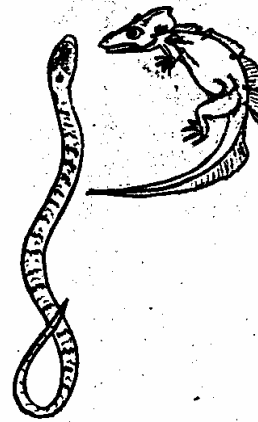
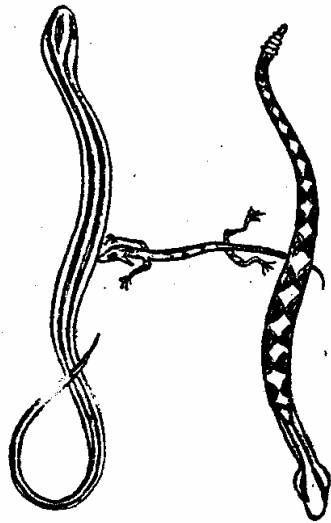
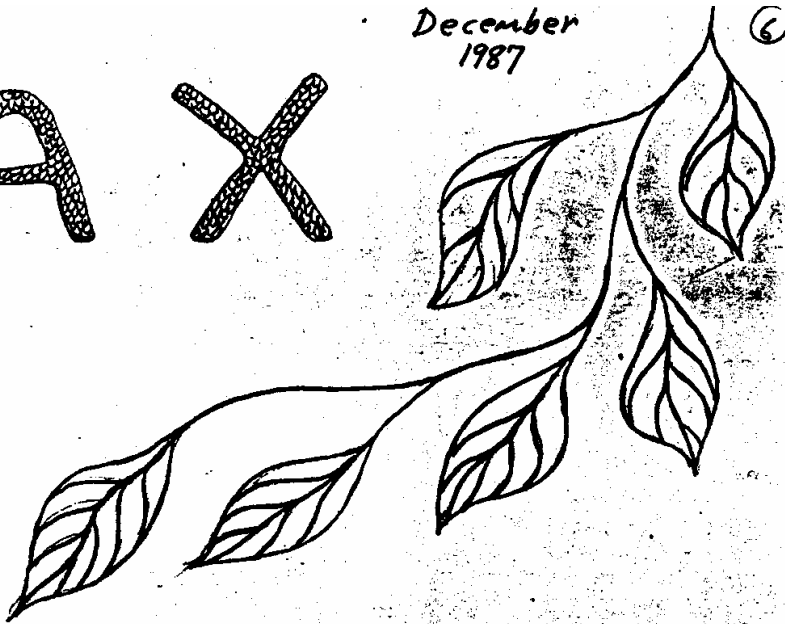


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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JACKSONVILLE HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 6

LAST MEETING

The last meeting of the Society was very interesting as some of the legal aspects of keeping reptiles and amphibians were discussed. Lt. Mike Edwards of the Florida Game and Fish Commission gave us the details. For more information please see the article in this issue.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will feature Mr. Jack Myer, General Curator of the Jacksonville Zoo. He will discuss what's going on at the zoo with reptiles. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 15th at 7:30 at the Jacksonville Museum of Arts & Sciences in the church room. The ecology and husbandry of the Pine Woods snake (*Rhadinaea flavilata*) also known as the Yellow lipped snake, will be discussed, and a live specimen will be present.

Bring Christmas cookies, candy, egg nog, etc. and plan to get to know some of the other members as the meeting will be short and we will break afterwards for an informal Christmas party.

THE LEGALITIES OF REPTILE OWNERSHIP IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

The following information is a summary of the presentation by Lt. Mike Edwards to the Jacksonville Herpetological Society at the November, 1987 meeting.

