In photo from left to right, Roy Mellott, Jack Hubley, Adam Darrenkamp, and Jeff Chiyka.

After 4 years serving as president, Roy Mellott steps down. Jeff Chiyka was voted our new president at the conclusion of our December 2012 meeting.

December also marked our last meeting at the North Museum in downtown Lancaster. To celebrate we shared memories from the past 7 years and some impressive reptile-themed snacks including a turtle-shaped watermelon, snake grape kabobs, and turtle cupcakes.

Margie Marino, museum director, started the meeting with kind words of friendship and good wishes. Robyn spoke about her late mother Kathy Tyson, a founding member, instrumental board member and long time treasurer. Adam Darrenkamp and Jack Hubley, the club's first president and vice president, told us about the club's roots.

Board member Zach Barton shared a fantastic trivia slideshow celebrating the history of the club. Our first meeting was in February of 2005. Since then we've held about 90 meetings, featured at least 4 PhD presenters and flown a speaker in from Arizona.

Corny Reptile Joke...
What do snakes write on the end of their love letters?
With hugs and hisses!
Happy Valentines Day!!

Calendar

January 18, 2013
Meet LHS
Members explain what our club is all about!

February 15, 2013
A Year in the Life as a Herp Addict
Learn how to explore reptiles in the wild with guest speaker, Bob Ferguson.

March 15, 2013
Toad Migration Walk and Social
Learn about American Toads, then help them cross the road safely at Overlook Community Campus. Bring a flashlight.

April 19, 2013
Critter Encounter
Meet some reptiles and amphibians up close. Ask questions, take photos, and enjoy!

All meetings are held at 7pm at the Manheim Township Public Library at 595 Granite Run Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601. Meetings are free and open to the public. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Reptile Shows:
Havre De Grace/All MD-
Feb. 9, March 2, April 13
Northwestern Berks-
Feb. 23
Greater Reading Expo Center-
Jan 19, March 22-24
WELCOME NEW LHS PRESIDENT, JEFF CHIYKA

Lancaster Herpetological Society is proud to announce our new president, Jeff Chiyka. He brings his business and management skills, passion for herps, and fresh ideas to LHS in 2013.

This year Jeff hopes to increase our presence in the community, add to our membership, and expand our value in the herp community. LHS starts off the new year with a fresh logo, new meeting location at the Manheim Township Public Library, and new board members and organization structure.

Jeff, How did you find LHS?
I found Forgotten Friend Reptile Rescue online while looking for a pet snake. After I adopted a kingsnake from Jesse’s rescue, he invited me to meeting. That was in 2011.

What do you do when you’re not organizing LHS?
I run my own home improvement business! I also love reading technical, science, financial, and business books. I love to find out how things work. I was an ASE certified Master Mechanic and I still love working on cars. I enjoy maintaining my small herp collection and learning about herps in general.

What is the most important advice you can give to someone getting a pet reptile or amphibian?
Research! Know what you’re getting into. What can be legally kept? What kind of housing do you need? What will it eat and where do I get the food? How big will this herp get? That question seems to be overlooked frequently. Like any other pet, understand what your responsibilities will be and be prepared before you bring that animal home.

SANDY DAMAGED HOMES AND LIVES BUT NOT PEOPLES’ SPIRIT

A Hurricane Sandy Memoir by Harvey Bird Jr. of Metropolitan Herpetological Society

In the days leading up to Sandy hitting the coast of Staten Island, I began feverishly preparing for her arrival. Many people were not concerned since we have seen the ocean come up the street many times over the years. And besides, the media has made it a habit to sensationalize storms that turn out to be weak or even non-existent.

As the days got closer, I became more nervous and had a really bad feeling about Sandy. I decided to be safe rather than sorry. I sent Janine, our twins and Jake, our dog, to her parents’ house. We didn’t want to take any chances in case we really did have to evacuate. I then began to transport most of my reptiles to a safe-zone. Thankfully, my best friend Fred Nattboy, Treasurer of MHS, was able to take a few animals. My in-laws also were very kind to allow me to keep many of my animals at their house. However, I still had approximately 40 reptiles left at home. I figured at worst, we would get a couple feet of water, so if I kept the remaining animals high enough off the floor they would be fine.

