

HORNED LIZARD



CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Post Office Box 122, Austin, Texas 78767

Phrynosomatics

The Newsletter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society

Our purpose is to document and publicize the values and conservation needs of horned lizards, to promote horned lizard conservation projects and to assist with horned lizard management initiatives throughout their ranges.

Volume 5, Issue No. 1

April 2000

President's Corner

by Scott Henke

Well, we have finally made it to the new Millennium. With the new Millennium will come new challenges and opportunities, and some changes. I think it is healthy to change on occasion rather than to allow an organization to stagnate. So I will continue on my quest as president to help our state chapters become more autonomous.

The National HLCS Board will continue to provide an infrastructure for state chapters, as well as continue with the quarterly newsletter, work to increase membership, and assist groups in creating additional states' chapters.

State Chapters are expected to develop short and long-term goals that are consistent with the objective of the National HLCS. Explicitly, to document and publicize the values and conservation needs of horned lizards, to promote horned lizard conservation projects, and to assist with horned lizard management initiatives throughout their ranges.

I challenged each state chapter to continue to develop their goals. By doing so, each chapter can determine, in time, whether it is moving in the direction it wishes to go. To date, I have received the goals and missions from Oklahoma

and Nevada chapters. Thank you very much, Oklahoma and Nevada. I am sure that California, Utah, and Texas chapters will be submitting their goals in the near future.

4th Horned Lizard Symposium

The 4th Horned Lizard Symposium will be held at the American Museum of Natural History in Portal, Arizona, on October 20-21. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this conference. Information about submitting abstracts is on p3.

The symposia provide opportunities to bring professionals together to exchange and discuss information regarding horned lizard biology, research, and management. It's an event you will not want to miss. I look forward to seeing everyone in Arizona. Additional information about the symposium will be in the summer newsletter.

National HLCS Elections

National elections will be upon us soon. Now is the time to consider running for an office. Offices include the President, Member Services, Research & Recovery, and Secretary-Treasurer.

The President has general supervision of the State Chapters,

and shall work to increase membership, and create additional states' chapters.

The Director of Research & Recovery maintains knowledge of the current legal status of horned lizards, aids the HLCS in legal issues about horned lizards, and maintains and updates scientific information about horned lizards.

The Director of Member Services is charged with maintaining the HLCS membership database and assisting the President with building membership within the society.

The Secretary-Treasurer is responsible for maintaining files, records, and funds of the National HLCS, addressing all mail and maintaining our mailbox, and submitting complete financial end-of-year reports.

If you are interested in nominating yourself or someone else for an office contact me at (361) 593-3689 or e-mail to scott.henke@tamuk.edu, or mail to MSC 156, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas 78363-8202.

Nominations Due August 31

Nominations need to be in by 31 August 2000. Election results will be announced at the 4th Horned Lizard Symposium in Portal, Arizona.

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Information to:**

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New Beginning 2000:

4th Horned Lizard Symposium

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society will be hosting New Beginning 2000: the 4th Horned Lizard Symposium on 20-21 October 2000. The symposium will be held at the American Museum of Natural History in Portal, Arizona.

