

Phry'no'so'ma'tics

noun, 1. people enthusiastically dedicated to reversing the decline and supporting the conservation of horned lizards. From the genus Phrynosoma - the horned lizards.

December 1991

The Newsletter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society

Bart's Notes -

Happy birthday HLCS! Last month we became one year old. Birthdays are a time for celebration and reflection. We had cake and ice cream at our November meeting and talked about our many accomplishments and failures, and I thought I'd make that the theme of this article: accomplishments and failures. I always like a story with a happy ending, so I'll start with the failures.

As long as I live I'll never forget the evening of November 6, 1991. What a crowd! What enthusiasm!... What happened? Let's face it, a lot of folks who came out that night in November got turned off by what they saw going on in our first few meetings. We've taken several steps to remedy the problem. Now our meetings on odd numbered months have a good program and are free from boring organizational business.

Except for returning a few vagabond horny toads back to the places from which they were taken, what can we point to and say "this has directly benefitted the horny toad population of Texas?" Well, our Research and Recovery committee has consulted with a few landowners about protecting their surviving populations, but truthfully speaking, we haven't done much of anything that has had a real impact on population recovery.

Upcoming Events

GENERAL MEETING—
Tuesday, December 10th, 7 p.m.
Austin Nature Center

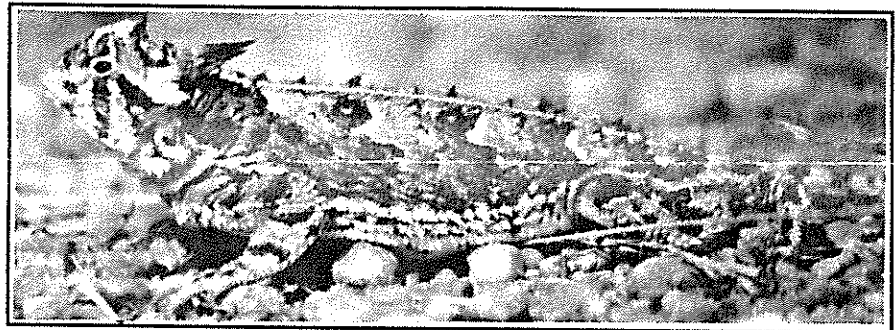
RESEARCH AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE —
meets next on Saturday, December 14th at 5 p.m. at the home of Melanie Typaldos (7611 Hawkeye). Bring something to drink and munch on. Call Melanie at 288-5291, or Wendy Donaldson at 499-0158 for more information.

What about all those new chapters in places like Ft. Worth, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio? They don't exist, and the prospects look dim at this point. We haven't filed for 501(C)(3) yet, and we haven't succeeded yet in raising the money for the statewide population survey. Enough of the bad news, now for the good news.

Boy, isn't this a great newsletter? For such a new and small organization we've got the finest newsletter I've ever seen. And how about those t-shirts? We've got the bylaws finished. We've got over a thousand dollars in the

writer from Dallas who's so affable and enthusiastic. Well, it seems he's been having serious problems finding a place and bringing together the people necessary for a Dallas chapter. If a gregarious guy who's as charming and outgoing as Wally is can't do it, I'm beginning to wonder if it can be done at all outside our fair city.

In many ways we resemble another group: Bat Conservation International. They've been quite successful at raising money and people's consciousness. They have thousands of members world-wide, but they have only one



general account and Bill Davis probably has that much or more in inventory. Membership is over 120 and growing.

I received a wonderful letter from Larry D. McKinney, Ph.D., Director of the Resource Protection Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife. On the Friday before our December meeting Wendy and I will be attending a day-long meeting at Parks entitled "Endangered Species Reintroduction and Restoration in Texas." Not only will the subject matter be of great interest, but we'll have the opportunity to meet a lot of people who share our interests.

I've been rethinking one issue in particular, the multiple-chapter concept. When we put the bylaws together we anticipated forming chapters in several cities in Texas and, possibly, in other states. Well, theory is one thing, practice is another. I placed an ad in the TCU *Daily Skiff* (student newspaper) asking TCU football fans to meet us at Scholz Garten after the game. Nobody showed up.

