



New Mexico Herpetological Society

September - December 2009 Newsletter

Volume 42 (3)

Annual CHRISTMAS BANQUET

Saturday 5 December 2009

Dinner 7:30 – 10:00 p.m. at Nick's Crossroads Cafe, 400 Central Ave. S.W. (on the southwest corner of 4th and Central). Our meal will feature a buffet with a number of different entrees (including bread, soup, pasole, a couple types of pizza, baked chicken, etc.). Beer, wine, or liquor will be extra. We will eat in a private room on the east side of the restaurant, next to 4th street. The buffet table will be in the next room.

Speakers – NMHS members Charlie Painter and Lori King will present a program about their work with King Cobras in India in 2009: "Agumbe Rain Forest Research Station Revisited: King Cobras -- Part Deux" (a follow-on trip to last year's presentation).



Nick's Crossroads Cafe

Cocktail Hour at 6:00 p.m. at the American International Rattlesnake Museum in Old Town.

***Cost is \$20 per person payable that night to Garth Graves.**

We will have a Silent Auction with lots herp related material.

Bring your ballot for the election of 2010 NMHS officers.

Meeting & Activity Notes

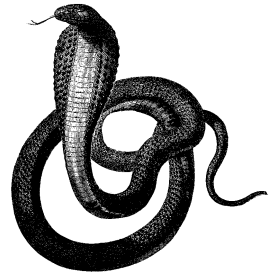


The Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge is 21 and 22 November 2009. Once again the New Mexico Herp Society will set up a display of live reptiles and even a few amphibians in a room in the main visitor's center. Times are generally 10:00am until 4:00pm, but plan on being there about 9:30am in order to set up. Electrical hook ups are available, but bring an extension cord or two. We will have small rubber herps to give away to kids as well as a kid's tattoo table. This is always a fun couple of days, so even if you are not joining us to exhibit a herp, come on down to enjoy the arts and crafts and meet lots of friendly folks.



5 December - NMHS Annual Christmas Banquet and Meeting. This is our last meeting of the year and aside from great company, delicious food, superb speakers, we will also elect the officers for the year 2010. We will meet at 6:00 pm at the American International Rattlesnake Museum for drinks and chips. This is once again hosted by Bob Myers and is your chance to check out his new herp-related books, figurines, wall hangings, etc. The perfect herper Christmas gift is in the museum store somewhere. The dinner and meeting will be from 7:30 to 10:00 pm at Nick's Crossroads Café on the corner of Central Ave. and 4th St. There is plenty of parking available.

Our speakers this year will be **Charles Painter & Lori King**. Both are NMHS members who spent an exciting few weeks earlier this spring chasing king cobras in India's Gombe Forest Preserve. We saw and heard episode one last year. Those of us who attended last year would not dream of missing episode two. This king cobra program has been featured on a National Geographic Special.



If you have a ballot insert in this issue it should be filled out and either mailed in or brought to the banquet.

FROG KILLER SECRET REVEALED

As reported in the journal *Science* and by the BBC News (Richard Black, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/8319467.stm>), scientists have finally discovered some answers as to how the fungal disease *chytridiomycosis* is causing the amphibian pandemic that has spread through amphibian populations worldwide and caused alarming die-off rates, including extinctions of some species. Researchers found that the fungus kills its host "by changing the animals' electrolyte balance, resulting in cardiac arrest."

The Australian research group worked with green tree frogs and found that levels of sodium and potassium were greatly reduced in diseased specimens. This type of imbalance can cause cardiac arrest in humans, and it seems it affects the frogs in a similar fashion. The exact mechanism behind this process is as yet unknown, but knowing what the fungus does, even if not exactly how, will go a long way toward hopefully finding some cure or preventative measure. This is no easy task. Captive specimens are quite easily cured using anti-fungal drugs, but this is obviously not practicable for wild populations worldwide. Some researchers are exploring various bacteria that live on the skin of amphibians, hoping to develop some anti-fungal activity. The Australian researchers will now expand their program to look at other amphibian species and determine if the same things are happening.



A SECOND BRIEF HERPETOLOGICAL SURVEY IN THE OJITO WILDERNESS, SANDOVAL CO., NM

5 SEPTEMBER 2009

Ted L. Brown
New Mexico Herpetological Society

Encouraged by their success on the 30 August 2008 survey in the Ojito Wilderness northwest of Bernalillo, eleven members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society returned to the area on 5 September 2009 for another one-day search for amphibians and reptiles. Bill & Regina Gorum had explored the Ojito quite a bit on earlier excursions and Bill showed us some of his photos of the wilderness at our 3 September NMHS meeting to whet our appetites for outdoor fun.

Participating in this year's survey were Ted and Sue Brown, Scott, Rebecca and Logan Bulgrin, Dave and Jean Burt, Tom and Donnie Eichhorst, Jaci Fischer and Fred Yost.

Before arriving at the meeting site at the junction of Cabezon Rd. and US 550, just south of San Ysidro, the Browns saw a large (4+ ft.) western diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*) crawling off US 550 1.5 miles SE of the road to Zia Pueblo. They easily decided to let it continue on its way. Scott & Rebecca reported seeing a large bullsnake (*Pituophis catenifer*) also on that highway, and it was likewise not collected.