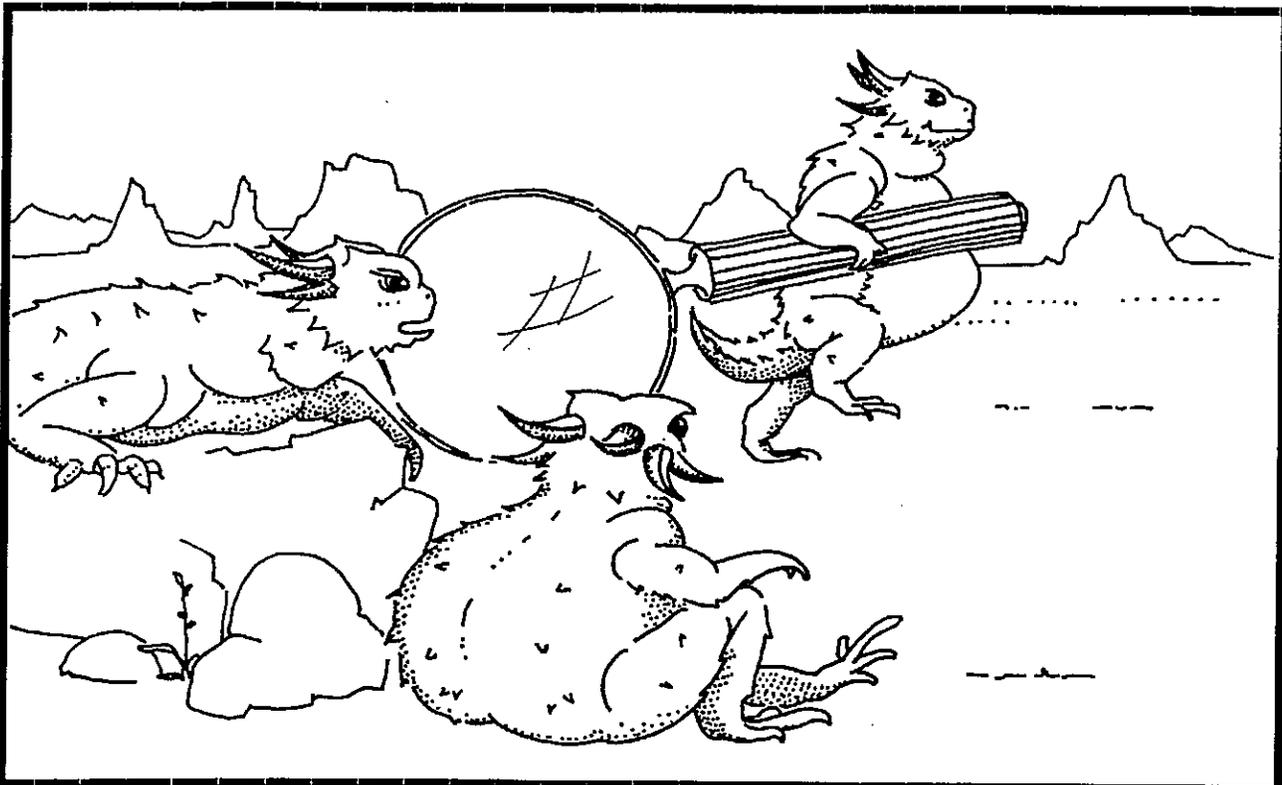
The symposium will address topics relevant to horned lizards: their ecology, biology, management, and education of the public. Abstracts will be published and are requested from anyone who would like to make a presentation at the symposium.

Abstracts should be less than 300 words and can be submitted either electronically (preferred) or via mail (hard copy and diskette please) to Scott Henke by 31 August 2000.

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HAYWIRE

by M. Hawley



"SLIM SURE DOES LOVE TO FIX THOSE ANTS 'CAJUN STYLE'"

The Pet Trade and Nevada

**FOR SALE:
NEVADA HERPETOFAUNA**

by Kevin Emmerich

If you are familiar with the current policies of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners regarding reptile commercialization in Nevada, you might expect to see a sign like that above on the state line.

Nevada is the only state in the West that continues to allow unlimited commercial collecting of native reptiles. For a mere \$100 a year, an applicant can acquire a permit to collect and commercially sell as many non-federally protected reptiles as he/she wants.

In 1998, for example, a reported 22,240 reptiles were collected. Between 1991 and 1998, 30,392 horned lizards were collected. These reptiles with a wholesale price ranging between \$3.50 and \$4.50 command a retail price of \$8.50 to \$9.00 in the U.S. but are sold in Europe for \$143 each. This practice continues in spite of the fact that reptiles have a very high mortality rate in captivity.

No one seems to know how things got so out-of-control in Nevada. State and Federal agencies originally demanded proof that commercial reptile collecting had no detrimental effect on species or habitat before allowing it.

Now, the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners would like proof that collection is having detrimental effects before LIMITS are implemented. There are still few data about the ecology and habitat requirements of just about all of the native herpetofauna. Often, species from other states are collected illegally and "laundered" in Nevada.