Many of you remember meeting Wally Chariton at Susan and Tom Curry's party last August. Wally is the

chapter, here in Austin. I'm not quite ready to say that I've given up on the multiple-chapter concept completely, but I've given up on the idea of trying to see to it that we have people elected to our first board of directors who are outside of Austin.

Which brings me to some final thoughts on our organizational structure. Deborah Denner has resigned from our board of directors and I'll be calling for nominations and a vote for her replacement at our December meeting. Jack Morse has done a fine job filling in for Deborah and I'd like to recommend him for the job. Also, the new bylaws call for the creation of a nominating committee in December and I'm hopeful that those of you who are interested in HLCS will make it a point to attend our December meeting. As that huge crowd who attended our first meeting last year clearly shows, enthusiasm for horny toads is out there. The key is to provide the leadership and ideas needed to harness that enthusiasm. Now is the time for all good horny toaders to come to the aid of their society! ▲

— Bart Cox

Letters

On a nice postcard of a Gila Monster came this message . . .

Dear Ms. Jenkins,
I hope you will expand the focus, not only for phrynosoma in Texas, but wherever they are found. I have noted a sharp decrease in populatins in Arizona in the past 25 years. Insecticides??
Enjoy your newsletter.

Sincerely,
Tom Taylor
Editor
Arizona Herpetological Associaiton.

Auction Items Requested

At the November general meeting, I brought a quilt that my mother had donated to our organization. I am currently seeking other items that can be used to raise money in an auction. The items can be anything: gift certificates from local restaurants, movie theatres, airline tickets, framed artwork..... I hope to hold the auction the last week of January. If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Wendy Donaldson 499-0158.

Give Horny Toad Gifts for Christmas!



T-shirts, pins, earrings, necklaces, key rings, hood ornaments, posters, books!

And don't forget about our Horny Toad Season's Greetings cards.

(Available at the next meeting.)

Bill's Notes —

The October Meeting

At our October meeting, Melanie did a speakie on ants. I was late and missed a lot of it but the part on how "Logic" works to rid you of ants is interesting. It's not like your standard poison that just kills 'em, Logic ingested makes the queen produce lazy ants only, so they all starve eventually. I thought about pointing out that my yard is fire ant free, but it's because I keep the entire yard toxic with Dursban, Diazinon and Malathion crystals. I figured I'd get an argument from those pesky environmentalists. Also, Melanie says ants and wasps are from the same family tree. Thank you god for those two.

Wendy brought her video from the California research trip. I was amazed at HOW BIG the transmitters roped on those poor Horny Toads were. These guys they're studying had a brown ball bearing with antenna strapped to their backs. Even if it were as light weight as Wendy says, come mating season, everyone looks like Quasimodo. I think we can all guess how much action *he* got. I didn't catch the researcher's name in the video but he once starred in "Grizzly Adams, the younger years." Wendy advised not to stick your arm down any hole if you don't know what's in it. Good by me. We also got to see a half eaten Horny Toad. I could have missed that. A lot of footage on how they wire their research lizards for sound. The lizard did not look happy.

Bart droned on and on about upcoming By-Laws, elections, etc. If anyone uses the December meeting to try and screw up the By-Laws I will heckle them unmercifully. *If you have a problem with the By-Laws, voice it now!*

The last of the meeting was used to plan the fun raising event the weekend of the 12th.

Live Oak Festival

Susan Torrance and I sat amongst the cedar trees, snorting, sneezing, and blowing our noses. Yes, a beautiful shady park and I'm allergic to all of it. The booths did vary, everything from Gerontology (what the hell is that!), to the bark people. As in tree bark. Sales were slow in the morning. I sold some hood ornaments, but only after I assured everyone that they were real Horny Toads dipped in gold. Com'on, just kidding.

Once again the most interest came from native Texans who were kids in the 50s and 60s. They ALL wanted to know what happened to all the Horny Toads. Susan and I stumbled through the 3 big reasons, again and again and again and again.

