



Virginia Herpetological Society

Newsletter

Volume 16, Number 2

August 2006

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Home Page: <http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/VHS/>
Message Board: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VaHS/>
Online Store: <http://www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety>

VHS Business

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| 1) Fall Symposium Announcement | 4) New VHS Store Committee |
| 2) Keynote Speaker's Biography | 5) Photo Contest for VHS Calendar |
| 3) Books Available at Fall Meeting | |

1) Fall Symposium Announcement

The fall VHS symposium will be hosted by Dr. Don Merkle in Longwood University's new science building from 9:00 – 5:00 on Saturday, October 21, 2006. This year's symposium will focus on educating the public, teachers, and VHS members on a diversity of herp related topics. There will not be a formal teacher's workshop this year but rather workshops and lectures will be happening all day long. All are welcomed to participate.

Michael Dorcas will be our keynote speaker. He is the author of *North American Watersnakes: A Natural History, A Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina, and Snakes of the Southeast*. We plan to purchase a small quantity of these books for people to purchase at the meeting (see #3 below). Dr. Dorcas will be available to sign books.

In addition to the keynote speaker we will have a photo contest, live animal display, live auction, a GPS workshop, and the presentation of the member of the year award. Five members have already volunteered to make presentations thus far. Anyone interested in presenting should contact Jason Gibson (frogman31@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

Plan to eat lunch at the college for around \$5.00. Please check the VHS website for updated information on speakers, activities, and for directions to the college. We encourage all members to bring a friend. Don't forget to bring items for the auction, a photo to enter into the photo contest, and a camera for the live animal display. We look forward to seeing everyone in the fall.

Virtual tour of Longwood's campus:

<http://www.longwood.edu/general/tour/>

Speakers and topics:

Michael Dorcas
"Effective Techniques for Field Studies of Amphibians and Reptiles"

Joy Ware
"The Role of Amphibians and Reptiles in Conservation Medicine"

J.D. Kleopfer
"The History and Impacts of the Pet Turtle Trade, specifically the red-eared slider"

Carol Pollio
"Threats to Amphibian & Reptile Conservation in Virginia."

Mike Clifford
"GPS workshop"

Kory Steele
"Caring for Captive Herps, in the Home and the Classroom."

2) Keynote Speaker's Biography

Mike Dorcas is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at Davidson College, Davidson, NC. He received a B.S. (1986) and M.S. (1990) from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Ph.D. from Idaho State University in 1995. Mike was awarded the 2004 "Environmental Educator of the Year in North Carolina" by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation. Mike's research program focuses on the physiology, ecology, and conservation of amphibians and reptiles. His research program is interdisciplinary in nature and relies heavily on collaboration with students. Mike has published several book chapters and over 50 articles on the biology of amphibians and reptiles, the most recent of which include students as

coauthors. His recent books include, *A Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina*, Davidson College, and *Snakes of the Southeast* (with J. Whitfield Gibbons), University of Georgia Press.

3) Books Available at Fall Meeting

The VHS has arranged for *Snakes of the Southeast* to be available at the Fall Meeting at a discounted price straight from the publisher. Preregistration is required to receive the discount of 40% at the meeting. Retail price = \$22.95, discounted price = \$14. Please send an email to Susan Watson (Susan.Watson@dgif.virginia.gov) by September 15th to preregister.

4) New VHS Store Committee

Upon the opening of a new online gift store (see announcement below), the VHS executive committee formed a VHS Store Committee to build and oversee the website. One of VHS's newest members was appointed to this ambitious task, Patricia Crane. Pattie first joined the VHS after seeing our booth at Reptile Weekend at the Virginia Living Museum in February, 2006. Also note below the photo contest for a calender to be offered through the online store.

Herp Trivia

This issue's trivia is etymology themed, compliments of John White...

1. Name the turtle with the engraved shell.
2. Name the unexpected lizard.
3. Name the charming snake.
4. Name the worn out snake.
5. Name the snake best at counting.
6. Name the springtime snake.
7. Name the stiff snake.
8. Name the turtle that's part snake.
9. Name the loneliest turtle.

