

Lancaster Herpetological Society

Husbandry, Education, Conservation, Community

The Lancaster Herpetological Society (www.lancasterherp.org) is a small club that meets once a month to discuss herps and herp-related issues. The club meets at the North Museum (www.northmuseum.org, 400 College Ave., Lancaster, PA 17603) on the 3rd Friday of every month. Meetings are open to the public, free of charge (donations accepted), and begin at 7pm. Please feel free to attend by entering through the back door (ring bell if locked). The membership requests that all children under the age of 16 be accompanied by an adult. For more information, contact Roy Mellott (aggrocroc@yahoo.com). *Hope to see you there!*

Upcoming Meetings

February is Membership Renewal Month. Yearly dues are \$10 for members. Please remember to bring cash or a check (sorry, no credit cards).

In 2009, LHS plans to host a variety of speakers on a range of topics. LHS is hopeful to reschedule Walter Meshaka who was not able to speak at the club this fall due to inclement weather and associated traffic problems. LHS also believes that the esteemed Carl Ernst will make a return speaking engagement, possibly covering chelonians this time instead of ophidians. LHS wants to schedule additional breeders and/or dealers in 2009. Last year, Demian Lewis of [Northwind Reptiles](#) and Gregg Feaster of [Gregg's Reptile Basement](#) kindly offered their breeder/dealer (not to mention hobbyist) perspective of herps. Undoubtedly, some members will speak to the club in their individual areas of expertise and passion. A few well placed Members' Nights where members bring in some of the herps they keep will round out the year. At press time, however, LHS does not have an exact speaker list for 2009 or even the next three months. Check the website for updates or show up and be surprised!

***Meeting for Board Members at 6PM prior to club meeting in February.**

Upcoming [Havre de Grace](#) Herp Shows: Feb 14th, Mar 7th, Apr 11th

Upcoming [Hamburg](#) Herp Shows: Feb 28th

Upcoming [Carlisle](#) Herp Shows: Jan 24th, Mar 21st

Club Happenings

The past three months did not go exactly as planned, but LHS remained active. The planned October community outreach was cancelled by Park City Shopping Center due to lack of insurance. LHS quickly changed plans to a field trip to Zoo America for their Creatures of the Night program. Most likely due to the late notice, attendance was low, but the members who did attend really enjoy the herps and other creatures at the local menagerie.

Inclement weather ruined the planned November meeting with speaker Dr. Walter Meshaka. A mixture of early wintery weather left our speaker stranded on the wrong side of the Susquehanna River. LHS hopes to reschedule Dr. Meshaka in the near future. Luckily, we had a herp-related video for the members in attendance to

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enjoy. Since we most likely violated one or more copyright laws, the video (which was stellar, cutting-edge, and rarely seen in the United States) shall remain nameless.

Bad weather almost interfered with the December meeting as well, but luckily the weather improved as the day progressed. Our very own club president, Chad Arment, presented on boss snakes, ethnoknown herps, and cryptozoology. Chad has published several books on those topics and was even able to make a few sales (LHS members received a discount). Sadly, this was Chad's swan song as our president. In a planned "coup", Chad gladly stepped down since relocation might be in his future, and LHS elected our third president and original member, Roy Mellott. All of us at LHS thank Chad for his productive year service and look forward to the next year with Roy at the helm. Remaining on as officers to assist Roy are Adam Darrenkamp (Vice-President), Kathy Tyson (Treasurer), Brian Fischer (Secretary), and most of the board members. Chad Arment will also continue to help with the website, and Zach Barton carry on with editing/publishing the newsletter.

Website

The website continues to be a work in progress. If you have ideas for the website, or wish to contribute something directly (photos, etc...), please contact Chad Arment (lancwildlife@verizon.net). Chad has recently added a Past Speakers List (including contact information where appropriate), a newsletter archive, and plans to add native PA herps galleries, and more... .

In the News

A frog with green blood and turquoise bones has been identified as new to science. The Samkos bush frog (*Chiromantis samkosensis*) is native to the remote Cardamom Mountains of Cambodia. The frog, first discovered in 2000 but only officially recognized in 2008, is extremely rare and most likely endangered due to limited habitat. A returning photography expedition led by Jeremy Holden of Fauna and Flora International was only able to locate one individual.

The green blood readily shows through the translucent skin of the frog. The color of the blood is a byproduct of biliverdin, a waste product that is normally processed by the liver. Green blood due to elevated levels of biliverdin has also been documented in some lizards. It has been speculated that blood's color aids in camouflage and/or gives the frog an unpalatable taste to predators.

Recent articles about a variety of scientific topics, herps or otherwise, can be found at Science News, <http://www.sciencenews.org/>. A better source for exclusively herp news can be found at HerpDigest, <http://www.herpdigest.org/>. HerpDigest will email you directly an electronic newsletter twice a week. Both services are free, though you must subscribe to Science News to read archived articles.

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LHS Milk Snake Chronicles by Jesse Rothacker

Happy ending after years of bad luck

The Lancaster Herp Society has finally broken a long string of bad luck with milk snakes. Club members have lost no less than four milk snake escapees from their collections in recent years. Here are their stories.

Mark had a juvenile sinoloan milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum sinaloae*) disappear into his backyard and it was never seen again. He monitored the area for many months but never found a trace of his snake.