One couple came all the way from Amarillo after reading a news article about our society in the "Sour Grapes" publication. I wish I knew which member wrote that brilliant yet emotionally inspiring article.

So, how'd we do? Between both set ups we cleared \$300. Thank you volunteers. Keep in mind, Christmas is coming up. Let's spread our Horny Toad cheer amongst our friends and relatives. We have plenty of everything to sell. How bout those new "Seasons Greetings" cards!

Finally, my special thanks to Susan Torrance who sat next to me at the Live Oak Festival for 8 hours!! A tribulation no mortal should have to bear.

— Bill Davis



In September, a group of Research and Recovery committee members and friends traveled to Smithville to study horned lizards at the home of Mollie DuBois. Pictured from left to right are: (front) Philip Waters (son of Melanie Typaldos), Wendy Donaldson, Joyce Snodgrass, Mollie DuBois, and her neighbor; (back) Rick Smith and Lynn Virta.

(All photos in this issue were taken on this day in Smithville by Melanie Typaldos.)



Horny Toad Safari

Lyrics by Glen Alyn (a poem/rap/song)

Verse 1:

When I was young, we'd go outside
Where the Texas prairie, was big an wide
We'd gear all up, for a horny toad hunt
In a big old cardboard box, we'd put them little runts

We'd fill the back yard, with prehistoric monsters
Bristling with spears, they looked preposterous
They looked so terrible, made us feel so powerful
To catch em an gaze, til we got an eyeful

They didn't hurt us, we didn't hurt them
We'd catch em all, an let em go again

REFRAIN

Horny Toads, all over the place
Crawlin all around, Spittin blood in my face
Ugly little buggers, I loved em all
Now they ain't hardly no, Horny toads — at all

Verse 2:

They say the Green Revolution's, given hell to pay
Made war on the bugs, Made war on earth's way
All them chemicals, got in our food
Given us cancer, put us in a bad bad mood

For a horny toad bugs, are his delicatessen
When you poison all a them, They're a hell of a mess in
New age dinosaurs, so tiny an bright
Nature's alter ego, for the forest sprite
Crawlin cross the prairie, like a time forlorn
When man feared and respected, big things with horns

Now all I want for my kids, when they grow up high
Is a world full of creatures, with horny toads in sight

REFRAIN

I said Horny toads
I said horny horny horny horny horny toads

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Thanks to Bill Oliver and Glen Alyn, two local singers/
songwriters who generously sent us the lyrics to their songs so
that we could reprint them for your enjoyment. Also below is
another "horny toad" song you may be able to sing this
Christmas season (you know how it goes).
Support our local musicians!

The Twelve Days of Christmas Texas Style

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me . . .

12 bulls a snorting
11 tumbleweeds
10 politicians
9 horned toads
8 Dallas Cowboys
7 bucking broncos
6 bluebonnets
5 mockingbirds
4 prickly pears
3 oil wells
2 pairs of spurs
and an armadillo in an oak tree

(Reprinted from Ellie Rucker, The Austin American Statesman,
December 1, 1991.)

Have to Have a Habitat

Lyrics by Bill Oliver

REFRAIN:

Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat
You have to have a habitat to carry on

Verses:

The ocean is a habitat, , a very special habitat
It's where the deepest water's at, , it's where the biggest mammal's at
It's where our future food is at, , it keeps the atmosphere intact
The ocean is a habitat that we depend on

The forest is a habitat, a very special habitat
It's where the tallest trees are at, it's where a bear can scratch her back
It keeps the ground from rolling back, renews the oxygen,
in fact
The forest is a habitat that we depend on

The river is a habitat, a very special habitat
It's where the freshest water's at, for people, fish and muskrat
But when the people dump their trash the river takes the biggest rap
The river is a habitat that we depend on

People are different than foxes and rabbits
Affect the whole world with our bad habits
Better to love it while we still have it
Or rat-ta-tat-tat, our habitat's gone.

Guitar Chords: G, Em, C, D

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A Research & Recovery Committee Communication . . .