Answers can be found on page 11

The Virginia Herpetological Society announces an online gift shop that provides quality merchandise of amphibians and reptiles native to Virginia. The store is hosted by a large web site, [cafepress.com](http://www.cafepress.com), which allows us to simply upload designs and place them on any number of different kinds of T-shirts, sweatshirts, bumper stickers, hats, and even an eco-friendly organic cotton T-shirt. The company uses on-demand printing that is all computer controlled. No merchandise is made until someone orders it. <http://www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety>

You will see the store broken into basic taxonomic groups. Each design has 3 subsections, with options of being on the back or front of the shirt. We also have a section for items such as magnets, stickers, tote bags, etc. For shirts, pay attention to the printing options as they dictate the quality of the graphic after a lot of washings. The Heat Transfer option is the best for shirts with photos on them but doesn't wear as well as Direct Printing. Keep in mind, the shirts are NOT silk screened! Instead, the graphic is printed directly onto the fabric.



One added bonus for members is a Members Only area. There isn't much material there now, but when we add new designs they will be featured there first. Also, some of our best designs will only be available there. For the introductory period of the store, we'll have all of our designs in the main store, and then move some of them out to the Members Only area. To maintain exclusivity, there is not a link to this area from the main page, bookmark this page in addition.

<http://www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety/1415361>

This store is intended to generate interest in our native herps and also secondarily be a fund raiser for the Society. Café Press charges a base price for each item, and any markup above that base price is what is sent to the VHS. The markup for most shirts is only a few dollars. Most of the items (mouse pads, stickers, etc) are marked up a couple of dollars. Although the products can get a bit pricey, rest assured we have minimized the markup and the quality of the shirts is very high.

We will be adding products continually. We will gladly accept quality photos and illustrations, please pass them along for consideration (thecranefamily@gmail.com).

5) Photo Contest for the 2007 VHS Calendar

We are currently looking for quality photographs of Virginia's native reptiles and amphibians for a 2007 calendar. All current VHS members are eligible to submit content, up to two photos each. A total of 12 pictures will be needed for the calendar.

Submissions will be judged by the VHS executive committee. Photographs will be judged on technical excellence, composition, and originality. The deadline for entering is October 1, at 12:00 AM EST. Winners will be announced October 21, at the VHS Fall Meeting. Calendars will be available for purchase from the VHS's online store: www.cafepress.com/vaherpsociety Date of availability to be announced on the VHS main website and the Yahoo group page: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VaHS/>

Pictures need to be high resolution PNG or JPG files, in RGB mode. They must be at least 2300 pixels in width and 1800 pixels in height. If you are unsure about these requirements feel free to send images to me and I'll let you know if they qualify. Pictures will be cropped or resized in order to fit the calendar.

Please send pictures, along with your full name to: Patricia Crane at thecranefamily@gmail.com RE: VHS Calendar Contest. All winning calendar pictures will include the member's name along with the species scientific and common name. Please indicate with your submission whether your images can be used for other store merchandise.



Events

Area Reptile Shows

a) Richmond Reptile Expo

Show Dates: October 29, 2006
 Location: The Holiday Inn Select
 1021 Koger Center Blvd.
 Richmond, VA 23235
 (804) 379-3800
 Time: 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
 Admission: \$6.00

b) Northern Virginia Reptile Expo

Show Dates: August 26, 2006, December 9, 2006
 Location: Prince William County Fairgrounds
 Manassas, Virginia 20108
 (703) 368-0173
 Time: 9 A.M. to 3 P.M.
 Admission: \$5.00
 Children under 6 - FREE!

c) 14th Annual Mid-Atlantic Reptile Show (MARS)

- Captive bred reptiles, amphibians, and tarantulas.
- Saturday, September 16th and Sunday, September 17th, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Over 170 vendor tables.
- 4-H Hall at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium, Maryland.
- Adult admission is \$8.00 (\$12.00 for a 2-day pass), \$6.00 for children under 12 & Seniors. Children under five are free.
- Proceeds will be donated for the purchase and protection of rainforest and critical habitat.

