

VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ENTERS ITS SECCND YEAR:

This Bulletin marks the first birthday of VHS. We enter an active 2d year. The long and useful existence planned for this Society will unfold in this and future bulletins. For our new members and friends let us retrace, briefly, the origins and purposes of the Society. In late 1957, after several years of conscious preparation, six individuals -- W.Leslie Burger, Faculty member, College of William & Mary; O.K.Goodwin senior Explorer Adviser, Newport News; Roger H. Rageot, curator, Norfolk Museum; Franklin Tobey, Jr., an information officer (now U.S. AEC)McLean Fairfax County; William L. Witt, Arlington County student (now USAF)and Dr. John Thornton Wood of Burkeville, Nottoway County -- launched the Society. The move aided by Dr. Phoebe H. Knipling of Arlington County Schools who provided exhibit space at the Northern Virginia Science Fair and Dr. J.J.Shomon, editor of VIRGINIA WILDLIFE magazine who introduced VHS to his readers across the state and in neighboring states.

A hard core of 28 members carried the VHS through its first few months. Fifty members and friends of VHS attended the first statewide meeting of Virginian herpetologists at Camp Shawondasee, near Richmond, through the courtesy of Rcbert ELee Council, BSA, where the first slate of VHS officers was elected. The state officers of VHS for 1959 are:

- President John Thornton Wood, M.D. of Burkeville, Va.
- President-elect W. Leslie Burger of Williamsburg, Va.
- Chairman O. K. Goodwin of Newport News & Warwick, Va.
- Co-Chairman Harry G.M.Jopson, PhD, Bridgewater College
- Treasurer Phoebe H. Knipling, PhD, Arlington Co.Schools
- Secretary Franklin Tobey, Jr. McLean, Fairfax County

VHS starts this 1959 season with about ninety members and more than 60 friends and prospective members. Our objectives, restated from the 1st Bulletin are: (1) Scientific study of the state's herpetofauna; (2) The qualitative improvement of recording of collecting data; (3) County surveys and exchange of verified information; (4) Broader public understanding in the interest of conservation; (5) Accurate news reporting; and, (6) Deposition of needed specimens in permanent scientific collections for study and educational use.

This year we wish to reach more high school and college biology students and their instructors. Also, to encourage more members to speak before public groups -- civic, social. luncheon and garden clubs, or write.

NEW REPTILES AT NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK (NZP): by Mario (Jack)DePrato
----- Senior Keeper, Reptiles
Two new shipments of reptiles were received at the NZP during January. Both shipments were of African species, Rhinoceros vipers, Prehensile or Tree vipers, Soft Shell tortoise, Chameleons, Vine snakes, Boomslangs and Cobras. The Rhinoceros vipers (Bitis nasicornus) are the first NZP has had for some time. These are darker than the earlier specimens exhibited. The Tree vipers (Atheris nitscheii) truly arboreal snakes, are possibly the first ever exhibited at NZP. The Soft Shell tortoise is indeed well named. Its shell is as pliable as a piece of soft leather. The Chameleons (Chamaeleo dilepis) make an unusual exhibit and are in the same cage with NZP's earlier specimens. The Twig or Vine snakes are (Thelotornis kirtlandi) not common in collections. Resembling a twig or vine hanging from a branch - they feed on passing lizards. The Boomslangs (Dispholidus typus) also make a good exhibit. They are quite large, rear-fanged, dangerous snakes. Their common name is from the Hollander meaning "tree-snake". The Cobras are Egyptian (Naja haie)and boost the NZP cobra collection to twelve. MDeP. (Visit the Nat'l Zoo/ft)

MEMBERSHIP IN THE VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY IS WELCOMED BY:

- (name)
- (address)
- (title, or occupation)
- (county)

Faculty, Staff, Student; Press-radio membership: dues \$1.00 per year. All other employed persons - annual dues \$2.00. Prefer you send check or postal money order to prevent loss to unauthorized handler of mails. Make check or note payable to: Phoebe H. Knipling, Treasurer; write on check or note "for VHS dues-1959" -Membership card will be sent with next bulletin. Mail this stub (detach along dotted line)with your note or check to Dr. P.H.Knipling, 2623 Military Rd. Arlington, Va. Members' renewals are due one year after first payment of dues. Reminders will accompany your anniversary bulletin. Charter member renewals due now.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY: (written for early March)