Phrynosoma Phacts

by Melanie Typaldos

I still welcome questions and comments although I haven't gotten too many so far! If you want to discuss the information in this article, or if you'd like to suggest a topic for a future column, see me at the monthly meeting or drop me a line:

Melanie Typaldos, P.O. Box 18494, Austin, Texas 78760

A Tale of Three Lizards

In this month's article, I would like to discuss the three species of horned lizards which occur in Texas. These three species are: the beloved Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*), the roundtail horned lizard (*P. modestum*) found commonly in west Texas, and the short-horned lizard (*P. douglassi*) which has only small, isolated populations in Texas.

Most of the members of HLCS are familiar with the Texas horned lizard. In general it is their familiarity with this lizard and their concern for its future that prompted them to join our group. But each member of the genus *Phrynosoma* (which contains all of the horned lizards) is a special animal well worth knowing and understanding. Before I joined HLCS, over a year ago now, I hadn't seen any of the three Texas species in the wild. Coming from California, I was familiar with the Coast (*P. coronatum*) and Desert (*P. platyrhinos*). I can say that it has been a great pleasure to see the three Texas species and to learn about how they each interact with their environment and with each other.

Identification & Distribution

The Texas horned lizard can be found throughout the state of Texas (with the possible exception of the north-eastern edge), Oklahoma, most of Kansas, the eastern half of New Mexico and a tiny corner of south-eastern Arizona. This is one of the most heavily spined of the horned lizards. The Texas horned lizard sports four prominent spines on the back of its head, a small spine above each eye, a row of spines along the lower jaw, multiple spines on its back and two fringes of spines running along each side of its body. It is the only Texas species to have a light stripe running down its back. The belly of this lizard may be heavily marked with dark spots, may have only a few dark spots or may be immaculate. Sherbrooke gives the snout-vent length of this lizard as 2.75-4.5 inches. The record snout-tail length is just over seven inches.

The roundtail horned lizard, *P. modestum*, inhabits the western half of the state of Texas, the southern half of

New Mexico and a tiny corner of south-eastern Arizona. While the Texas horned lizard might be described as the "horniest" of the horned lizards, the roundtail could probably be described as the least horny. The roundtail has only four diminutive spines along the back of its head and no spines on its back or sides. This lizard is typically tan in color with dark bands on the tail and dark markings on the neck. The belly is completely devoid of spots. This is a small horned lizard with an adult size of 2.25-4.0 inches snout-vent length.

The last Texas species is the short-horned lizard, *P. douglassi*, which has the widest range of any horned lizard. In fact, the short-horned lizard ranges all the way into southern Canada — farther north than any other species of iguanid lizard. Of that tremendous range, only a tiny fraction is in the state of Texas, in the mountainous areas of the far west including the Guadalupe Mountains and the Davis Mountains. The short-horned lizard is intermediate in "spiny-ness" between the Texas horned lizard and the roundtail. It has a central notch in the row of spines along the back of the head and a single row of fringe scales along its sides. There is no light dorsal stripe. This is another small lizard with an adult snout-vent length of 2.25-4.0 inches.

Although these lizards all overlap in range, it is easy to tell them apart. The Texas horned lizard has two fringes of scales along the sides of its body and very large horns on the back edge of its head. The short-horned lizard has a single fringe of scales along the side of its body and much shorter horns on its head, with a gap in the center. The roundtail horned lizard has no fringe of scales along its body and small, evenly spaced horns on the back of its head. Although it might seem that you would need to get up pretty close to the lizard to be able to tell them apart, nothing could be farther from the truth. Each species is so distinctive that even a glance can quickly differentiate them.

Horned lizards have given me the excuse I needed to travel around west Texas. Having been in the state for only two years, I think I've seen more of it, at least the western two thirds, than most

people. When I traveled I took note of where I saw any horned lizards, living or dead. I was never able to spot a short-horned lizard while in Texas, the only one I saw was in north-eastern New Mexico. Although I have been able to spot three roundtails, all three have been from the same area around Seminole Canyon State Park in Val Verde county. I have had much more luck with the Texas horned lizard, having spotted it in eight counties: Val Verde, La Salle, McMullen, Karnes, Bastrop, Coryell, Briscoe, Howard and Ward.