For additional information, please contact Holli Friedland, Program Director of the Mid-Atlantic Reptile Show, at 410-580-0250 or via e-mail at holli@reptileinfo.com.

Herpetofauna Data Needed!

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) oversees an outreach program called WildlifeMapping that allows citizens volunteers and community groups organizations to collect & submit wildlife-related information. This information contributes to the Virginia's biological databases. Herpetofauna is probably one area that is lacking for data collection.



If you are interested in becoming a WildlifeMapping volunteer, contact Tim Christensen for assistance. This involves attending a one-day workshop. Workshops are held throughout the state. Tim can organize workshops on the Hampton Roads/Tidewater area or assist in coordinating workshops elsewhere. He can be contacted via email at Tim.Christensen@eustis.army.mil or by phone at (757)878-2375 ext 21. More information about the program is available from the VDGIF website:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlifemapping>

Big animals, little animals, plants - right down to the sea itself. We need them, not just for their own sake, but because all this has to be here for everybody forever. Only one thing is certain: if we are to preserve our environment and save this priceless wildlife we need much, much more knowledge.

Harry Butler from 'In the Wild With Harry Butler' 1977

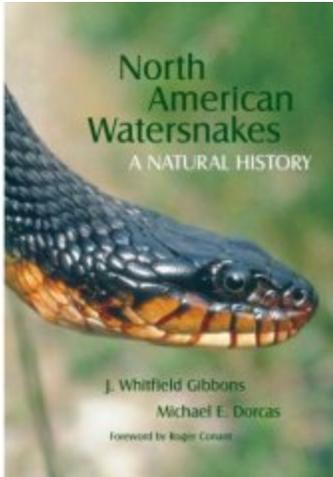
Book Review

North American Watersnakes - A Natural History, by J. Whitfield Gibbons and Michael E. Dorcas. 2004. University of Oklahoma Press, 2800 Venture Drive, Norman, OK 73069-8216, Hardcover. xxvi + 438 pp., ISBN 0-8061-3599-9. \$50 from Amazon.com

Timothy P. Christensen

As a natural resources manager for two military installations, I am frequently challenged on the best approaches to maintain biodiversity. Effective management of these conditions requires the identification and subsequent life history information about indicator species. Several species of herpetofauna represent

potential candidates for indicator species. Watersnakes serve well in this capacity particularly due to the habitat types mentioned above. The dilemma lies in obtaining suitable reference material that can shed more light on such species to support meeting management objectives. Few all-inclusive reference books exist that target a specific group of species; however, *North American Watersnakes* is the momentous exception.



The operative word that succinctly describes *North American Watersnakes* is comprehensiveness, and the book serves as an excellent desk reference that allows for quick access to needed information. The book is organized into two basic parts. Part 1 covers the full gamut of watersnake biology with Part 2 comprising full species accounts of nine species of *Nerodia*, four species of *Regina* and the one species of *Seminatrix*. One can appreciate the exceptional accounts of all North American species as each account includes details on taxonomy, etymology, fossil record, habitat, physiology and behavior, growth and size, diet and feeding, predation and parasitism, reproduction, population biology, captive maintenance and conservation. These sections are well written by avoiding excessive use of scientific jargon, yet information is clearly supported with documented research; the bibliography is indispensable.

I was particularly impressed with two other special features associated with the book, namely the distribution maps and a species identification key specifically for species of the three genera cited above. The maps are in color and portray the distribution down to county level with supporting records noted in an appendix. This is more accurate and more useful than typical blanket regional maps found in other references. The identification key provides a simplistic means to accurately key out all North American watersnakes. Both this key and the distribution maps are easily used in conjunction to confirm a given species.

It is quite appropriate to note that color photographs have been included. This portion too is comprehensive as it includes all species discussed but goes further to include photographs depicting dorsal and ventral markings, adults and juveniles, and subspecies.