Concern from herpetologists, conservationists, and Nevada citizens has prompted the Nevada Division of Wildlife to prepare the *1999 Special Report to the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners on Reptile Commercialization in Nevada*. In this document, minutes from two public meetings held in Reno and Las Vegas are published. Most of the people who commented asked for stronger regulations due to the fact that the effects on collecting these species are not understood. Some compared collecting to hunting seasons. Because deer have their young in the spring, hunting seasons are regulated to fall. Reptile collectors' best months are from March to early June: the best breeding season for many species. There are few baseline population data to understand population trends of many species. One collector admits that his activity has an impact on the ecological system, but he still needs to make a living. Other collectors suggest that they are providing the best data on species after they report numbers to the state because they see reptiles more than anybody. This is, of course, after they remove the reptiles from their habitat.

A former collector reveals a darker side to the industry, "If you have ever seen 1,000 collared lizards stacked on top of themselves in a cage defecating on themselves, living in this and dying in it, most of them die of stress in the first month. It's a pretty ugly site."

Yes, collectors can probably provide a great deal of data about the

habitat and species they collect. But what are the consequences? An attorney sums this up concisely by saying that it seems that the issue here is where does the burden lie on proving whether or not the taking of these animals may have a negative impact on the ecosystems in the State of Nevada. When little data exist, the burden is on the collector.

There are only about 20 commercial collectors in Nevada. Can they make their living breeding reptiles in captivity? This could be a possible alternative.

Is it wrong to have pet reptiles if they can survive in captivity? We know horned lizards do not do well, but some others do. And there is a difference in keeping one or two reptiles as a hobby and taking thousands out of a habitat. The latter is potentially dangerous to an ecological system. It is time for the Nevada Wildlife Commission to recognize this.

Collections will be allowed to continue in the year 2000. But, there may be hope for the following year. Many species (the chuckwalla is at the top of the list that includes horned lizards) may be addressed by local Habitat Conservation Plans. This will at least place limits on numbers of individuals collected, and fees collected may fund species studies. This is a start.

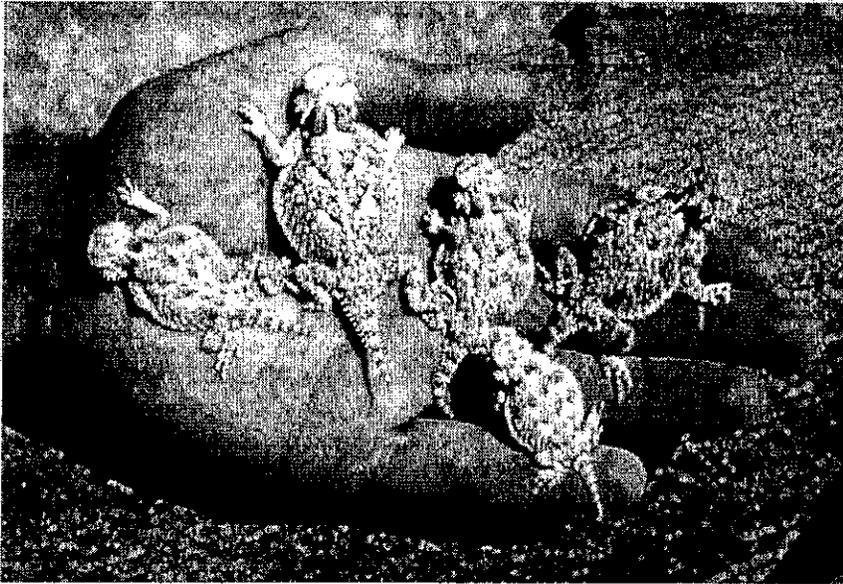
We need *as many letters ASAP* to the Wildlife Commission and Chairman Bradley (addresses below) requesting actions to protect these reptiles.