Ecology

In Texas, there are areas where all three species occur. In fact, both the Texas and the roundtail horned lizards occur over most of west Texas. It is one of the premises of evolutionary theory that two species cannot use exactly the same resources in the same area. Whenever two species utilize the same resource, they compete with each other for that resource. This competition eventually results in the species evolving to different resource usages, or to the extinction of one species. How then do the three species of horned lizards in Texas partition the available resources so that each can manage to survive?

First, I'll introduce a few terms:

sympatry — The area of geographical overlap in the range of two or more species.

allopatry — This describes the area outside of the range of geographical overlap for two or more species.

syntopy — This refers to the coexistence of two or more species in the same habitat in a specific area.

The reason for defining these terms is to show that these concepts exist and are important in ecological research. This is why:

The Texas horned lizard, the roundtail horned lizard and the short-horned lizard are all sympatric in the area of the Davis Mountains in western Texas. They are not all syntopic in this area though. The short-horned lizard is confined to the higher elevations within this range. It is better adapted to cold climates than the other species. In this way, the short-horned lizard avoids competition with the two related species.

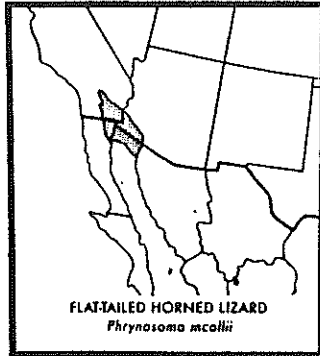
I have found both the Texas horned lizard and the roundtail horned lizard at the campground in Seminole Canyon State Park. Since this campground is not a very diverse habitat, the Texas horned lizard and the roundtail can be called syntopic in this area. Since two species cannot coexist if they utilize

continued on page 5

Facts about Flat-Tails

By Wendy Donaldson

The flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*) has a limited range, occurring in the southwestern corner of Arizona and in isolated sections of California and into Mexico (see map).



From: *Western Reptiles and Amphibians*, Robert C. Stebbins (*Peterson Field Guides*).

Threats to the lizards' habitat have led to a federal classification of the flat-tailed as a Candidate 2 Category species (the same classification as the Texas horned lizard, *P. cornutum*), and it receives special protection prohibiting collection in California and Arizona.

Flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL) populations have been monitored sporadically since 1978 by the Bureau of Land Management, biologists at the University of California-Riverside, and the California Fish and Game Department. In 1986, Barbara Carlson and W. Mayhew submitted a petition to have the FTHL listed as an endangered species. They claim that 95% of optimal habitat is subject to use-oriented activities, including off-road vehicle recreation, pesticide use, and oil, gas, and

geothermal leases. Despite increasing evidence of habitat alteration and destruction, neither the state nor federal governments have changed the status of the FTHL.

I visited Dr. Allan Muth at the Boyd Deep Canyon Desert Research Center near Palm Desert, CA, during August. Allan Muth, along with Tracey Weiss and Mark Fisher, were concluding their second summer of research on a FTHL population southwest of the Salton Sea. My objective was to gain hands-on experience in horned lizard field work. Donald Montgomery accompanied me and video taped much of the field work.

Every adult FTHL was marked by sewing three beads onto the lizard's tail with surgical wire. This marking technique allows the lizard to be identified again in the field without being picked up. Toe clipping is the most widespread form of marking lizards, but these markings can not be seen without recapturing the animal. Mark and Tracey toe clip juvenile FTHL's because their tails are too small for proper fitting of the beads. The juveniles' toes regenerate in less than a year.

Up to twenty lizards have been fitted with radio transmitters that weigh less than three grams. The transmitters look like miniature backpacks on the lizards. Using these devices, the lizards can be located every time the researchers are in the field, day and night. They have provided a plethora of biological information. Sometimes, they were unable to find a transmitter-fitted lizard on the study site, and Tracey would say that it went on a "walk-about". The next week they were in the field, they could locate the lizard in its original area.