Monday came, and the ocean began to come up the street with the initial high tide at 8:00 am. It reached a few houses away, then it receded with the outgoing tide. This was always a common occurrence when it came to big storms over the years, so we were not as concerned. We spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon bunkered up with our neighbors, discussing our plans to stay, which went against NYC Office of Emergency Management’s mandate to evacuate. We promised each other if it got bad to communicate and keep in touch, in case anyone needed assistance.

At about 2:30 pm, the entire block lost power. It marked the first time we ever lost power during a major storm. We slowly began to become anxious since we relied on the electricity to run the pumps in case the basement took any water. We had to go to plan B, which was to use our generator.

Around 4:30 pm, the ocean had started to make its way back up the street again. This was very
unusual because high tide was still four hours away, and the storm had yet to reach the coast. At that moment, we knew we were in trouble.

We rushed inside the house and started preparing the pumps and generator. Before we knew it, it was dark, and the water was slowly surrounding the house. We moved the generator to higher ground and I ran into the basement and started moving as many reptiles as I could up to the first floor. Twenty or so reptiles remained in the basement, but they were all at least four feet off of the floor.

By 6:30 pm, it was clear that I would have to leave. Fred came to our house trying to convince us to evacuate. My parents did not want to leave, and I knew I had to go be with Janine and the twins. I was torn because my parents are older and I wanted to be there in case anything happened to them. However, since they continually refused to go, I decided I had no choice but to leave them behind to assure the safety of my family.

Fred and I trudged down the porch steps and into the freezing cold tidal surge water that had engulfed our neighborhood. Debris was floating everywhere in the knee deep water. With one hand I carried a bag of clothes, and used the other to try and keep my phone and wallet from hitting the water. Fred carried a plastic tub with my tegu in it. He put it down for a second to grab something and the wind threw the tub in the air. It broke open sending the aspen shavings everywhere, and my tegu into the ice cold water. I screamed in desperation, as I scrambled to find him in the darkness. Miraculously, the current pushed him right in front. Being so dark out, all I could see were the white beady scales on his back exposed from the surface of the water. I picked him up, and ran back inside the house to grab a towel to wrap him in. We then waded through the water about another fifty feet to the truck.

I cried as we drove to my in-laws house. The idea of not knowing what was to happen to my parents and our home formed such a knot in my stomach, and made me feel so sick. About an hour later, around 7:30pm, I received a call from my mother letting me know that they were leaving. I felt such relief that they will at least be safe the rest of the night. Luckily, the emergency service unit of the NYPD convinced my parents to leave the house. My dad could no longer stop the water from coming into the basement, and it was their last chance to be rescued. They were taken out by kayak in the chest deep water.

I spent the rest of the night tossing and turning, as I listened to the wind howl outside and the sounds of transformers exploding in the distance. I could not sleep, as the events of the evening played over in my head. The uncertainty of it all and not having the ability to control the situation was eating away at me. I said some prayers and tried my best to get some sleep.

At 7:30 am the next morning, the sun was shining as if nothing had happened. Fred picked me up and we went to the house. Robinson Avenue looked like a war zone. An old, giant tree lay blocking the street, splintered from the trunk. Beyond the tree was the bottom third of the block, covered in debris. Amidst the debris were docks, parts of homes, photos, peoples' collectables, etc.

When I reached the house, I stood and stared in amazement. The house was standing, but there was so much debris in the front and back yard. A Bayliner (18' boat) sat across our driveway, still tied to a twenty foot dock that stretched across the front lawn and rested on my father's 17
year old pickup truck. A refrigerator, full of food, lay on its back on our lawn up against the porch. There was a pile of debris five feet high in our yard that spanned from the front gate to the back of the house. The pool was collapsed and lay half in our yard and half in our neighbor’s yard.

I was afraid to go inside. My mom stood on the front porch crying, as she watched all of our neighbors sift through the debris for belongings. Many of our neighbors’ homes are ground level, and had their entire first floor flooded and destroyed from the tidal surge. As bad as it was, we were a bit luckier since our foundation is about five feet above ground.

As I walked inside our house, I was relieved to find that the first floor was fine. However, the basement got it worse than I ever would have expected. The water receded with the outgoing tide, but there was still about three feet of water down there. The depth of the water overnight was obvious by the mud on the steps and stairway walls. It came within inches of flooding the first floor. Overall, we had about seven feet of water in the basement (completely to the ceiling).

