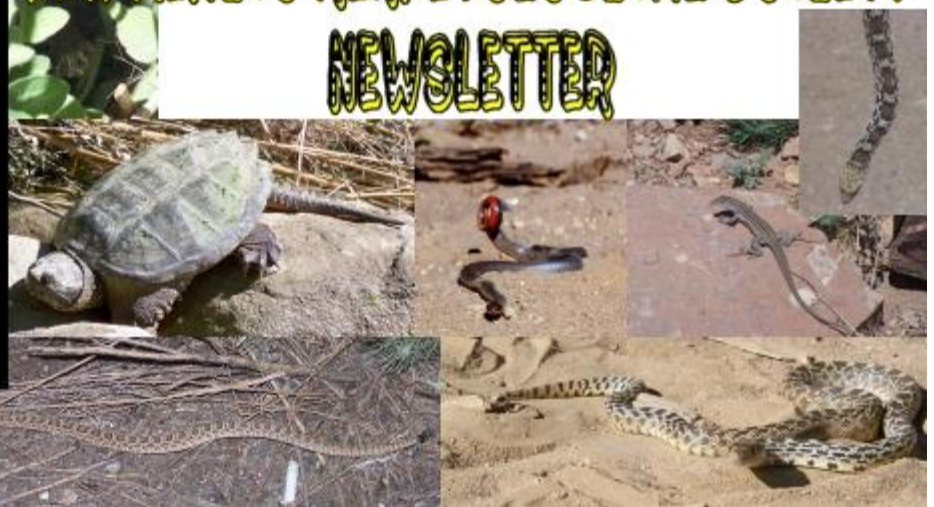


# NEW MEXICO HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



January - May 2012 Newsletter

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## SANDIA PUEBLO HERP SURVEY 2012



Members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society headed out on April 21<sup>st</sup> to set up pitfall traps for the 2012 herp survey for Sandia Pueblo. This year we only had to open the traps that were already in the ground. A lot of fun was had by all. Several lizards were spotted and captured. Afterward, several members met up at El Pinto for some good eats.

Clockwise from upper left: Jean Burt places flags to mark where the traps are, Leopard Lizard noosed by Tara Wheeler, August Breithaupt places a rock on top of a trap, Nancy Bush dug out several traps, a fully operational trap with members moving on to the next one. Photos courtesy of Zane Dohner and Josh Emms.





# HERPER SPOTLIGHT: GARTH GRAVES

## How did you get into herping?

Like most herpers I became interested in nature at an early age. I grew up in an old ranch house surrounded by desert grassland west of Roswell. This grassland supported abundant wildlife, including a wide variety of herps. I also learned a lot about herps while doing field work with Ted Brown in the statewide Vector Control Program, and later in the Sandia Pueblo surveys. It was Ted and Sue Brown who encouraged me to join NMHS.

Garth (right) would catch spadefoots in this area.



## How long have you been a member of NMHS?

Since about 2003.

## Do you keep any herps?

I have kept box turtles in my back yard in the past.

## Do you field herp?

I have enjoyed being in the field since childhood. In recent years I have learned to focus more on herps.

## What is your favorite herp to work with?

I like whiptails, especially the beautiful Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail. I remember seeing it in our yard west of Roswell years ago.

## What was your most memorable find?

My most memorable encounters have been with the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. I worked about six years on a plague research project on the 55,000-acre Red Bluff Ranch north of Roswell, testing the use of very low concentrations of systemic insecticides on baits to control fleas on wild rodents. Because of plague in Viet

Nam, this research was funded by the U.S. Army. At that time Red Bluff Ranch contained a variety of habitats, from overgrazed mesquite grassland in the interior to breaks and bluffs along the Pecos River. Low-lying areas that drain into the river supported dense stands of giant sacaton grass that can grow seven or eight feet high. Back in the wet years of the 1970s, these habitats supported high populations of rodents, including banner-tailed kangaroo rats, plains wood rats, and hispid cotton rats. Probably because of these food sources, the ranch was loaded with diamondbacks. It was a common occurrence to see one during the course of our work, especially in the sacaton grass where we did tests during the summer months on cotton rats using a grid of bait stations. I learned that these snakes would usually lie still or try to get out of the