Fellow Herpetologists: Winter is over. The reptiles and amphibians are about through with hibernating -- and we should be too. Spring is by far the most exciting season for field work with the 'herptiles'. The cricket and chorus frog males have been calling the females in to the drainage ditches and temporary ponds since early February. The male spotted salamanders have deposited their sperm capsules on dead leaves on the pond bottoms -- and by night the females are wandering over the bottoms of these temporary ponds in search of them. The female four-toed salamanders have taken their annual swim in the cold swamps in search of mosses in which they can deposit their eggs. The two-lined salamanders are nesting -- their egg groups are attached to submerged objects in shallow running water and the females are "standing by, guarding their eggs." Activity of the snakes, lizards and turtles will become common by April. We need to learn the natural history of each species as it adapts itself to our area of study. We must observe more often than collect. Patient watching will tell far more than a shriveled specimen in a bottle can. True, preserved specimens are needed to plot the distribution of each species in the state of Virginia -- and this is basic information we badly need from over most of the state on most species. But, we know almost nothing of natural enemies of each species, and how each protects himself. Do these "tigers of the world of small creatures" stalk their prey by night? When do they seek mates? How do they recognize mates? What are the patterns of courtship? When are eggs laid in each part of the state -- for any species? How many eggs are laid? Does the female "guard" the eggs? How does she do this, and against what? Do these creatures feed during the egg-watching period? What is the population of any one of our many species in any area of our state? These are just a few of the questions to which we have no answers or only incomplete ones. We need the answers. We won't find them in books -- for the most part, they remain to be discovered. You can join in the search for answers by observing and RECORDING what you see. A field worker carries cloth bags, jars, net and collecting hook. By all means, do not forget the most important items, NOTEBOOK AND PENCIL. Don't trust your memory for an hour. Write down what you see when you see it. First the date; then, county and state; then, specific locality so that another field worker could find the place you made your observation. Then write the kind of place you are observing; e.g., gum swamp, drainage ditch, pine woods, sawdust pile, etc. Then write the common name of the species you are observing and describe as well as you can what you see. Your original notebook is worth ten copies of your notes -- keep it carefully. We will all gain more if you make observations carefully, completely, and record just what you see. The answers to many mysteries will come from the accumulated notes of many observers. If you undertake some problem and want to know what is known about it in this state, please write me and if I can't tell you, I'll send your letter to one who can. Good collecting -- and great observing to you all!

John Thornton Wood, M.D.
Burkeville, Virginia

Bulletin No. 10 will carry an item on "How to Label and Preserve Specimens."

"Finest piece of observation on a Virginia herptile in 1958 was the brilliant 'Courtship and Spermatophore of *Plethodon jordani metcalfi*'" COPEIA, No. 4, pp. 251-8, by James A. Organ (University of Michigan) from studies on Whitetop Mountain, Smyth County, Va., during summer 1957.

Members are invited to contribute brief observations, notes, to VHS-B.

VHS has been saluted by the Philadelphia Herpetological Society Bulletin in a round-up of Herpetological Societies around the world - PHSB Jan.-Feb., 1959, and a free "ad" in Mar.-Apr., 1959 PHSB. The Phila. Herp. Soc. Bulletin is published every other month. It is recommended by VHS for those interested in out-of-state and "exotic" (foreign) herptiles. PHSB subscription (and student membership) \$1.50 per yr. Adult membership at \$2.00 per yr. Write: Barry Rothman, Chairman, PHS, 7036 Rising Sun Ave. Phila. 11, Pa. Husband-and-wife team Barry and Norma Rothman would like to have (if only on loan) specimens of Rough Earth Snake (*Haldea striatula*) from Virginia for comparison with out-of-state examples. They will return live or preserved specimens, but such must be sent with complete and correct data. If museum or depository specimens are known send citation of record and adequate data. This species is known to occur in the Richmond (Henrico and Chesterfield counties) area -- a challenge to our Richmond area members -- let's keep eyes open!