Nevada Department of Wildlife
NV Board of Wildlife Commissioners
PO Box 10678
Reno, NV 89520
Phone: (775) 688-1500



Chairman Bill Bradley
P.O. Box 1987
Reno, NV 89505
ore-mail
billobradleyjr@yahoo.com

Nevada Reptiles include desert horned lizards (*P. platyrhinos*)



Since desert horned lizards (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*) are so easy to catch, they are a favorite target for commercial collectors (story on page 4).

[Photo by Kevin Emmerich]

Wild Reptiles do not thrive in captivity



Tom McCain (left) and his Horny Toad Connection booth at Austin's Rodeo visits with Bill Brooks, March 26. [Photo by Leigh Sanders]

in memory...

The HLCS recently lost two men who many of our members knew and share in our thoughts for their families.

Wesley G. Brown, a longtime member from Pharr, Texas, died in February of this year.

Timothy Allen Repp, son of Tucson members Roger and Dianna Repp, died March 2.

Memorials for Tim may be sent to Compass Health Care/Vida Libre, 2475 N. Jackrabbit Ave., Tucson, AZ 85745.

TIME AND MONEY

RENEWING MEMBERSHIPS

This is a reminder to you folks renewing your memberships now. All memberships expiring in January, February, or March 2000 are now due for renewal for the remainder of the year at the prorated rate of 75% (or 3/4) of the amount for the membership category chosen.

Prorated Rates (75%):

- 1) Students and Seniors - \$7.50,
- 2) Regular - \$18.75,
- 3) Contributing - \$37.50,
- 4) Patron - \$75.00.

This will extend your membership to December 31, 2000, when all memberships will expire and be renewable for 2001 at the annual rates of \$10.00, \$25.00, \$50.00 and \$100.00 for each category, respectively. Lifetime memberships are not affected.

ADDRESS CHANGES

A word needs to be said about address changes. We really appreciate being informed about any changes in your mailing addresses. The USPS only keeps the records for a limited time and we often miss the deadline. The newsletter is sent at a special nonprofit rate which, unfortunately, can be very slow. If you are to continue to receive it after a move, please send us a post card with your new address.

Clare

HLCS SIGHTING REPORTS

Once again, we express our thanks to all who have sent in horned lizard sighting reports and encourage everyone to also inform Texas Parks and Wildlife through their Horny Toad Watch program.

Dr. Hinckley sent the society a lovely Christmas card and pictures of his "horny toad preserve" we visited last year in Littlefield, Texas. His report read: "October 12, I saw and watched 3 juveniles. That was the last for this year. I saw numerous juveniles during the Summer & Autumn. I hope this spring I will see these juveniles as adults.

Jamie P. Washam sent in a Horned Lizard Sighting Survey from his current home in Cambridge, MA. Jamie reported that "my brother and I played with horny toads all the time--babies and adults" back in the '80s in Midland, Texas (Coke County). He hasn't seen any in the past 10 years.

Carolyn Pool sent the HLCS a lovely letter. She wrote, "You might be interested in knowing that my husband and I and our neighbor behind us have seen some horned toads on our property. Hamilton is about 45 miles north of Lampasas and about 65 miles west of Waco, and we have about 5 and 1/2 acres a couple of blocks from the courthouse square. There are several large red ant beds on our property, but, unfortunately, we also have fire ants. We have lots of tree lizards or 'Boomers' as my husband calls them. We spotted a horned toad a few times last year, and we started seeing them again since April this year."

John R. Survil, a HLCS member, reported that he saw a horny toad in the summer of 1997 outside of Cisco, Texas, in Eastland County. He also saw horny toads in the '60s in Dallas County.

The Saenger Family sent in this interesting report:

"We are new members but we have been formally studying our own local horned lizard population for 2 years now. We seem to have a healthy population of *P. cornutum* (the only species we have found) as well as many harvester ant nests in our area. Our home is NW of Willcox, AZ in the Sulphur Springs Valley. We thought you might appreciate seeing our data from this year.

