

editorialVHS BUILDING AND MAINTAINING
A DESIRABLE "PUBLIC IMAGE"

Reputations, particularly good ones, are made by the exercise of care and responsibility. -- They are damaged through carelessness and irresponsibility.

The public image the Society's officers have carefully nurtured is a special one. In the building of this good image the VHS officers have had the support of the members, and a lot of luck.

In its conduct of a statewide study of Virginian reptiles and amphibians, VHS has emphasized the scientific, educational, conservation, and safety aspects.

The Society has called for care and responsibility in connection with collecting and studying the lower vertebrates and care in exhibiting and handling those that are venomous.

It is not by accident that VHS maintains a balance between student and adult memberships. Our adult members provide a steady, encouraging influence which offsets the occasional bursts of over-enthusiasm, or so we hope.

Members should strive to bring their knowledge of their areas of interest -- herpetology and other related or complementary sciences or arts -- into line with their own innate intellectual capacity.

VHS reaches a 'public'. Though it may be a limited audience, it's a segment of the public no less. Let's all work to keep a good VHS 'image' before the public.

Fortunately, members have avoided a long list of (often preventable) events which would reflect on their own good judgment and, at the same time, damage the public image of VHS. Among these are: careless and indiscriminate handling of snakes; escape of large or potentially dangerous snakes in urban or suburban neighborhoods, buses, etc.; or the releasing of numbers of specimens in residential areas where the snakes can't find a natural habitat; inhumane treatment of captive animals; lack of proper respect for human life and safety as reflected by improper handling of venomous snakes; violation of state, county, municipal or community ordinances through housing poisonous species without a scientific justification, thereby risking an increase in the number of snakebite accidents.

Let's keep the incidence of poisonous snake bite as low as possible. Your assistance is requested in lowering the incidence of snakebite in Virginia and in the neighboring states to the south and west. (See VHS BULLETIN No. 49.)

VHS OBJECTIVES:

- (1) Study of Virginia's reptiles and amphibians;
- (2) Improvement and verification of collecting records, data;
- (3) County surveys and exchange of verified information;
- (4) Broader public understanding;
- (5) Depositing of needed specimens in scientific collections, and
- (6) Increased accuracy in reports on reptiles and amphibians in the newspapers and magazines.

REVIEWS:A FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS, Robert C. Stebbins

This is No.16 in the Roger Tory Peterson Field Guide Series sponsored by the National Audubon Soc. and National Wildlife Federation. Ever since the appearance, in 1958 of Roger Conant's Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians (of Eastern U.S.) users and collectors of the Peterson Field Guides have looked expectantly toward the publication of this companion volume, No.16 in the long-established and increasingly popular series. "A FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS" answers a great need for a concise, illustrated guide directed to field identification in western North America. Robert Stebbins has brought all of his talents as an eminent herpetologist and as an artist to this excellent and up-to-date book. Although the west does not have as many salamanders and turtles as the East, its diversified terrain, encompassing mountains and deserts, supports a wealth of lizards and snakes. More than 200 species of salamanders, frogs, toads, turtles, lizards and snakes are described.

There are 39 plates, 290 drawings, and 129 maps. Almost all of the plates are illustrated from life; of these, 24 are in color. \$4.95

Robert Stebbins is Professor of Zoology, and Curator in Herpetology at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, Berkeley, Calif. Eminent in his field, he has won national and international recognition and has traveled widely in the interest of herpetology and of improving science teaching in schools.

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From "Natural Science Notes" in the December 30, 1967 SCIENCE NEWS:

MALE LIZARDS UNNEEDED

Fathers are not needed in a strange group of whiptail lizards that seem to reproduce without males, according to scientists at Texas A&M.

While several lower forms of life, such as algae and aphids, may reproduce offspring from only one parent, these lizards (Cnemidophorus tesselatus) are the highest form yet discovered. Only an occasional male is found among the whiptail colonies. Reproductive cells of the female lizards apparently do not undergo the process (meiosis) that halves the number of chromosomes. The parthenogenic females simply contribute the full number of chromosome -- 46, the same as human beings -- to the offspring. SCIENCE NEWS

SNAKE VENOM: "Medical Science"

The identity of a snake can be told from venom at the site of the bite. Two Melbourne, Australia, scientists have isolated serum taken from the region of simulated and actual snakebites to animals, and it has reacted specifically with a series of antivenenes. Antivenenes are made up of blood sera from animals that have been immunized against venom.

The most efficient treatment of a snakebite is an adequate dose of the antivenene to the specific snake's venom, but in many cases, the identity of the snake is not known. The discovery, made by Dr. E.R. Trethewie of the University of Melbourne, and P.A. Rawlinson of Latrobe University at Melbourne, was reported in the Medical Journal of Australia.