THE VHS LOG-ROLLERS' ROUND-UP: Names of members and friends heard from since the Fall sound so much like this season's roster that we've decided to wait and publish the list then. PLEASE send your correct address or spelling of names, if not carried correctly heretofore. FT Thanks to all those kind souls who sent their congratulations on the carrying-off of the statewide meeting in October. * * * * This Spring the SCIENCE FAIRS are with us again: Several of the high school student members qualified for prizes. Not all the returns are in yet, but Butch Abel, Arlington, had a winning exhibit on the Snakes of Virginia. Butch distributed VHS Bulletins to interested students, parents and teachers. Alan Creutz and Joe Hickman, both of McLean, took prizes for Botany and Lepidoptera exhibits, respectively. Joe's won the plaudits of the D.C. Society of Entomology. Alan's won first place in the Jr. High School Group earlier at McLean High. Mike Grindstaff, a biology student asked your secretary for a project - he surveyed veterinary reports of Copperhead bite in dogs and plotted the results on a topographic map of the northern half of Fairfax county. He won an Honorable Mention at the McLean High Science Fair. * * * * John Millsback and Bill Xanten, Jr. trekked to Florida over the Spring vacation leaving March 31 from the Roslyn area of Arlington County. * * * * Butch Abel visited Augusta, Ga. and brought home a Corn Snake (Elaphe g. guttata) Said the trip was a "flop" but I think he's being modest. He has two Water Moccasins for trade. * * * F.T. has been busy in northern Va. showing his colored 2" X 2" slides of Virginia's Snakes to Scout, Cub, Civic Association, Service organizations (Falls Church Rotarians) as this letter goes to press. The TOBEY FAMILY, with the fall job shift to the Information (Press) Division of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission at Germantown, Md., has, so far, resisted moving to the left bank of the Potomac. Commuting is 30 miles one way - hence the delay in getting this bulletin to bed. (ed. It was promised for March 1, 1959!) * * * * Bill Witt, U.S. Air Force, formerly of Otis AFB, Massachusetts is en route to Okinawa in the Pacific. He stopped long enough in Va. to give your editor a much-needed course (low-level) in salamanders in the Shenandoah National Park bogs. Burger started this course at College of William & Mary for Tobey on a quick visit in early November, I think Les Burger despaired of ever getting his lectures "over" -- FT was too intent on the two specimens of extra-large Rainbow Snakes (2): (Abastor erythrogrammus) housed in the William & Mary greenhouse. * * * SEND IN YOUR LOCAL GOSSIP FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF LOG-ROLLERS ROUND-UP!

MANY NEW MEMBERS SINCE WE PUBLISHED VHS-B # 8 in late October, 1958. If your name has been passed by, or you received no membership card, please let the Secretary know: VHS, Rt # 2, Box 241, McLean, Va. FT

- * DePrato, M. (Jack) (Sf) Senior Keeper, Reptile House, N.Z.P., Wash., D.C.
- * Abel, Arthur (Butch) (Stu.) 1902 No. Quincy St. Arlington, Va.
- * Dillon, Allan G. (Stu) 906 No. Liberty Street, Arlington 5, Va.
- * Giltz, Dr. Maurice L. (F) Ohio State University, Columbus 10, Ohio.
- * Hauser, John J. (G) 1327 W. Toronto St. Philadelphia 32, Pennsylvania
- * Stewart, Miss Bobbie (F) Biol Dep't, Intermont College, Bristol, Va.
- * Taylor, George E. (F) Biol. Dep't, Wakefield High Sch. Arlington, Va.
- * Schmeltz, Lee D. (Sf) Reptile House, N.Z.P., Washington 9, DC. (see p.1.)
- * Walker, Wallace Haynes (G) President, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club 5315 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington 16, D.C.

WANTED: INFORMATION ON WHEREABOUTS OF FOLLOWING NAMED LOCALITIES FOR EXISTING SPECIMEN RECORDS: (AVAIL YOURSELF OF THIS SPACE, TOO)

Where "South Quay, Blackwater river," Va.? N.C.? from which a U.S. is ? Nat'l Museum specimen of Amphiuma m. means is recorded.

"Magnolia Swamp, Augusta County, Va." from which a Museum of Comparative Zoology (Harvard Univ.) specimen of Clemmys guttata is recorded. Also, "Aria, Floyd County, Va." from which a Hellbender (Cryptobranchus alleghaniensis) is recorded.?WRITE US!

MEMBERS! FRIENDS! WHY NOT PLAN TO contribute brief notes to the VHS Bulletins. Write popular, magazine style articles for VIRGINIA WILD-LIFE magazine (Va. Commission on Game & Inland Fisheries, Richmond.) or scientific papers for Va. Journal of Science, HERPETOLOGICA, COPEIA! WHY NOT PLAN to talk to the local high school science club on your specialty? Interest the local biology instructors, students, in VHS. Make use of outdoor recreation programs, nature courses, local zoos & museums. STUDENT MEMBERS PLAN to take advantage of nature courses, register for junior naturalist training courses wherever available. Prepare yourself for that summer camp job as assistant to camp nature director. FACULTY MEMBERS, MUSEUM STAFF, LABORATORY OR ZOO STAFF -- let VHS know of openings available for summer work - we can reach a wide audience of interested, enthusiastic, potential-scientist helpers. MAKE USE OF OUR CLASSIFIED SECTION!