I was sick to my stomach and couldn’t bring myself to walk in the basement. Seven feet of water meant that the animals I left down there had a very slim chance of survival. Fred did me the favor of going down there to assess the damage. He strapped on some chest waders, put on a headlamp and started to make his way through the area where my reptile room was.

Tanks were all over the place. The glass aquariums either had settled onto the floor when the water receded or sit still on their stand as they overflowed with water. The wood of the custom cages absorbed the water causing them to sink to floor, while the light weight vision cages floated amongst the debris. Mounted wall racks that held the plastic tubs my snakes were mangled and ripped off of the wall, with the tubs half full of water and partially sunken.

I stood upstairs waiting for the gruesome news from Fred. As he checked through the plastic tubs my snakes were in, he screams up to me, “I found a live one!” I was elated to hear those words and my eyes swelled with tears. The first live animal found was my male Florida kingsnake (which I adopted from Forgotten Friend). He was ice cold, but fine nonetheless as he musked and lunged to bite me.
After continuously searching, he found a few more live snakes – my female Florida kingsnake, Pueblan milksnake and jungle carpet python. As he continued to the back of the basement he shouted enthusiastically, “I found Ralph!” Ralph, my Chinese water dragon, had been clinging to a piece of floating debris. He grabbed him and brought him over to me in the stairwell. Moments later he found my Australian water dragon, also clinging to floating debris. It would turn out that the most shocking survival discovery would be days later while we were sweeping up the mud off of the floor – a Northern brown snake, who must have washed in with the tidal surge.

Unfortunately, even though we found a good number of survivors, more than half of the animals down there were not lucky enough to make it. All four of my frogs – ornate pacman frog, albino bull frog, African bullfrog, and Whites tree frog were killed by the influx of salt water. A few snakes were unlucky and drowned inside their plastic tubs. My bearded dragon and blue tongue skink were able to make it out of their cages but drowned anyway. It was heartbreaking to see them laying there motionless, but in all the loss I tried to keep a positive attitude that some of them were strong enough to withstand the force and survive.

I didn’t have too long to mourn over the animals lost because we got to work cleaning up rather quickly. We had so much help and the support of so many was extremely overwhelming. We are so fortunate to have such incredible people in our lives. People we never expected to show up came to lend a hand, whether it was to help clean or to bring us food and/or supplies. In a matter of days, we had our yard and entire basement cleaned up. We are now in the rebuilding phase.

Walking around the storm ravaged neighborhood serves as a reminder to just how strong mother nature is, and just how precious life is in general. Things may be repaired completely in the next few months, but the image of the damaged homes and lives will always remain. The friendships that were forged and strengthened during those days will be remembered for a lifetime. The storm may have destroyed our homes and inconvenienced our lives, but never our spirit.

The storm was surreal and a scary experience. But like I tell everyone, it was sort of a blessing in disguise because beyond the devastation, it brought so much good. We got to meet a lot of incredible people and got to build special relationships with neighbors, friends and strangers as we worked together to get through the hardship. There is no guarantee that this will never happen again, but if it does, we know we can persevere, and that includes the animals...

LHS would like to thank Harvey Bird Jr. for sharing his heartfelt story with us.

If you have a herp story you’d like to share, please send your idea to lancherpsociety@gmail.com.

Metropolitan Herpetological Society

The Metropolitan Herpetological Society is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit reptile and amphibian husbandry and conservation club based out of Staten Island, N.Y. MHS was founded in January of 2006, and our mission is to educate the community on the proper care of reptiles in captivity and raising awareness of the conservation issues facing native species of Staten Island.

www.metroherpsociety.org
HAVE AN EMERGENCY HERP PLAN?

Thought about what you’d do if you lose power? Have a tornado warning? Reptile room starts to flood? Fire or carbon monoxide alarm goes off?

10 Emergency Preparedness Ideas from Club Members:

1. Have pillowcases ready for a quick snake evacuation and a bin of hole-punched tupperware for smaller critters.

2. Keep old towels and blankets ready to cover tanks in a cold-weather power outage.

3. Consider getting an emergency generator (and having extension cords ready).

4. Store extra water.

5. Have a safe place to evacuate pre-arranged, like a relative or neighbors house.

6. If you can boil water, fill water bottles with warm water to put in herp tanks as a temporary source of warmth.

7. Have tanks clearly labeled incase someone unfamiliar assists you with an evacuation.

8. Have a propane heater as back-up if you have electric heat.

9. If you're in a bad weather hot spot, consider limiting your collection to what you can manage in an emergency.

10. In an emergency, worry about yourself and human companions first.

What have we been up to?