Red Bluff Ranch



way of humans, with only a few rattling vigorously in an immediate defensive mode. It was unnerving to hear the rattle of a well-hidden snake in the thick grass, but even more so knowing that many snakes were hidden in the grass but not rattling. There was always a fear of stepping on one. We also had to be cautious when reaching down to pick up a live trap with a cotton rat in it, because a snake might be coiled in the grass next to the trap. I wore heavy boots and thick leather leggings up to the knee, and usually beat the grass in front of me with a stick to encourage the snakes to rattle or move away, but since they sometimes crawled up into the thick clumps of grass this didn't offer complete protection. I once heard unusual disjointed rattling, and when I pushed the grass back with my stick I saw two diamondbacks mating. An even more memorable experience occurred early one morning as we were checking

traps. I was following a coworker along a path we had beaten in the grass along the trap line, and he walked right by a coiled diamondback which didn't move or rattle and he didn't see. As I approached it I didn't see the snake either, until it suddenly reared up and went over a clump of grass almost waist high next to me. It was so close I could have reached out and touched it. The scales on its back seemed to crackle as it slid over the grass to the other side. It was fairly thick bodied and appeared to be close to five feet long. I was lucky this snake just wanted to move away from me that day. These big, dangerous snakes certainly made our field work more intense. They added an element of danger and wildness to the ranch that I found somehow appealing. In the end, nobody on the project ever got bitten

by a rattlesnake.

## If you could take a herping trip anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Probably the Australian outback.

## If you could keep any herp in the world, what would it be?

I like Carolyn and Sparky Newell's blue-tongued skink. I wouldn't mind having one of those.

## What other interests do you have in nature?

I have a general interest in nature, and the preservation of as much biodiversity

as possible. I have had a special interest in insects since my childhood days of roaming over the grasslands and seeing such things as tarantula hawk wasps flying around or running rapidly over the ground in search of their prey.

## Who would you like us to spotlight in the next newsletter?

I would like to learn more about Bill Gorum.

Garth sitting in front of the mobile lab at Red Bluff Ranch



Garth checking live traps at the Red Bluff Ranch.



Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake *Crotalus atrox* Photo by Ted Brown



Garth (right) hunting jack rabbits in Roswell



# HERP KEEPING LAWS IN ALBUQUERQUE



This King Cobra *Ophiophagus Hannah* at the zoo is classified as an exotic animal. Under the city's laws, you need a permit to own more than 14 exotic animals.

August Breithaupt called me one night and told me of a preview for a news story he saw about someone getting busted with venomous snakes. I watched the story and for the most part the story was pretty typical. The transcript of the story can be found here: <http://www.koat.com/Poisonous-Snakes-Seized-From-Albuquerque-Apartment/-/9154444/9706876/-/80enpsz/-/index.html> The thing that got me towards the end of the coverage was this statement : "Authorities said a person can only have up to 14 snakes without a permit." I was not aware of that. And then at the end of the story, the anchor said that if anyone knew of anyone who had more than 14 snakes to report them to the authorities. I decided I needed to do some research because that did not sound right to me. I went on to the city's website and pulled up the regulations. Here is what I found out.

## 9-2-3-9 PERMISSIBLE EXOTIC OR WILD ANIMAL COLLECTION



This Plains Gartersnake *Thamnophis radix* is not considered an exotic animal and therefore there is no limit on how many you can keep

### PERMIT OR EWACP. Section A states:

"Any Person who wishes to receive, purchase, own or keep 15 or more Permissible Exotic or Wild Animals shall first obtain an Exotic or Wild Animal Collection Permit (EWACP)." Well, that was where the 14 came from, but what is a "Permissible Exotic or Wild Animal?" I found the

- (2) Class Reptilia
  - (a) Order Squamata
    - 1. Family Varanidae (only water monitors and crocodile monitors)
    - 2. Family Iguanidae (only green iguanas and rock iguanas)
    - 3. Family Boidae (all species whose adult length has the potential to exceed eight feet in length)
    - 4. Family Colubridae (only boomslangs and African twig snakes)
    - 5. Family Elapidae (coral snakes, cobras, mambas) - All species
    - 6. Family Natricidae (only keelback snakes)
    - 7. Family Viperidae (copperheads, cottonmouths, rattlesnakes) - All species
  - (b) Order Crocodylia (crocodiles, alligators, caimans, gavials) - All species

definitions section and there is a list of animals you can't keep. See the list at right. That made more sense to me than 14 snakes in general. So you can have

as many animals not on that list that you want and not need a permit. This makes sense especially if someone is breeding garter snakes which can have more than 14 in just one clutch! There is also another clause that should be mentioned here. According to section D "No Person shall own, harbor or keep any species in violation of federal or New Mexico law." Zoos, of course, are excluded.