A cursory examination of the book would clearly demonstrate its utility to the academic and research communities associated with ecology and herpetology. Having read *North American Watersnakes* and actually used its information, I extend the recommendation to personnel managing refuges and other wildlife management areas. I feel that the purchase of *North American Watersnakes* was a worthy investment, and there is little doubt that I will continue to make use of this book for professional purposes in the future.

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Online Resources

- 1) Frog Call Ringtones
- 2) VHS Website Report
- 3) VaHS Yahoo Group Report
- 4) Herp Publications Available Gratis

1) Frog Call Ringtones

Compliments of Touchstone Energy, you can download 18 species of frog calls native to Virginia taxa to your cell phone for a really cool ringtone. Species included are American Toad, Green Treefrog, Barking Treefrog, Mountain Chorus Frog, Bird Voiced Treefrog, Eastern Narrowmouth Toad, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Cope's Gray Treefrog, Pickerel Frog, Southern Leopard Frog, Northern

Cricket Frog, Eastern Spadefoot, Fowler's Toad, Spring Peeper, Upland Chorus Frog, Green Frog, and Wood Frog.

Link:

<http://www.ekpc.com/NewGreenweb/greenindex.htm>

Look for the "free nature ringtone" icon.

Editor's Note: *I was unable to easily upload these files to my phone using Verizon Wireless. Instead, I simply recorded the calls from CD directly to my phone with it's "Record New" ringtone feature. Holding the phone up to the speaker provided excellent sound quality. Since most people carry their mobile phones when doing frog call surveys, this provides the most convenient way to carry along the calls of frogs you are the least familiar with.*

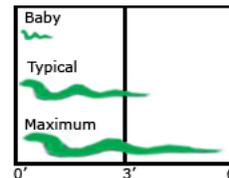
2) VHS Website Report

VHS webmaster John White recently added a hit counter / web tracker to the VHS home page. The resulting data from July 2006 has provided very interesting information about the use of the webpage.

	Page Loads	Unique Visitors	First Time Visitors	Returning Visitors
Max	169	85	67	22
Min	40	20	13	2
Total	2776	1476	1228	248
Daily Averages	90	48	40	8

Recent updates to the website include:

1. Etymology of scientific names for reptiles completed.
2. Graphic representing snake size added.
3. New photographs added.



3) VaHS Yahoo Group Report

Announced in the previous newsletter, the VHS has created an online gathering place just for Virginia's herps. So far there are nearly 70 members signed up and have had over 400 messages posted. Discussions so far have been "mysterious snake" identities, groups for herping, strange colored frogs and snakes, and pictures from this year's VHS surveys. All of those interested in herps are encouraged to join, even non-VHS members are welcome.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VaHS/>

YAHOO! GROUPS

4) Herp Publications Available Gratis

The American Museum of Natural History Library announces the availability of the full legacy of the museum's scientific publications. Both back issues and current-ongoing publications have been digitized and all publications are now available on the web at:

<http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/dspace>

Printing services provided by Environmental Specialties Group, Inc., Newport News, Va.

(757) 599-7501

www.envspgroup.com



News

- 1) New State Herp Regulations
- 2) How Do Highways Influence Snake Movement?
- 3) A slither of truth

1) New State Herp Regulations

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries enacted new regulations effective 7/1/06.

<http://www.dgif.state.va.us/fishing/regulations/new.asp>

- Candy darter, eastern hellbender, diamondback terrapin, and spotted turtle will not be legal to collect or possess.
- Salamanders used as bait will have to be less than 6 inches long.
- Crayfish will no longer be legal to buy or sell (the sale of salamanders and madtoms is currently prohibited).

General Herp Regulations

<http://www.dgif.state.va.us/fishing/regulations/nongame.asp>

- Possession Limits: 5 of each species.
- It shall be unlawful to take, possess, import, cause to be imported, export, cause to be exported, buy, sell, offer for sale or liberate within the Commonwealth any wild animal unless otherwise specifically permitted by law or regulation.
- A special permit is required to import, possess, or sell the following non-native (exotic) amphibians and reptiles: giant or marine toad, tongueless or African clawed frog, barred tiger salamander, gray tiger salamander, blotched tiger salamander.

2) How Do Highways Influence Snake Movement?