The state of Florida has fairly liberal requirements with regard to the possession of most reptiles and amphibians. No permit or license is required to possess (non-commercially) any of Florida's herps except those which fall into one of three major categories. The three categories are: Endangered Species, Threatened Species, Species of Special Concern. The endangered species are the American Crocodile, Atlantic Hawksbill Turtle, Atlantic Ridley Turtle, Leatherback Turtle, and Lower Key Mud Turtle. The threatened species include the Loggerhead Turtle, Blue Tailed Mole Skink, Sand Skink, Big Pine Ringneck Snake, Miami Blackheaded Snake, Short Tailed Snake, Key Brown Snake, Key Ribbon Snake, Atlantic Salt Marsh Snake, and Indigo Snake. The species of special concern include: Georgia Blind Salamander, Gopher Frog, Pine Barrens Treefrog, Florida Bog Frog, Alligator Snapping Turtle, Suwanee Cooter, Barbour's Map Turtle, Gopher tortoise, American Alligator, Florida Key Mole Skink, Lower Key Red Rat Snake, and Florida Pine Snake.

Some of these species do not require permits but there may be restrictions on the number that may be maintained in captivity. If you think you have one of these species, contact the commission to find out if there are any restrictions or if a permit is required.

If you are collecting commercially, you need an exhibitor permit, the price of which varies depending upon the number of species. If you possess less than ten species the permit costs five dollars but if you possess greater than ten species the cost is twenty five dollars annually.

A permit is required to possess any venomous reptile in the state of Florida. The permit costs five dollars. The main requirement for this permit is a cage with a lock. Exhibiting venomous reptiles requires that you post a one thousand dollar bond and acquire a displayers permit.

There are also rules for transporting venomous reptiles in the state of Florida. All specimens must be placed in a closed sac inside of a sturdy box clearly labeled "DANGEROUS POISONOUS REPTILES"

No permit is necessary for the possession of non-poisonous exotic reptiles except for the Black Caiman.

Jacksonville residents may contact the Lake City, Florida Office of the Florida Game and Fish Commission if they have any questions concerning reptile and amphibian ownership.

TIP OF THE MONTH

This month's tip is short and simple. Feed "clean" food. The term clean means that a food item is not likely to contain parasites or bacteria that are harmful to your pet. This goal can often be easily achieved by feeding captive raised food items to your reptiles and amphibians. Avoid feeding wild caught insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds or mammals to your pet if it is at all possible. Of course, this will be impossible for some species or the young of certain species, but an occasional attempt to feed clean food should be made anyway. If the specimen you have refuses to accept clean food, there are procedures which you should take to avoid problems. These will be discussed in January's Tip of the Month.

Contributed by John Rossi

Gopher Tortoises

-need help! Major construction is imminent and some will need to be relocated. We need some volunteers to help with this project. If everyone volunteers just a few hours we can get plenty of work done. All members with 5 gallon buckets please get them ready and let us know how many you have. Jim Hartman is the chairman and his phone number is 389-4389.

Booklist-Part Two

THE COMSTOCK HANDBOOKS: **Handbook of Snakes** by Albert and Anna Wright: 1957 2 vols. 1151 pgs. \$59.50. **Handbook of Lizards** by Hobart Smith: 1946 578 pgs. \$37.50. **Handbook of Turtles** by Archie Carr: 1952 557 pgs. \$45.00. **Handbook of Salamanders** by Sherman Bishop: 1943 555 pgs., out of print. **Handbook of Frogs and Toads** by Albert and Anna Wright: 1949 652 pgs. \$36.50.

All published by Comstock. These fairly technical, well illustrated, and very expensive books vary greatly in usefulness. The Wrights' volume offers paragraphs on each species' usual habitat, breeding, food, and habits. The salamander and lizard books are the least valuable, being almost purely descriptive. The serious amateur will need to consult these sooner or later.

RAYMOND L. DITMARS: Raymond Ditmars was the patron saint of young herpetologists throughout the first half of this century, and no one has taken his place. He was curator of reptiles at the New York Zoological

Park from 1900 until his death in 1942, and was also a former newspaperman whose knack for a good story made his reptile books best-sellers and herpetology a popular pursuit. Only one of the 14 titles listed in the public library's card catalog is still in print. His best books, **Snakes of the World**, **Reptiles of the World**, and the wonderful **The Reptiles Of North America** must be obtained from used-book stores. The last-named offers a wealth of information based on Ditmars' wide experience collecting and keeping reptiles, as well as 135 pages of beautiful black and white photos taken by Ditmars himself.

OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Amphibians and Reptiles, vol. 3 of Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida. Roy McDiarmid, ed. (1979) 74 pgs. \$5.50 Univ. of Fla. Press.

North American Amphibians and Reptiles. James A. Oliver (1955) Out of Print.

The Giant Snakes. Clifford Pope (1961) 290 pgs. \$17.95 Alfred A. Knopf.

The Frog Book. Mary Dickerson (1910) 253 pgs. \$8.95 Dover

More technical books for the advanced amateur, all out of print but available at the livbraries designated.

Introduction to Herpetology. Coleman and Olive Goin (1971) Haydon Burns, J.U.

The Life of Reptiles. Angus Bellairs (1971) 2 vols. Haydon Burns, J.U.

The Biology of the Amphibia. G.K. Noble (1931) J.U.

A Contribution to the Herpetology of Florida. Archie Carr (1940) U.N.F.

AMPHIBIAN OF THE MONTH: THE SLIMY SALAMANDER

Salamanders are the least frequently encountered herptiles of the South. Though lizardlike in appearance, salamanders are amphibians, and require a cool, moist environment. They are quite common in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where the heat is tempered by frequent rainfall, but in Duval County the heat and relatively dry climate restrict the number of terrestrial salamanders to six or seven (there are also six aquatic salamanders, but these will be dealt with later): the flatwoods salamander, the mole salamander, the southern dusky salamander, the dwarf salamander (possibly), and the subject of this article, the slimy salamander (*Plethodon glutinosus*).

The slimy is misnamed; the copious skin secretions exuded when the salamander is disturbed are not slimy, but sticky. It is shiny black above, usually well-sprinkled with silvery-white flecks. It is slate-gray below, with a black throat; no other dark salamander has a black throat. The slimy attains a maximum total length of 7 3/8 inches.

The eggs of this species, typically about 20 in number, are laid on land, in a subterranean chamber, and the young salamanders hatch in 60

days. Young females have a 20% survival rate. In three years (slightly less for males the females attain sexual maturity, pretty accurately assessed by size (2 1/4 inches, but again slightly less for males).

The slimy salamander is found in moist woodlands under logs or other cover. They are very sensitive to moisture loss, and survive in the South only where the moisture is fairly constant. Locally I have found them under fallen trees in seasonally dry swamps and creek bottoms. They wander more than some salamanders; one study has shown their home range - the area encompassing a preferred shelter and one or more feeding sites - to be between 34 and 75 square meters. For a comparison, the home range of the spotted salamander is about 10 square meters.

They make good captives, so long as their high moisture requirements are heeded. I carried one in an empty jar for two or three hours, and when I next looked at him he'd shriveled down as thin and hard as a toothpick. Another one, more fortunate, survived the trip home and did very well in a small jar filled with a ball of sphagnum moss. I sprayed him with water daily, and fed him aphids and termites, which he captured with a flip of the tongue.

Contributed by Rex Rowan

NATIVE CRITTER OF THE MONTH: THE BLACK RACER

The Black Racer is perhaps the most common snake in Florida. Their broad diet and quickness make them a successful denizen of numerous habitats. They can do very well in captivity also, but they require special care. Success with most black racers will depend upon catering to their nervous, high strung personality. Hide boxes are essential to keep this species content.

Many will take a variety of foods including fish, amphibians, lizards, snakes, mice, and small birds. But some have definite preferences. In addition, some snakes will become "gun shy" around mice if they have a bad experience with a live one. Therefore, I recommend that only freshly killed mice be placed in your black racers cage. Also, do not house black racers together with other racers or any other snakes as it will lead to competition for food, and increased nervousness.