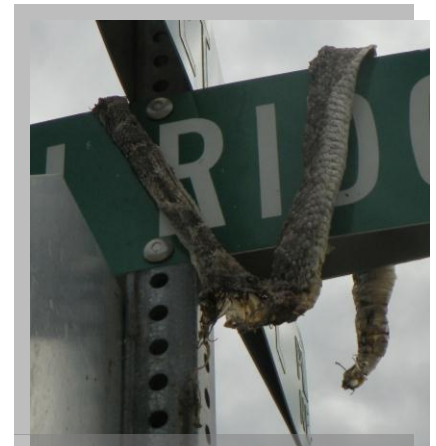
### 9-2-4-2 SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THAT CONSTITUTE CRUELTY TO AN ANIMAL.

Any Person who acts intentionally, willfully or maliciously is guilty of cruelty when engaged or attempting to engage in the following behavior:

(A) Killing or attempting to kill an Animal. Exceptions include:

- (1) Humane Euthanasia performed by a Veterinarian, a Euthanasia Qualified Employee or a Euthanasia Authorized employee of AACC or the Animal Humane Association;
- (2) Killing a bird if such bird is Poultry owned by that Person and will be used for food;
- (3) Killing a rabbit if such rabbit is owned by that Person and will be used for food;
- (4) Killing mice or rats that are not a Domestic Animal or otherwise claimed as a pet by any Person; and
- (5) Reasonably necessary taking of Animals by a governmental entity or contractor of a governmental entity for bio-disease management including, without limitation, selection of birds to determine the existence of or monitor the spread of avian flu.

Another interesting thing I found is in 9-2-4-2 SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THAT CONSTITUTE CRUELTY TO AN ANIMAL. See section at the left. It is illegal to kill snakes! Be sure to tell everyone you know that if they kill a snake it is against the law!



The killing of this Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake *Crotalus atrox* is illegal according the City of Albuquerque's animal cruelty laws



## MEMORIAL DAY FIELD TRIP – MAY 25-28



Texas Horned Lizard  
*Phrynosoma cornutum*



Western Green Toad  
*Anaxyrus debilis insidiosus*

This year's spring field trip will be to Oliver Lee State Park south of Alamogordo. We have surveyed there before and have had success. We will also present to the other visitors some of our finds. This will be a very fun trip! We will also be close to the Sacramento Mountains and can take a day trip up there to look for Sacramento Mountains Salamanders and Smooth Green Snakes among other things. White Sands is also nearby and there is a possibility of a day trip there as well. We will be camping in the group area and there

will be no charge. There are bathrooms with showers. When you arrive, let them know you are with the society and they will let you know where to go! Here is a species list that Ted Brown put together in 2004.

### A LIST OF AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES FOR OLIVER LEE STATE PARK & VICINITY, OTERO CO., NM