Behavioral Responses To Roads And Vehicles

2005. Copeia (4): 772-782

by Kimberly M. Andrews and J. Whitfield Gibbons

Abstract: Roads affect animal survivorship and behavior and thereby can act as a barrier to movement, which exacerbates habitat fragmentation and disrupts landscape permeability. Field experiments demonstrated that interspecific differences in ecology and behavior of snakes affected responses of species when they encountered and crossed roads. The probability of crossing a road varied significantly among southeastern U.S. snakes, with smaller species exhibiting higher levels of road avoidance. Species also differed significantly in crossing speeds, with venomous snakes crossing more slowly than nonvenomous ones. All species crossed at a perpendicular angle, minimizing crossing time. A model incorporating interspecific crossing speeds and angles revealed that some species cannot successfully cross highways with high traffic densities. Individuals of three species immobilized in response to a passing vehicle, a behavior that would further prolong crossing time and magnify susceptibility to road mortality. Identifying direct and indirect effects of roads on snakes is essential for mitigating road impacts and for designing effective transportation systems in the future.

A copy of this article can be downloaded gratis by visiting the CNAH PDF Library at

http://www.cnah.org/cnah_pdf.asp

3) A slither of truth: Va.'s cottonmouths are shy but venomous, and best left alone.

BY REX SPRINGSTON
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

NEWPORT NEWS - Vinnie Passaro dropped a cloth bag onto a footbridge at Newport News Park. Out spilled that legendary embodiment of evil, the eastern cottonmouth, or water moccasin. Passaro, an environmental scientist who is studying the park's cottonmouths, had caught this one about 25 yards from the well-traveled bridge. He had weighed and examined the venomous snake, and now he was returning it. The moment it left the bag, the cottonmouth assumed its storied stance head up, tail twitching, white mouth agape.

For centuries, people have interpreted this display as aggression. Scientists now say it is mostly bluff. "You see? Is he trying to bite me?" Passaro asked. Wearing protective chaps on his legs, he stood beside the 4-foot snake and nudged it with a pair of metal tongs. The snake kept making threats but didn't strike. The cottonmouth's famous posture -- mouth open, eyes cast back -- is not good for seeing or striking, experts say. But it is perfectly fine for scaring the bejeebers out of people. Villain of screen and page, the cottonmouth inspires tall tales: It will chase you. It will drop into your boat from a tree limb. It will climb into your boat to attack you.

"Mostly all those stories are unfounded," Passaro said. "The only thing that is true is that it is dangerously venomous. They can really put a hurtin' on you."

After a winter of hibernation, cottonmouths are active now just as outdoorsy folks are taking to rivers, ponds and other cottonmouth haunts. Watch where you put your feet and hands and, if you see a cottonmouth, keep your distance and you'll be fine, experts say. Pushed far enough, a cottonmouth will indeed strike. One bit Passaro last year, sending him to a hospital and causing his left arm to swell until the skin was "tight as a drum," he said. "It was probably the most painful thing that's ever happened to me."

Many people claim cottonmouths inhabit the James River in Richmond. They are wrong. They are seeing the northern water snake, a harmless serpent that invariably causes a ruckus when it glides past waders. The cottonmouth is a denizen of the South. Its northernmost realm is southern Chesterfield County, where an isolated population persists along Swift Creek and the Appomattox River. Passaro's snakes in Newport News Park represent another isolated population. He is studying their numbers and habits for his master's thesis at Christopher Newport University, where he studies environmental science. He estimates there are 400 cottonmouths in the park.

Cottonmouths are more common in far southeastern Virginia, especially the remaining wilds of suburban Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. Many have been killed by the bulldozers of progress -- along with the hoes and guns of frightened Virginians.

Even when it's not acting up, the cottonmouth is an impressive beast. It can get 5 feet long and as big around as a man's arm; 3-footers are more typical. Their color varies. They are usually a drab greenish-brown, or nearly black, with vague, dark bands. The one Passaro released was nearly golden.