We really are glad that there is a Society devoted to *Phrynosoma* and we enjoy receiving *Phrynosomatics!*"

(Note: The Saengers sent us five pages of data including dates of captures, snout-to-vent lengths, weights of the lizards, a map of their study area, and a methods description. Please remember that the Saenger family is in Arizona. This sort of detailed report from the average citizen would have been illegal to collect in Texas. With work like this, perhaps Arizona Horned Lizards will never become as rare as they are in Texas today. Thank you. We love hearing from a family who appreciates what they have. Keep up the good work!)

On the net we received this note:

"We recently had a horny toad living in our flower beds and around our house. This is the first time I had ever seen one, and I am 29 years old. It was awesome. We never touched it, but we only saw it three or four times, and then the next time we saw it, it was dead. I can't figure out why it might have died. Any suggestions? The kids and I were very sad to see that it was not alive anymore. We live just outside of Keene, Texas, that's in Johnson County. Please answer with any info you may have."

[We have an e-mail address but not the author's name.]

-- Bill Brooks

A CONVERSATION WITH TOM McCAIN

Sunday, March 26, Leigh Sanders and I visited Austin's Rodeo. The reason we went to the festival was not to view the animals (even though Leigh had recently acquired a horse). We went to the fair to meet a long time HLCS supporter, Tom McCain of the "Horny Toad Connection" (photo on p5). We were glad we did.

This jovial guy had a booth with so many horny toad items for sale. I'd never seen this much horny toad paraphernalia at one place. He had hat bands, pins, tie tacks, statues, black iron cut-outs and much, much more. It was great!

I had horny toad sculptures in my own personal collection that I didn't even know Tom had done. Some of his work is lost wax casting and some of his art used Larry Wisdom's replicas for his models. I especially liked Tom's hand painted pewter pieces.

Tom is on the rodeo circuit. He's on the road and away from his New Mexico home more than 222 days of the year. In Texas, you can catch him at the Austin, Fort Worth, and San Antonio rodeos, as well as the Texas State Fair in Dallas.

Since 1980, when Tom made his first Horned Lizard replica, he's expanded his line to include five different species of Horned Lizards. He's on the road so much, he's met many of our members and has been a tireless apostle and supporter who spreads the HLCS conservation message wherever he goes.

If you get the chance to visit with Tom, I strongly recommend you do so. You can get his schedule if you contact him at:

PO Box 295 Sandia Park, NM 87047

1-800-667-5574

and on line at

www.hornytoadsonline.com

It's always a pleasure to meet someone who works so hard to "spread the word".

Thanks, Tom.

-- Bill Brooks

Web-Site

Web-site of Interest! If you are interested in a web-site that has a searchable database of plant and animal species from field and other guides, try this one:

<http://www.enature.com/>

TEXAS CHAPTER NEWS

Snaketales, A Snake-Friendly Fest at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center

by Bill Brooks

In January, Frances Jackson, the Marketing Project Director of the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, found me via the HLCS website and contacted me. Ms. Jackson invited the HLCS to help out with the first of its kind Snake (and reptile) Friendly Fest at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. It was to be an alternative to Rattlesnake Round-Ups, *which caught my imagination immediately!* I have never been a big fan of the typical rattlesnake round-up/carnival.

On Saturday, March 11, Leigh Sanders and I took off for Glen Rose, a small town about 200 miles north of Austin. Fossil Rim is close to the Dinosaur Valley State Park and the Paluxy River, a great kayaking river after rain has filled its banks.

With the trunk and back seat of my Toyota filled with handouts and exhibits, we left Austin at 10:30 a.m. We leisurely enjoyed wildflowers and redbud trees blooming along the highway. After short stops to enjoy the views and grab a burger at a small town cafe, we arrived at about 3 pm.

We checked in with Frances and she directed us to the Conservation Camp, Zebra Cabin, where we were supposed to spend the night. Do you remember the second weekend in March? That was our last cold front of the winter. It was freezing that night. This screen shelter was much too cold to partake of Fossil Rim's hospitality.