Northern Black-tailed Rattlesnake  
*Crotalus molossus molossus*



Long-nosed Leopard Lizard  
*Gambelia wislizenii*



Ornate Box Turtle  
*Terrapene ornata*



Texas Crevise Spiny Lizard  
*Sceloporus poinsettii axtelli*

Located along the western scarp of the Sacramento Mountains a few miles south of Alamogordo, Oliver Lee State Park combines desert flats, limestone foothills and deep canyons to provide a variety of habitats for about 56 species of amphibians and reptiles. A ☺ denotes possible additional species in the area. Names follow Charles Painter and James Stuart's *A List of Standard English and Current Scientific Names of Amphibians and Reptiles of New Mexico* (2004).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Tiger Salamander ( <i>Ambystoma tigrinum</i> )                | Texas Blind Snake ( <i>Leptotyphlops dulcis</i> ) ☺       |
| Great Plains Toad ( <i>Bufo cognatus</i> )                    | Western Blind Snake ( <i>Leptotyphlops humilis</i> ) ☺    |
| Green Toad ( <i>Bufo debilis</i> )                            | Glossy Snake ( <i>Arizona elegans</i> )                   |
| Red-spotted Toad ( <i>Bufo punctatus</i> )                    | Trans-Pecos Ratsnake ( <i>Bogertophis subocularis</i> ) ☺ |
| Woodhouse's Toad ( <i>Bufo woodhousii</i> )                   | Ring-necked Snake ( <i>Diadophis punctatus</i> ) ☺        |
| Canyon Treefrog ( <i>Hyla arenicolor</i> ) ☺                  | Chihuahua Hook-nosed Snake ( <i>Gyalopion canum</i> ) ☺   |
| Couch's Spadefoot ( <i>Scaphiopus couchii</i> )               | Western Hog-nosed Snake ( <i>Heterodon nasicus</i> ) ☺    |
| Plains Spadefoot ( <i>Spea bombifrons</i> )                   | Nightsnake ( <i>Hypsiglena torquata</i> )                 |
| New Mexico Spadefoot ( <i>Spea multiplicata</i> )             | Common Kingsnake ( <i>Lampropeltis getula</i> ) ☺         |
| Ornate Box Turtle ( <i>Terrapene ornata</i> )                 | Striped Whipsnake ( <i>Masticophis taeniatus</i> )        |
| Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail ( <i>Aspidoscelis exsanguis</i> ) | Coachwhip ( <i>Masticophis flagellum</i> )                |
| Little Striped Whiptail ( <i>Aspidoscelis inornata</i> )      | Bullsnake ( <i>Pituophis catenifer</i> )                  |
| Marbled Whiptail ( <i>Aspidoscelis marmorata</i> )            | Long-nosed Snake ( <i>Rhinocheilus lecontei</i> )         |
| New Mexico Whiptail ( <i>Aspidoscelis neomexicana</i> )       | Groundsnake ( <i>Sonora semiannulata</i> )                |
| Checkered Whiptail ( <i>Aspidoscelis tessellata</i> )         | E. Patch-nosed Snake ( <i>Salvadora grahamiae</i> )       |
| Texas Banded Gecko ( <i>Coleonyx brevis</i> )                 | SW Black-headed Snake ( <i>Tantilla hobartsmithi</i> )    |
| Eastern Collared Lizard ( <i>Crotaphytus collaris</i> )       | Plains Black-headed Snake ( <i>Tantilla nigriceps</i> ) ☺ |

Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia wislizenii*)  
 Greater Earless Lizard (*Cophosaurus texanus*)  
 Lesser Earless Lizard (*Holbrookia maculata*)  
 Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)  
 Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma hernandesi*)  
 Round-tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma modestum*)  
 Prairie Lizard (*Sceloporus consosbrinus*)  
 Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*)

Black-necked Gartersnake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*)  
 Terrestrial Gartersnake (*Thamnophis elegans*)  
 Checkered Gartersnake (*Thamnophis marcianus*)  
 W. Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*)  
 Black-tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus*)  
 Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*) ©  
 Mojave Rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*) ©  
 Prairie Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*)  
 Crevice Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus poinsetti*)  
 Massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*)  
 Ornate Tree Lizard (*Urosaurus ornatus*)  
 Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana*)  
 Many-lined Skink (*Eumeces multivirgatus*)  
 Great Plains Skink (*Eumeces obsoletus*)



Texas Night Snake  
*Hypsiglena jani texana*



Banded Rock Rattlesnake  
*Crotalus lepidus klauberi*

**DIRECTIONS TO OLIVER LEE STATE PARK:** From Albuquerque, the most direct route is to take I-25 SOUTH to San Antonio (90 mi.), then drive EAST on US 380 to Carrizozo (65 mi.). Turn SOUTH (right) onto US 54 and drive the 58 miles to Alamogordo. Drive through the town and continue SOUTH on US 54 for about 8-9 miles and then turn EAST (left) at the sign for Oliver Lee State Park (Dog Canyon Rd.). This road leads for 4.2 miles directly to the park.

Ted L. Brown, New Mexico Herpetological Society  
 5 August 2004

## MEETING & ACTIVITY NOTES



**April 21 – Commencement of 2012 Sandia Pueblo Survey.** This year we are continuing our survey of the plains just east of I-25. We had several members show up to open the traps and we even found a few critters active. A lot of fun was had by all and all the traps are ready to go! After the work was complete many members went to El Pinto and had some great New Mexican cuisine.