Retired Virginia Commonwealth University biologist Charles Blem, who studied the Chesterfield-area cottonmouths, said moccasin myths were probably started by people who misinterpreted things they saw. A cottonmouth might appear to chase you if you stand between it and its escape hole. And Blem said they have indeed tried to climb into his canoe, but not out of malevolence.

"They are so darn nearsighted and dumb they don't even know [the boat] is not a log. As soon as you make a move like you are going to do something, they go. They are really, really pretty shy."

As for falling in boats from limbs, cottonmouths aren't big on climbing. They prefer to bask on stumps, logs and small islands. The harmless but menacing-looking brown water snake, however, can climb 10 feet above water.

"If you're out in a boat and you see a snake in a tree, dollars to a doughnut it's a water snake," Blem said.

For a 2002 study that's high on the don't-do-this-at-home list, University of Georgia ecologist Whit Gibbons and Davidson College biologist Michael E. Dorcas tested the cottonmouths' legendary aggression by nudging them, stepping on them, and grabbing them in a South Carolina swamp. They wore snake-proof boots and carried tongs fashioned to look like hands. The scientists approached 45 snakes. Nine dashed into the water. They nudged 13 with their boots, but none bit. After being stepped on, one of 22 bit. And after being picked up, 13 of 36 bit the artificial hand.

"Our observations," the men wrote, "strongly support the contention that snakes are first cowards, then bluffers, and last of all warriors."

Virginia is home to two other venomous snakes. Copperheads can be found across the state. Rattlesnakes live in the mountains and in southeastern Virginia. The fangs of all three mete out a poison capable of

destroying blood cells and tissue. Rattlesnake venom is the most potent of the three. Some experts say cottonmouth venom is stronger than the copperhead's; others say that's not clear.

Death from snakebite is extremely rare in Virginia. From 1990 through 2004, three people died -- two from bites in far Southwest Virginia and one bitten in an unrecorded location, state health statistics show. During the same period, insect stings killed 38 people and lightning killed 31.

Most Virginia snakebite deaths in recent decades were caused by untreated bites from rattlers handled in religious ceremonies, said Rutherford Rose, director of the Virginia Poison Center at VCU. The bite of a venomous snake probably won't kill you, but you should call a poison center or get to a hospital, Rose said. "It is a big deal. You get a big, ugly, swollen, painful extremity hand, foot, leg. If you are a piano player, you are not playing the piano for a long time if you are bitten on the hand."

Research shows that most victims -- 67 percent in one study -- get bitten because they are trying to catch or aggravate the snakes. "The intoxicated male is clearly at the highest risk," Rose said. Nationally, venomous snakes kill fewer than a dozen people each year. Rattlesnakes cause 95 percent of the deaths, experts say.

Millions of people have visited the 8,000-acre Newport News Park since it opened 40 years ago. The cottonmouths there inhabit a section beside a popular hiking trail. No one but Passaro has been bitten, said city parks director Michael Poplawski. During a recent hunt for specimens, Passaro and helper John Agee, a Christopher Newport biology student, donned chest waders and plunged into a swamp beside the park's footbridge. With his tongs, Passaro caught the golden cottonmouth as it moved across a berm. Passaro carried the snake in a collapsible cooler to his truck nearby, where he would measure it and inject it with an identifying microchip. Strollers gathered to watch. The snake came out of the bag, mouth agape. Passaro used his tongs to guide its head into a clear plastic tube. That made the biting end visible but harmless. The snake's fangs dripped yellow venom.

Passaro let people touch the cool, scaly body. Sami Wanderer, 5, of York County, said the snake was pretty. "I like its mouth."

Passaro names the snakes he catches and releases. They include a monster called Godzilla. What should we call this one, he asked the group. Sami suggested "Frankie," after her dad. Passaro christened it Frankie II, since another Frankie already inhabited the park.

Raven Haynes, 27, of Fort Eustis watched from a distance. She doesn't like snakes, but that doesn't keep her out of the woods. "I figure if I yell loud enough, someone will come."

Shortly after Passaro released the snake on the footbridge, the gaping moccasin found the edge of the walkway. It plopped into the dark water below and disappeared. It would soon join Godzilla, Frankie and its other not-so-fiendish friends.

