

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 (LancHerpSociety@gmail.com). **Hope to see you there!**

Date	Speaker	Topic	Comments
7/15/11	Zach Barton	Herps in the Classroom	York County School of Technology
8/19/11	Richard Bonnett	A Year in the Life of a Timber Rattlesnake	_Mengel Natural History Society
9/16/11	Roy Mellott*	Snake Gardens*	<i>Tentative</i>
10/21/11	Aura Stauffer	Timber Rattlesnakes	Update on Continuing Research

Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming [Havre de Grace Herp Shows](#): Aug 13th, Sept 10th, Oct 1st

Upcoming [Hamburg Herp Show](#): Aug 6th, Oct 15th

Upcoming [Philadelphia Herp Show](#): Aug 27th, Sept 24th

Club Happenings

April was a busy month! First, Dr. Walter Meshaka gave a very helpful presentation full of ideas of how a small, local club like LHS can be very helpful to science. Essentially, just by documenting what we already do, we can easily become a repository of herpetological information. We should be able to use existing online resources, as well as our own website and Facebook page, to help with this documentation. Dr. Meshaka also had a variety of other ideas just in case a few of our members get ambitious!

Immediately following the meeting, most of the club went to Rinatra Pond to explore a vernal pond. We saw red-spotted newts,

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pickerel frogs, American toads, and a poor, headless garter. LHS members will continue to lead field herping trips throughout the season, but these trips will typically be during the day and not usually on meeting dates. Please check out Facebook and/or the Yahoo Group frequently as these outings are often informal and somewhat last minute.

Additionally, LHS cosponsored with the Metro Herp Society a field trip to the Bronx Zoo. Though the weather was damp and dreary, the reptile house was warm and dry. Sadly, a promised behind the scenes tour had to be cancelled due to the zoo's recent trouble with escaped cobras!

Finally in April, LHS had a fundraiser at That Fish Place's annual anniversary sale. For a small fee, people could get photographed with one of three different sized snakes. This event is always a good fundraiser for LHS, and we are thankful to TFP for providing the opportunity yet again. Special thanks also goes out to Tim, Josh, Roy, and Adam for manning the table, and an extra special thanks to Adam for bringing the three boas.

May brought the one and only Bill Love. Bill had just moved across country from Florida to Arizona, so we are most thankful for his presentation on photographing herps. Bill was full of useful suggestions and tips for getting the best photos, and it is easy to see why he is able to make a living taking pictures. Bill's trip was sponsored both by LHS and the Metropolitan Herpetological Society, where he spoke later the same weekend.

LHS sponsored another field herping trip the day after Bill Love's presentation. Bill (who grew up in New Jersey) was delighted to get reacquainted the herps of the northeast. LHS members did not disappoint in locating many of regional herps, including the elusive bog turtle. As always, LHS photographed and documented the native herps, and left them in the same spot to be found again another day!

June was once again Members' Night where individuals bring in their personal herps. These meetings occur two to three times every year and are always a big success. This meeting brought a litter of normal, hypo, and super hypo boas, plus the proud ghost momma and hypo poppa!

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Book Review

Peter Laufer's "Forbidden Creatures: Inside the World of Animal Smuggling and Exotic Pets" is an unsympathetic view of people who own "big cats, great apes, and long snakes". Based largely on first person interviews, Laufer, a PhD in journalism, is actually more balanced in concern to reptiles than mammals. Written from his perspective (he uses "I" frequently), it is obvious that he doesn't understand pets in general, exotic or ordinary. Indeed, he often worries whether or not his family should possess a cat or a dog. He finds some solace in his cat's ability to leave or enter the house via a cat door and freewill.

Laufer continually returns to the theme that people who possess "big cats, great apes, and long snakes" want to "dominate" the animals. Chapter 15, "A Conscientious Merchant", is supposedly about Charles Thompson of Snakes'n'Adders, who deals with a variety of herps and helps a young couple in Laufer's presence with an "aggressive" cornsnake that was recently purchased. Needless to say, it was the couples' first snake, and they did not know how to approach and handle it properly, and the cornsnake was as tame as you would expect. Laufer, however, manages to incorporate an unrelated story of animal (reptile) cruelty and an apocryphal tale (related second hand from his wife) of a keeper who would peruse the community bulletin boards searching for children's accidental surplus baby mice to feed to his kingsnake. The mice would then become "a stripped skeleton". Laufer's misunderstanding of basic biology assures that he will never answer his own question of "What do you do with it?"