**April 27-28 – B.E.M.P. Presentation** at the Bosque School and El Rancho de las Golondrinas was a great success with lots of children wandering through the facility to look at and talk herps. The society brought some specimens and were able to answer the children's questions and even allow them to touch some of the specimens.

**May 25-28 – Spring Field Trip** to Oliver Lee State Park near Alamogordo. See above article.

**July 7 – Annual Summer Potluck** will be at 6:30pm at Jaci's house. Her address is 217 Tornasol. Bring your favorite dish!

**July 14 – Prairie Fest** Pat Walsh of New Mexico State Parks has asked if we would do a presentation on herps at their festival at Ute Lake. If you want to participate talk to Ted Brown



## NEWS IN THE WORLD OF HERPS

Andrew Hoyt Price



Andrew Hoyt Price, 60, died January 16, 2012, at Christopher House in Austin, TX, after a long fight against Multiple Myeloma. Andy was born on May 12, 1951, in Brussels Belgium to his parents, C. Hoyt of Arkansas and Rosemary Price of England that preceded him in death. He was an avid herpetologist and worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department from 1986 to 2008. From 2009-2010, Andy worked with the Texas Natural Science Center and taught at Southwestern University. Andy was passionate about fieldwork and was granted awards for his lifetime efforts in conservation of Texas reptiles and amphibians by the Southwestern Association of Naturalists and Texas

Herpetological Society. He was given the Southwest Book Award for Literary Excellence for his book, *Amphibians and Reptiles of New Mexico*. He was Editor-in-Chief for the *Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles* from 1994 to his death. He is survived by his brothers, Roger Price of Pittsburgh, PA and Carl Price of Chandler, AZ; His son, Alexander Hoyt Price and wife Callie A Price; His two grandsons, Aiden Hoyt Price and Oliver Clarence Price of Lovington, NM; His cousins Donald Price of Beaumont, TX; Rev. Dr. Robert E. Price of Monson, MA; Paul Price of Hoover, AL; Rita Givens of Payson AZ; James Price of Sheridan, AR. A wake will be held at



6:00 p.m., January 21, 2012, at 3405 Aldwyche Dr. In lieu of flowers, donations should be sent in his name to support the "Field Research" section of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Grants in Herpetology program: Dr. Kirsten Nicholson, SSAR Treasurer, Museum of Cultural and Natural History, 103 Rowe Hall, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan 48859.

Published in Austin American-Statesman on January 19, 2012

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?n=andrew-hoyt-price&pid=155540389>

'Pope's crocodile' gets papal send-off to Cuba



Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu looks at a Cuban crocodile which will be given to Cuba on the occasion of the visit by the pontiff, during a departure ceremony of the crocodile from Rome's zoo on March 14, 2012. The Bio Park's two-year old croc, a rare "crocodylus rhombifer", will make its return to Cuba around the same time that the pope makes a scheduled trip to the island.

ROME—Pope Benedict XVI only knew him for a short time, but the brief encounter was enough to earn a special papal farewell as the esteemed guest prepared to return home — to a swamp in Cuba.

Which would be odd, if the guest in question weren't a baby crocodile that had a special audience with the pope in January.

A top Vatican cleric presided over a ceremony in Rome's zoo Wednesday to bid farewell to the baby crocodile, dubbed Il Coccodrillo del Papa ("The Pope's Crocodile").

The reptile is being returned to its natural habitat in Cuba later this month — a journey coinciding with the pontiff's own visit to the island nation scheduled for March 26.

The initiative symbolizes "respect for nature and friendship between nations," Vatican Substitute for General Affairs Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu said during the ceremony, which was also attended by Cuba's ambassador to the Holy See, Eduardo Delgado.

Before taking up his current post of Vatican chief of staff, Becciu served as the Vatican's ambassador to Havana.

The crocodile, which belongs to the highly endangered *crocodylus rhombifer* species, was seized by Italian police last year from a private home in northern Italy and placed in the care of Rome's Bioparco zoo.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the zoo's foundation, the crocodile was shown to Benedict during a Jan. 11 public audience.

At the time, officials said that once it is strong enough, the crocodile would be returned to its natural habitat in Cuba's swampy southern Zapata Peninsula.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/1146437--pope-s-crocodile-gets-papal-send-off-to-cuba>

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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. If you would like a color digital copy of this newsletter, please email me!

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