Housing is not difficult as racers will do well in relatively small cages. In fact, some believe that too large a cage will lead to increased nervousness. Indoor-outdoor carpet, rock, branch, hidebox, and water bowl will suffice for this species. Cages must have smooth sides, or this snake will rub its nose raw. A hatch in the top will allow food to be dropped in without disturbing the snake.

Babies are voracious snakes and seem to be very fond of lizards. Contrary to popular belief, a baby started on lizards can be switched over to mice. Racers raised from hatchlings can be surprisingly calm in captivity and will take food readily from your hand.

Black Racers will thrive in captivity but once again you must cater to their "nervousness" and try to stress them as little as possible.

FOODS: Lizards, frogs, fish, snakes, mice

CAGE: Ten gallon aquarium with screen or pegboard

- BOTTOM:** Indoor-outdoor carpet
- LIGHT:** Natural lighting or Vita-light
- ACCES:** Hide Box, branch, rock, plastic plants

Contributed by John Rossi

EXOTIC PET OF THE MONTH: THE BOA CONSTRICTOR

The Boa Constrictor is probably what anyone who doesn't know snakes thinks you're holding if they see any type of snake. Ancient of legend, its length and weight are usually greatly exaggerated, (even confused with the anaconda, which can reach lengths of 30 feet). The Boa actually grow up to 12 feet, but the average size ranges from 6 to 8 feet. It is a heavy snake, at 8 feet its average weight is 90 pounds, which is twice the weight of any python of the same length.

Three species of Boas occur in Madagascar, 3 in Papua New Guinea, and neighboring islands. The other 20 occur in Central and South America. All give birth to live young.

The "Common Boa" is the most popular Boa for a pet. They are very adaptable, occurring in semi-desert regions in Mexico to the more familiar habitat in the jungle regions of South America the most common being the two sub-species of red-tailed Boas, the redder from Colombia and points east and the darker one from Ecuador.

The male boa is usually more slender and has a longer, thinner tail, as well as more prominent "spurs" at the cloaca, which, as most of us know, only boas and pythons have. They live a long time, up to 40 years, although the average is 15-25 years.

Most common boas eat various sized rodents exclusively, but I know people who feed them chickens, ducks, dead chicken parts, rabbits, and even hot dogs.

I love Boas, find them pretty hardy and adjustable but generally not as patient about waiting to eat as other snakes. Boas are a good snake for anyone who is realizing it is a large snake, both long and very heavy. I heartily recommend it for a pet.

- FOODS:** Rodents, rabbits, & chickens
- CAGE:** 10- 25 gall. aquarium for young species.
55 gall.aquarium or large wooden cage for larger species.
- BOTTOM:** Indoor-outdoor carpet or corn cob
- LIGHT:** Vita-light or plant light with 60-75 watt light bulb
- ACCES:** Hide box, heat rock, branches for climbing, and a large water bowl.

Contributed by Sherry LeClair

THE TURTLE PEN

THE GOPHER TORTOISE (*Gopherus polyphemus*) is a Florida species that is dwindling in numbers. Due to housing development in dry, well-drained habitats such as beach scrub, oak hammocks and pine flatwoods, the tortoise population has decreased dramatically over the years. Unlike its cousin, the box turtle, gophers rarely venture far from its den. The burrow it digs is well known by many. Unfortunately, due to the destruction mentioned above, many other vertebrates and invertebrates are destroyed in the havens below. Burrows may run underground laterally for distances of 30 feet (9mm) or more and to a depth of 18 feet (5.5mm).

The gophers are primarily herbivores, feeding on grasses and berries. They tend to come out only when there is sufficient heat to help them carry on their active lives. These tortoises are social in nature, communication with head bobs and ramming. Visit the Jacksonville Zoo in April and see the male gophers display their King of the Mountain behavior. Nesting takes place from April through July. Usually 4-7 spherical, hard shelled, white eggs are laid. After 80 days, hatching takes place. Collecting this species is restricted, only 2 tortoises can be kept. Stiff fines can be yours to enjoy if this law is broken.

NEXT MONTH: The Florida Softshell.

Contributed by Mike Rossi