Though Laufer continually uses direct quotes from interviewees, he (subconsciously) cherry-picks his quotations and sources and reveals a bias of his academic, San Franciscan surroundings. His portrayal of big cats, great apes, and the people that deal with them are universally unflattering. His treatment of herpetoculture is more even, though he does manage to lump all reptile people under the same umbrella as people who keep burms and retics. He writes at length about invasive burms in the Everglades, and does a good job of presenting both alarmist and skeptical views on the issue. However, he thoroughly fails to appreciate the scope, diversity, and

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considerable history of all the invasive animals in Florida and unfairly singles out the reptile trade as the issue of concern.

“Forbidden Creatures” is a worthwhile read if only to remind those immersed in herpetoculture that a large segment of the general population remains ignorant (and fearful) of reptiles. That ignorance can be educated, well-researched, and powerful (in the case of Laufer specifically and journalists and politicians in general), should give all within the herp community pause. Laufer’s fixation on “dominance” of animals clearly can’t account for us at LHS who enjoy finding herps in the field, *taking care* of the captive reptiles within our possession, and fostering and rescuing of herps as needed. Do read “Forbidden Creatures” but don’t reward the author by buying it. Check it out from the public library instead.

Next issue of LHS newsletter will include a book review of Jennie Erin Smith’s “Stolen World: A Tale of Reptiles, Smugglers, and Skulduggery”.

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 (LancHerpSociety@gmail.com).

If you wish to contribute to the website, please contact Caleb (bursur83@gmail.com).

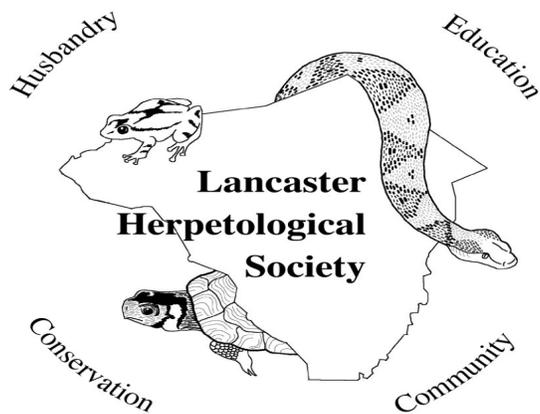
If you wish to contribute to the newsletter, please contact Zach Barton (zbarton@ycstech.org). Possible original contributions include: book reviews; species care sheets; notes from a field herping trip; herp news summaries; and opinionated essays. The deadline for the Fall 2011 Newsletter is approaching fast!

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LHS President Roy Mellott, May's speaker Bill Love, and a timber rattlesnake.



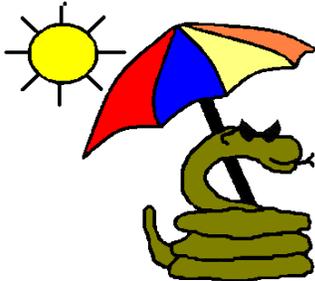
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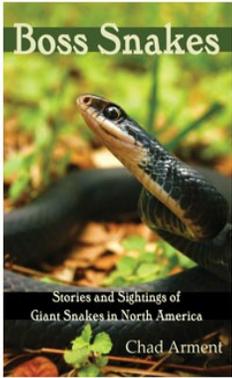
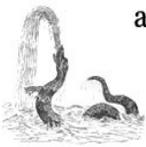
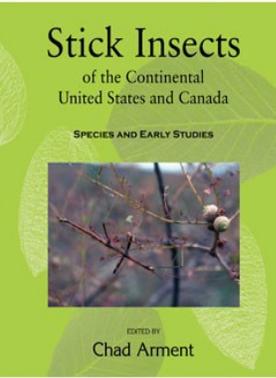
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