VHS Publications

As freshman Newsletter Editor, I am looking to expand the content of our newsletter. The following are ideas I am asking the VHS members to contribute to the Newsletter.

- Narrative of a herping trip, in VA or abroad
- Amusing stories
- Candidates for a Member Profile
- Opinion letters related to herps / environment / conservation
- "First Love", how you got started in herpetology or your career highlights
- Results of informal herp surveys
- Any news articles, online resources, or herp events you find from around the state
- Suggestions for herp trivia, both easy and difficult

NOTICE: Submissions for *Catesbeiana* Vol. 26 No. 2 are due September 1, 2006!

Please support the VHS by submitting any papers, field notes, or artwork for *Catesbeiana* to: Dr. Steven M. Roble, Editor, *Catesbeiana*, Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, 217 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219, Steve.Roble@dcr.virginia.gov.

Answers from page 3

Herp Trivia Answers

1. Q: Name the turtle with the engraved shell.
A: Wood turtle - *insculpta* is derived from the Latin word *insculptus* which means "engraved".
2. Q: Name the unexpected lizard.
A: Southeastern five-lined skink - *inexpectatus* is derived the Latin prefix *in* meaning "not" and the Latin word *expectare* meaning "expectation". This refers to the unexpected discovery of this skink in the well-known lizard fauna of North America.
3. Q: Name the charming snake.
A: Eastern worm snake - *amoenus* is Latin for "pleasing" or "charming" referring to the disposition of the snake.
4. Q: Name the worn out snake.
A: Blackrat snake - *obsoleta* is derived from the Latin word *obsoletus* which means "worn out" referring to the loss of the juvenile pattern as the snake ages.
5. Q: Name the snake best at counting.
A: Mud snake - *abacura* is derived from the Latin word *abacus* which means "counting board".
6. Q: Name the springtime snake.
A: Smooth green snake - *vernalis* is Latin for "of springtime".
7. Q: Name the stiff snake.
A: Glossy Crayfish Snake - *rigida* is derived from the Latin word *rigidus* which means "stiff", this refers to the way the the snake moves.
8. Q: Name the turtle that's part snake.
A: Snapping turtle - *serpentina* is derived from the Latin word *serpentinus* meaning "snake". Referring to the long tail of the turtle.
9. Q: Name the loneliest turtle.
A: Eastern spiny softshell turtle - *Apalone* is derived from the Greek *apo* which means "separate" and the Anglo-Saxon *alone* meaning "solitary" referring to the original isolated Hudson River population.

*Send your suggestions for Herp Trivia to the newsletter editor, Kory Steele,
colchicine@hotmail.com.*

Disease is the bullet killing frogs, but climate change is pulling the trigger - Alan Pounds

Virginia Literature

Literature. These selections represent articles published or In Press, June 2005 to January 10, 2006. Included articles are focused primarily on (1) studies performed within Virginia environments, (2) studies on reptiles or amphibians found within Virginia, or (3) additional herpetological topics that are of general interest. Compiled by Joy Ware.

Reptiles

Fry BG, Vidal N, Norman JA, Vonk FJ, Scheib H, Ramjan SF, Kuruppu S, Fung K, Hedges SB, Richardson MK, Hodgson

WC, Ignjatovic V, Summerhayes R, Kochva E. 2006 Early evolution of the venom system in lizards and snakes. *Nature*. 2;439(7076):584-8.

Apesteguia S, Zaher H. 2006 A Cretaceous terrestrial snake with robust hindlimbs and a sacrum. *Nature* 440 (7087): 1037-1040.

Schroter M, Speicher A, Hofmann J, et al. 2006 Analysis of the transmission of *Salmonella* spp. through generations of pet snakes *Environmental Microbiology* 8 (3): 556-559

Winne, Christopher T., John D. Willson, Kimberly M. Andrews and Robert N. Reed. 2006. Efficacy of marking snakes with

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Snakes

OF THE SOUTHEAST

BY WHIT GIBBONS AND MIKE DORCAS

Snakes of the Southeast will be available at the Fall Meeting at a discounted price straight from the publisher.