The Herpers Eleven stopped first at a large pond about 8 miles west of the highway. Roaming around on the large sandstone rock face that sloped away northward from the pond, the herpers saw 2 adult plateau lizards (*Sceloporus tristichus*), a tree lizard (*Urosaurus ornatus*) and hatchlings of 4 species of whiptails: 2 Chihuahuan spotted (*Aspidoscelis exsanguis*), 5 New Mexico (*A. neomexicana*), 1 checkered (*A. tessellata*) and 2 plateau striped (*A. velox*). All of these were too fast for the Not-Ready-for-Morning-Herping gang and avoided capture. Two young side-blotched lizards (*Uta stansburiana*) escaped in



Above: one of the many hoodoos to be found in the Ojito Wilderness.

Below: Logan Bulgrin prepares to document the field trip.





Above: The juvenile collared lizard we caught and then set free after he or she posed for a few photographs.

Below: A New Mexican whiptail safely surrounded by cholla.



Looking to the west past Bernalillito Mesa, at the foot of which are the hoodoos we explored last year, we saw and heard huge thunderstorms rapidly building, so we decided to drive a few more miles northwest to the pipeline section of Cabezon Rd. and look around an old coral at the northwest end of Bernalillito Mesa. The sky clouded over, but it was still warm, so we set out to see what we could find. Scott, Logan and Ted lifted a large rock and disturbed a large piñon mouse (*Peromyscus truei*), which ran into a clump of prickly pear cactus, but posed for a quick photo or two before scampering under

weeds along Cabezon Rd. Scott Bulgrin caught a large (30") black-necked garter snake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*) on the south edge of the pond as he was returning to the group who were gathered and ready to leave the site.

The herpers next drove a few more miles to the northwest and parked at last year's parking site across from a pedestrian entrance to a long ridge leading to the north. Taking a trail leading to a site where paleontologists in the 1990's unearthed a large dinosaur, the *Seismosaurus*, the herpers spilt up into smaller groups and explored the area. The east side of the ridge was steep and rocky with splendid views of the dissected landscape. Several unusual rock formations were seen, including some that resembled lattice-work squares, a few that looked like petrified logs, and one that could have been mistaken for a petrified tree stump. Sue Brown rested under a juniper and observed 2 hatchling New Mexico whiptails approach her as they searched for small insects. Dave and Jean Burt reported seeing a hatchling plateau striped whiptail and an adult plateau lizard on their hike on the ridge looking for the dig site. The other herpers recorded 6 hatchling collared lizards (*Crotaphytus collaris*) from the ridge, including one that Tom Eichhorst caught and held in a plastic container for us to examine and photograph. We released this little one after lunch.



another rock. A few lightning flashes in the distance told us the storms were getting productive and that we'd best get moving or get wet.

At this point, with storms threatening in the area, the Burts, Eichhorsts, Jaci and Fred took off to return to Albuquerque. Scott and Ted wandered over to an old abandoned cinder block ranch house to poke around but saw only one quick and unidentified lizard before it dashed into a large rodent burrow. After returning to their trucks for snacks, the Bulgrins and Browns headed back along Cabezón Rd. to the highway.

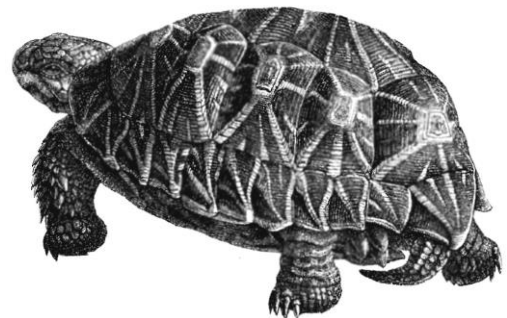
Following Rebecca's truck as they passed the large pond and headed downhill around a bend, Sue asked, somewhat concerned, "What's that white stuff in the road up there?" The "white stuff" was a

lot of water rushing over the dirt road. The storms we'd seen from afar had dropped a considerable amount of rain on the road southeast of the Ojito. Dave and Jean were forced to wait nearly an hour for the deep water to subside and allow them to drive through in their new Subaru. By the time the stragglers reached the crossing, water was only a foot or so deep and Rebecca drove through it like she was cruising in a Tiger Tank. The Browns tested their Ford van at the spot and had no problem getting through (and Sue wonders why we never wash the van before a trip), but it was just the first of several smaller flooded crossings to accomplish. A few more light to heavy rain showers made the rip home to Santa Fe for Sue & Ted interesting. All herpers managed to arrive home safely.

Perhaps the next trip to the Ojito Wilderness will prove more productive, at least in terms of numbers of individuals and species of herps encountered. Why not join us on the next trip?

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Yes, it is that time of year again. You can pay your 2010 dues at the Christmas banquet directly to Garth Graves, or send them in the mail. Dues are \$10 for adult or family membership and \$5 for junior membership (up to 13 years of age).



This newsletter is published for the edification and enjoyment of the members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society. Any opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not express or represent official NMHS policy. Questions, suggestions, and articles for publication may be submitted to the editor,

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