Samuel had a sinoloan hatchling escape from his bedroom. Several months later it turned up in a neighbor's yard, which was a terrific surprise. Unfortunately, it never ate again and eventually died.

Zach wins the award for owning a milk snake for the shortest span of time before losing it. His sinoloan hatchling disappeared less than 24 hours after he brought it home. Within a few weeks he noticed some commotion in a neighbor's yard while he was outside mowing. It turned out that they had discovered his milk snake, and he was very happy to scoop it up and take it home. Like Samuel's snake though, Zach's snake marked his return with a hunger strike, and it did not live another week.

Jesse's lost milk snake finally broke the negative trend. During a routine cage-cleaning, an adult pueblan milk (*Lampropeltis triangulum campbelli*) managed to do a disappearing act. Jesse is known to leave the back door of the reptile room open for ventilation in the summer, and he assumed the snake had slipped into the great outdoors. His suspicion that the snake was outside was confirmed several weeks later when a shed snake skin, matching the missing milk, was found in the backyard. This was good news to find out that the snake was still alive and had not left the immediate area. But it was bad news for a Mexican reptile as Summer turned to Fall and the cold northeastern temperatures began to set in.

Jesse gave up hope for his missing snake after several freezing nights. But months later, in mid-November, while working in the reptile room, he spotted a small colorful snake coiled on a shelf. It was the long, lost milk snake! It was very light and weak, most likely dehydrated and hungry. The snake was placed in a nice warm quarantine where it was very thirsty and soon became active. It refused to eat for a few weeks, went through a shed cycle, and appeared to be somewhat healthy. Still, it looked like it might follow the course of Zach and Samuel's snakes, and never eat again.

Finally in the middle of December the snake took a mouse! It now appears to be eating and drinking with normal fecals and activity. The club's streak of bad luck with milk snakes may have been broken, but we would be wise to keep our cages well-secured in the future!

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Forgotten Friend Reptile Rescue Update

(<http://www.forgottenfriend.org>)

by Jesse Rothacker (info@forgottenfriend.org)

December Fundraiser THANK YOU - Our bearded dragons, leopard geckos, and box turtles would like to send a special THANKS to everyone who participated in the holiday fundraiser to benefit Forgotten Friend. The donations collected at the December LHS meeting will be used to buy crickets for the rescue for the first two months of 2009.

New outreach program booklets available - Our live reptile programs continue to be the main revenue source for Forgotten Friend, and a great educational connection in the community. In 2008 we provided over 150 community programs, as well as 100+ after-school programs in Lancaster and Lebanon School Districts. This translated into several thousands of dollars in revenue for Forgotten Friend, and thousands of kids and adults who were reached with a positive reptile message. Our reptile programs remain very popular for school assemblies and events, churches and scouts, community events, birthdays, and more. After collaborating with other educators, we decided to create a colorful program booklet to help market our programs in 2009. If you know a school, church, or other event that would benefit from a live reptile invasion, please ask Jesse for program booklets to share with event planners.

Forgotten Friend wildlife rehab - Traditionally Forgotten Friend has worked with captive pet reptiles rather than wild animals. However, it has never been uncommon for the rescue to get turtles and snakes into the rescue that had been originally taken from the wild in PA. Due to the fact that PA's native species have received higher levels of protection in recent years, Forgotten Friend is taking steps to become a certified wildlife-rehabber through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Although we will continue to focus on "pet" reptiles, we have a vast appreciation for our native species and want to make sure we are properly equipped to work with them. Hopefully our status with the state will be official before the next newsletter!

Forgotten Friend Fundraiser Sale - January 24, 2009, Forgotten Friend will have a table at the Central PA Reptile Expo (next to the LHS table). We will be selling our surplus reptile supplies to benefit the rescue. If you know anyone who wants to stock up on tanks, lights, and other petstuff, come out to the show (or contact Jesse to buy your supplies any time before the show).

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Reptiles for Adoption

Recently Forgotten Friend joined PetFinder.com and started using an online application process. These changes have made our adoption process much easier and more efficient. In the last quarter we've found homes for bearded dragons, leopard geckos, king snakes, corn snakes, ball pythons, sulcata tortoises, box turtles, red tail boas, and more. Additionally, our online rescue network has grown to well over 1,000 members, and ForgottenFriend.org's public adoption forum remains very busy. Even when we can't take in a reptile at the rescue, surrendering owners can still post a free listing on the adoption forum, and we offer to share pictures and owner info with the rescue network.

Currently we have some 3-toed Box Turtles (not PA's native Box Turtle, which is a protected species) available for adoption. You can submit an adoption application online at www.forgottenfriend.org/apply or email info@forgottenfriend.org for more information.

Requests

LHS exists solely as a volunteer organization. The club would not survive without the constant and continual input of its members. Arranging speakers, organizing field trips, and producing the newsletter take volunteered time. If you have ideas for and are willing to take the lead in arranging speakers or field trips, please contact Roy Mellott (aggrocroc@yahoo.com).

If you wish to contribute to the newsletter, please contact Zach Barton (zbarton@ycstech.org). Possible original contributions include: book reviews; species care sheets; notes from a field herping trip; herp news summaries; and opinionated essays. The deadline for the Spring 2009 Newsletter is approaching fast!



Slimy Salamander from the LHS Picture Library

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