), was about a half hours walk from the campus on Route 1. I used to go about once a week and got to know everyone on a "hello" basis. I really regret not asking if I could do volunteer work, or even a real job, I would have learned a great deal. It just never occurred to me then. A similar situation existed with the Crandon Park Zoo. This has since moved south and changed its name to the Miami Zoo. I should have volunteered at their reptile house since I visited the thing often enough. By the way, theirs was unique because all the enclosures could be viewed from the outside. I've never seen one like that since. They didn't have too many reptiles but one day I saw the prettiest boa I had ever seen there. It was then that I realized that not all boas constrictors were the same and began to narrow my focus to what I was really interested in.

I've had some great times while enjoying of this hobby. I've gone herping in every east coast State from New Jersey south and a few on the west coast. I've taken some great trips. Trips to the National Breeders Expos in the early days were a lot of fun. They're fun today but in the early days they were just a big bunch of amateurs. I've also met a lot of "reptile" people and many good friends.

Switchable Adhesive

Science Daily — Two surfaces stick together, separate, and stick together again—on command. This discovery by a team of researchers from the Universities of Sheffield (UK) and Bayreuth contradicts our day-to-day experience.

In the animal kingdom, geckos can climb up vertical inclines, displaying an incredible switchable adhesion as they do so. Insects also use another form of switchable adhesion to sit on your ceiling and then fly off before you climb up on your chair with a rolled-up newspaper. How these animals can switch off and on adhesion is not yet understood in detail. But the scientists led by Mark Geoghegan reveal the secret of their “intelligent” adhesion in the journal *Angewandte Chemie*.

One of the surfaces involved consists of a polyacid gel, a three-dimensionally cross-linked polymer containing many acid groups. This polymer network is so heavily soaked in liquid that it forms a solid, gelati-

nous mass. The second surface is a silicon chip onto which a polybase has been deposited. This polybase consists of polymer chains that stretch brush-like from the support and contain many basic groups.

In water or slightly acidic solution, the acidic groups carry a positive charge while the basic groups are negatively charged; this causes them to attract each other. In addition to this electrostatic attraction, hydrogen bonds are also formed, which causes the two surfaces to be tightly stuck together.

If the surrounding solution is made more strongly acidic (a pH value of about 1), the bonds break up, the basic groups lose their charge, and the electrostatic attraction lets up. The two surfaces can then be slowly and carefully separated from each other without any damage. This detachment is reversible: If the pH value is raised again, making the solution less acidic, the gel and “brush” stick to each other once again. This cycle can be repeated many times by simply changing the pH value.

Possible applications for such “smart” surface pairs include microelectromagnetic components (actuators), components for microfluidic systems, or carriers for pharmacological agents that could release their cargo under specific physiological conditions.

Classified Advertisements

Classified advertisements are free to dues paying members. The format for the ads should be as follows: 1.1.1 The first number represents the number of males, the second represents the number of females, and the third, the number of unknown sex. Please use the species name whenever possible. The Maine Herpetological Society is not responsible for content, prices, or errors in classified ads, nor do we receive any compensation from the sales resulting from these ads. **

For Sale from MHS: Frozen Feeder Mice. Check out the new prices! The big rodent suppliers have dropped their prices, so we have too! (There are currently no pinkies available) Fuzzies (large) 100/\$20, Hoppers 100/\$25 or 50/\$12.50, Weanlings 50/\$15, Adult mice 50/\$18, Available at MHS meetings in Fairfield available by appointment, Call Jason Patterson - 207-825-3876. - **Call first since inventory is changing constantly!**

MHS Items for sale Members prices: New MHS T- shirts and hats \$10 ea. 4 sizes available, Adult S,M,L,XL Maine Reptile and Amphibian Book including the frog CD, \$15 each; ME Herp Posters, 4 varieties, snakes, turtles, amphibians and vernal pools. \$3 ea.; They are also available by contacting Doug Kranich (723 4108) or kranich@verizon.net They can be mailed but shipping will be added to the cost.

For Sale: 100's of Balls, Boas & Colubrids Available. Largest variety around. Inventory changing constantly if you are looking for something call. Thanks, J&J Reptiles sales@jnreptiles.com (207)479-6658 Check out our website at: www.jnreptiles.com

For Sale: 0.0.20 CB '05 Assorted cornsnakes. \$30-\$40 Debbie Seeber 746-3027 (leave message) or email seeberserpents@yahoo.com

For Sale: 1.0 Patternless Hypo Colombian 95% patternless, even most of tail pattern is gone. \$10,000; 12.10 albino balls \$675 each; 20.18 pastel balls-killer hi yellows-breed stock grade \$500 per pair; selects \$400 per pair; Diamond carpet crosses-turn into killer adults \$150/pr. ; 66% chance het sharp albino boas \$100 each; Contact: Ben Cole at BCherps@yahoo.com

For Sale: 0.2 Peruvian red-tailed boas 9 ft. \$350 ea.; 6.9 Okeetee corn snake \$20.00 ea. 2.2 Nicaraguan boas 125.00 ea.; ball pythons \$25.00 ea. Contact Kevin Murphy - 207-576-0157 kmurphy70192@roadrunner.com

Adopt or Surrender a Reptile or Amphibian The New England Amphibian & Reptile Rescue (NEARR) provides permanent placement & adoption to herps of all sorts; including, but not limited to; snakes, lizards, frogs and turtles.

Contact Information: Phone: 207-399-4631 Email: rescue@reptilerescue.net Website: <http://www.ReptileRescue.net>