Virginia Native

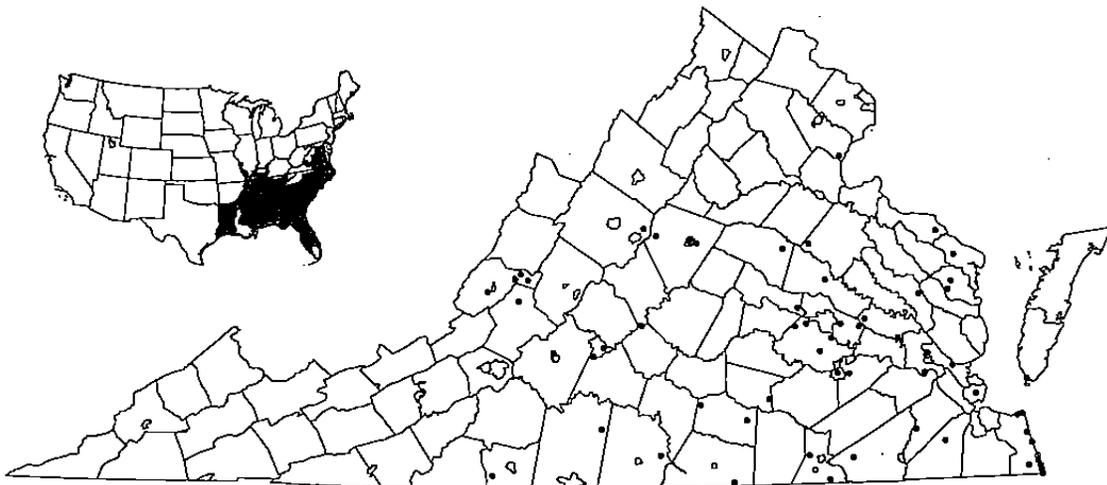
For this issue's **Virginia Native**, the information below can be found on the website of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) as what is known as a 'short species booklet'. To view the 'short species booklets', go to VDGIF's home web page at www.dgif.virginia.gov, then click on 'Wildlife', and then click on 'Virginia Wildlife'. When you scroll down this page you should see links to Amphibians: Species Information and Reptiles: Species Information.

Characteristics: This medium-sized lizard is not shiny and has a pointed nose. It grows to a maximum snout-vent length of 3 in. (75 mm) and a total length of 9.5 in. (241 mm). The back has six narrow, white to yellow, stripes on a dark brown background, and a tan stripe from head to the base of the tail. The tail is long and slim, bluish in the young but brownish to gray in adults. Hatching is from late June to September. The older females lay two clutches per season. Racerunners can run very fast, and will do so to escape predators. They do not drop their tails like skinks and glass lizards do, but rather, use their tails to help balance themselves when running.

Distribution: This species occurs throughout the coastal plain and piedmont. Individual populations also occur along the James River drainage in the ridge and valley region and in the Shenandoah Valley. This species is associated with hot, dry, open areas in fields, woods, and coastal dunes, as well as in farmland and urban areas.

Foods: This lizard eats many different invertebrate prey. The racerunner forages under vegetation for termites and other invertebrates.

Eastern Six-Lined Racerunner
(*Aspidoscelis sexlineata sexlineata*)



Cnemidophorus sexlineatus sexlineatus (Linnaeus) – Eastern Six-lined Racerunner

The distribution of six-lined racerunners is apparently spotty but widespread east of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. Ridge and Valley locations may have been colonized via the Roanoke-James River corridor. Dispersal of individuals along railroad tracks may have allowed establishment of the Augusta County population (Mitchell, 1994a). Populations may also occur in far southwestern Virginia along the Clinch River (C.A. Pague, pers. comm.).

NOTICE to Members: If you have an email address, please send it to Paul Sattler, at pwsattler@liberty.edu. Then, for future issues of the newsletter, you will be notified via email upon its release on the website along with a provided link to it. Thank you for helping to save some trees, or should we say herp habitat!

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