In October our speaker couldn't make it so we shared reptile stories instead. Zach got his lost box turtle back. Alex saw queen snakes. Softshell turtles were discovered to urinate through their mouth!

In November expert herper extraordinaire, Kyle Loucks, shared “Four Seasons of Field Herping”. We all learned where to look for reptiles in the winter and strategies to disturb herps as little as possible.

In December Zach Barton shared club history trivia and stumped us all! Amphisbaeni... what?!

HERPS IN THE HEADLINES...

A Clemson University student studying how to help turtles cross roads safely discovered that drivers would deliberately veer off the road just to crush a rubber box turtle!!!

FORGOTTEN FRIEND REPTILE SANCTUARY
JANUARY NEWS

13 Reptiles abandoned in Clay Township

We received a call from ORCA to pick up a bunch of abandoned reptiles. Apparently convicted animal abusers from Illinois had been staying at a farm in Lancaster County, where they abandoned over a dozen reptiles as well as other small mammals. We picked up several bearded dragons, pythons, monitors, and a boa. Most of them needed to see a vet that week for vitamins and medication, and one of the bearded dragons had a rotted foot that had to be surgically amputated. The good news is that he didn't miss a meal after losing his foot. He continued eating full speed like nothing ever happened. And since he's a lizard, isn't there a chance it'll grow back?

How NOT to rescue a turtle

We also received an eastern box turtle that someone tried to "rescue" from the road after it had been nipped by a car. By the time we were contacted, winter had set in and the turtle had been out of the wild for too long to release it. It was a good case to remind people to never "rescue" a turtle by removing it from the wild. Even if it is nipped by a car, it may have a good chance of survival in the wild.

Removing an adult turtle from the wild is an automatic loss to the population. If you want to help a turtle on the road, please help him get to the other side, and let him go on his way.

"Undercover Reptiles" library show

Forgotten Friend is busy scheduling library programs for the national "Dig into Reading" Summer Reading Program. We will be at all 17 of Lancaster County's Libraries between June and August offering free community programs, and other libraries around the state as well. Please visit www.forgottenfriend.org/events to view our calendar, then come out and see us!

Three tortoises in new homes

We helped network a home for a Sulcatta tortoise that was abandoned at a church in Philadelphia. In the process, we also lined up a home for another tortoise in our care. We were able to send it out west because a family member of the adopter happened to be driving within 15 minutes of our location. This was the second tortoise we shipped out west after our biggest tortoise, Abraham, ended up in Arizona with former LHS member Jan Cooper. Jan and her husband Bruce personally drove him there in their Honda Insight (tiniest car ever invented)! Here is Abraham starring in his last elementary assembly before the trip:

We hope to see lots more adoptions in the next quarter. Please visit www.forgottenfriend.org/adopt for a complete list of adoptable herps.

Who is Forgotten Friend Reptile Sanctuary?

Forgotten Friend Reptile Sanctuary is a reptile rescue in the middle of Amish country, Pennsylvania. Registered as Forgotten Friend, Inc., we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on educational outreach and rescuing reptiles. Lancaster Herpetological Society board member, Jesse Rothacker, is the founder and president of Forgotten Friend Reptile Sanctuary.

Learn more at Forgottenfriend.org
BECOME A MEMBER OF LANCASTER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

We are a group of reptile and amphibian enthusiasts. We get together once a month on the third Friday at 7pm at the Manheim Township Public Library. Our meetings include guest speakers on topics from the basics to scientific presentations, and member's nights where we bring in pets, photos, and stories to share. Our club is open to all folks curious about cold-blooded creatures! We hope you can join us!

Membership Form

Name: ________________________________
Address: _______________________________________
City: __________________ State: ______ Zip: ______
E-mail: _______________________________________

Please check membership type:

☐ Individual - $20  ☐ Business - $50

New members welcome anytime. Renewals due no later than January 31st.

Please return this form with payment (cash or check) to an LHS board member.

All ages are welcome. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.