COMMUNICATIONS TO VHS:

The CATALOGUE OF AMERICAN AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES is a series of loose-leaf accounts, each prepared by an expert in the field. The 8½" X 11" pages are punched for standard ring binders. Each 1- to 4-page account gives a wealth of information about the animal, including common and scientific names (with synonymy), a definition, a description, fossil record, a map showing its range, and a comprehensive introduction to the past literature. The loose-leaf form allows individual additions and up-dating, as well as giving the user the opportunity of placing the accounts in serial, alphabetic or geographic arrangements.

The ASIH* Herpetological Catalogue Committee has published, to date, 55 individual accounts of North American amphibians and reptiles. Forty-eight of these are on salamanders, four on the frogs, two on amphisbaenians, and one on snakes. Other accounts are in various stages of preparation. It is expected that 40 or 50 more accounts may be published in 1968. We encourage those who are interested to subscribe now with \$10 for the first one-hundred accounts. Subscriptions and requests for information are to be addressed to:

H. G. Dowling, Chmn.
ASIH Herpetological
Catalogue Committee
Amer. Museum of
Natural History
New York, N.Y. 10024

* ASIH - American Society of
Ichthyologists and Herpetologists

Individual accounts are available for ten cents each and may be ordered directly from Dr. W. J. Riemer, 8313 Loring Drive, Bethesda, Md. 20034 (minimum order \$1). Regular subscriptions and requests for information should be sent to AMNH, attention: Dr. H. G. Dowling.

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Leaflet picked up at National Zoo:

Dear Friend of the National Zoo:

We hope that you will join us in our program to enhance the educational benefits of the

National Zoological Park.

Since 1958, when the Friends were organized as a non-profit corporation to provide this educational assistance, we have worked on such projects as our report to the Smithsonian Institution

"The Crisis at the National Zoo," (1960), our proposed solution, "A Master Plan for the National Zoo" (1961), and in 1964 the regular publication of SPOTS AND STRIPES, a quarterly newsletter to keep our members informed of Zoo activity.

Our most recent effort is an outline of our major purpose -- the educational program which covers: plans for guided tours, information booths, free pamphlets, and television programs. To achieve the high goals we have set for ourselves, we need time, talent, and energy. Needless to say, we would not only be grateful for your interest but would welcome your assistance. Write for application:

Friends of the National Zoo
1725 N Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

LETTERS TO VHS

Last November 30, two weeks before this writing, a rare Annulated Tree Boa (Corallus annulatus), which I have in my possession, gave birth to eleven live young. I was fortunate in being able to watch this process which took about forty-seven minutes. The newborn boas ranged in size from seventeen to nineteen inches. The normal adult coloration for this species is a grayish-brown or brown with darker saddles covering the over-all length of the reptile. I noted that one specimen from the litter had a ground color of light orange, but this grew darker within the next few days. All the young Annulated Tree Boas are feeding very well on insect larvae and newborn mice. The female that gave birth is 5'8" long and feeding on mice and small rats. This species of tree boa normally inhabits forest areas of northern South America. It feeds on birds, lizards, and small rodents.

From what I have been able to find out, this is the first time an Annulated Tree Boa (Corallus annulatus) has ever borne live young in captivity. . . .

(Comments welcome:)

(Dec. 14, L. A. (Trooper) Walsh
1967..) 5109 Marlyn Drive NW
Washington, D.C.
20016

VHS Members in Maryland are encouraged to join the Maryland Herpetological Society which holds meetings on the third Saturday of each month at 9:45 A.M. at the Natural History Society of Md. 2643 No. Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

THE TUATARA, LIZARDS, AND FROGS OF NEW ZEALAND is a new kind of nature book. It is designed for readers of all ages. The combined text and superb photographs serve as an excellent introduction to the colorful reptiles and amphibians of New Zealand.

The strangest member of this group is an animal found nowhere else on earth -- the Tuatara. The Tuatara looks like a lizard, but it isn't one. It is a survivor from the age of giant reptiles and it has remained practically unchanged for 135 million years. It is the sole survivor of the fourth order of Class Reptilia, the Rhynchocephalia, the "beak-heads."

The author, Richard Sharell, has studied and photographed the tuatara and New Zealand's lizards and frogs for many years. It is an authoritative and very richly illustrated handbook, and a striking testimonial to his conviction that nature study cannot --- or should not -- be divorced from an appreciation for nature's beauty.

The Director of the Auckland Institute and Museum, E.G. Turbott, notes: "This book is a splendid contribution to popular natural history in New Zealand. Mr. R. Sharell's writing is gripping for the layman and at the same time includes considerable scientific detail." -- The TUATARA, LIZARDS AND FROGS OF NEW ZEALAND, 1967, Richard Sharell, Collins Publishing Company, Ltd. Auckland, N.Z. Order through your local bookshop.

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