We decided to drive through the park which, according to the brochure, would take 3 hours to drive through the 2,700 acres, and they weren't kidding. We saw some of the more-than-1000 threatened and endangered free-roaming animals that reside here and were impressed with their conservation and breeding programs. Animals I found most interesting were the Bleskop, Arabian Oryx, Dama Gazelle, Zebras, Reticulated Giraffe, Cheetah, Wildbeast, and Rhinos. You really haven't lived until a giraffe sticks his head inside your car window.

After this adventure, we went into town for a great catfish dinner at Donna's Restaurant. It was heavenly. Later, as I mentioned before, we wimped out of the free camping at Fossil Rim's safari camp and got a hotel room in Glen Rose.

First thing Sunday morning, we were up and out early. We wanted to check out the numerous dinosaur tracks at Dinosaur Valley State Park. The ranger station was constructed of limestone rocks with dinosaur scenes that also provided informative exhibits inside.

Once we got past the station, there were a 70-foot Apatosaurus and a 45-foot tall Tyrannosaurus rex models. Both were donated to the park in 1970 by the Atlantic Richfield Company after they finished their stint at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

Inside the park, in the river bed of the Paluxy River, there were gobs of dinosaur tracks. This is where the Chicago Museum of Natural History and the Texas Memorial Museum excavated sets of tracks to be used for displays.

We couldn't spend much time at the park. We needed to be back at Fossil Rim by 10 am to set up for the show that was to begin at 11am. It was quite a show. We set up outside the restaurant and gift shop located at the midway point in the drive-through tour.

About a dozen of the members of the North Texas Herpetological Society were

there with bunches of their pets. There were also Native American dancers, an African story teller, a snake slither game for the kids and snake-sock puppets to be made.

Joe Frank came down from Chicago for the event. He is an employee of the National Humane Society and is currently working on alternatives to traditional rattlesnake roundup fairs. He stated his case quite eloquently, considering he had just driven in from taking photographs at the Sweetwater Rattlesnake Roundup the night before.

It was quite a family affair. Leigh and I handed out lots of HLCS information and tons of coloring pages to the kids.

The event ended at 4pm. I was pleased at the response the crowd gave us. I was very happy with the gracious manner all the staff at Fossil Rim treated us. Apparently, Fossil Rim liked what we did, too.

This first Snaketales Fest may become an annual event. They'd like us to come back.

I'd like to see this become a regular HLCS public event. It's a good one. Thanks again to one and all who made this trip a success.

Daisy Scouts in Smithville

I did the slide presentation with the little Daisy Scouts. I showed the models to both the scouts and a small group of homeschoolers on a park day.

They were very interested and excited. A mom said she used to see a lot of them when she was young. One of the girls was familiar with them and said she had seen one. I told them that we would like to have them call if they see them again.

It was a new idea to them that fire ants could be detrimental to harvester ants.

One of the things the kids in both groups were impressed with was the life-likeness of the painted rubber models! Many asked if there was any place they could get more hands-on models, activities, and books.

I also handed out literature to parents. The coloring sheets were not that big of an interest.

--Dail Hershberger

UPCOMING TEXAS EVENTS

Earth Day, April 22, 2000

HLCS Booths at

Brazos Bend State Park near
Houston
camping allowed; contact
Cheryl Franks at (713) 943-7824

NTSU in Denton

Safari at Zilker Park in Austin in
May.

Old Rip Festival in Eastland
Saturday, September 16
See next issue of Phrynosomatics!

Wildlife Expo, Austin
first weekend in October



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PLEASE JOIN US NOW! Students/Seniors 65+: \$10, Regular: \$25, Contributing: \$50, Patron: \$100, Lifetime: \$250
(Families=\$25 for the first person and \$10 for each additional member).
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Table of Contents

President's Corner	page 1
Scott Henke	
Call for Abstracts, 4th HL Symposium	page 3
The Pet Trade and Nevada	page 4
For Sale: Nevada Herpetofauna	
Kevin Emmerich	
In Memory	page 5
Wesley G. Brown, Pharr, Texas	
Timothy A. Repp, Tucson, Arizona	
Time and Money	page 5
Clare Freeman	
HL Sighting Reports	page 6
Bill Brooks	
Texas Chapter News	page 7