Other interesting facts have been obtained from using the transmitters. FTHL's have three alternative postures during the night. If it is warm, they stay active until the sun goes down. A lizard either finds a burrow to sleep in, stops where ever it is and lies flat, or finds a shrub to lie under until morning. The lizards we found at night did not submerge themselves under ground; they remained on the soil surface. Mark and Tracey were also able to locate the lizards while they were hibernating. All but one lizard hibernated for the entire winter. The exception lizard appeared thinner than the other lizards and spent most of the winter foraging. Occasionally the lizard would go underground. All of the transmitter-fitted lizards survived until spring.

The transmitters have also provided some insight into the effects of off-road vehicle (ORV) recreation. Even though the study site was on a naval testing range, with no trespassing and warning signs place around the perimeter, an ORV site was just to the west. One of the transmitter-fitted lizards was found after it had been run over by an ORV operator, not on ORV property.

Many hours were also spent following lizards around for a day. A lizard would be chosen the previous evening and located. The next morning, as the sun began to rise, Tracey would take up a post and watch the lizard. For over an hour, the lizard remains motionless except for a slow rise off of the ground. Then, in a burst of movement, the lizard climbs on a rock, positions its back to the sun and basks. Sometimes, the lizards are aware that something is watching them, and it will not move even as it gets warm. The observations will terminate because the lizard can "over heat" if not allowed to move or seek shelter from the sun.

If the lizard is not bothered by the observer, it will begin foraging after it has adequately warmed up. Tracey has also observed lizards digging deep burrows for one or two hours. These burrows are necessary in FTHL habitat because very little vegetation exists, and daytime temperatures soar above 115° F. The sand will get above 140° F at times. Some of the lizards that have been followed will travel between several burrows. I do not know if these burrows are used for hibernating or if the lizards dig new ones.

Dr. Muth will be preparing an assessment of the research project that should be completed by next March. A re-examination of the status of the FTHL will be conducted by both the state of California and federal government agencies. ▲

Phrynosoma Phacts ... from page 4

exactly the same resources, this must mean that there is *resource partitioning* going on. Each species is using some subset of the available resources. For example, the larger Texas horned lizard eats large ants while the smaller roundtail horned lizard eats the smaller ant species. They may also forage at different times of the day or use different types of basking sites.

In many cases, the behavior and habitat usage of a species will be different in the area of sympatry verses the allopatric areas. For example, the Texas horned lizard might be more likely to feed occasionally on small ants in areas where the roundtail does not occur than

in areas where the two species are syntopic. ▲

References:

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Herbie the Horned Toad

by Mary Arena

I am sending you my story on Herbie The Horned Toad. If you can use it in the newsletter, then I would be honored. It is a true story. My twelve year old daughter Teresa spent the entire summer away from home. I wrote this story for her as a letter. The first thing she did when she returned to Texas was to ask about Herbie. She wanted to see where he was buried.

I did not know much about horned toads until after Herbie passed away. A relative of mine works for the Department of the Interior, and she gets your newsletter. She told me about the habits of horned toads. I read the newsletter, and it informed me further. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Arena

Once there was a nice lady called Mary who loved to jog around the Adobe Wells Country Club about 8 o'clock every night. One evening it started to rain hard while Mary jogged, so she found shelter under a carport. When the rain stopped, Mary walked back to her mobile home to get her pink umbrella. Again she went out around Adobe Wells.

As Mary came to Harvey Lane, she noticed a horned toad sitting still in a puddle. It did not move when she touched it. Something was wrong. Mary picked up the creature and placed it inside her opened umbrella which was turned up-side-down. Mary saw that the horned toad was barely breathing.

At her home, she placed it in a show box with dirt and grass. Mary named her new pet Herbie. She killed some red ants for Herbie to eat but he didn't want food. Mary watched her horned toad carefully.

The next day Mary took Herbie to the University of Texas. He was probably the first horned toad to attend a class there. She showed Herbie to her friends. However, Herbie still didn't move or breathe. A friend, Joe, who knew about horned toads told Mary that Herbie purposely paralyzed himself because he was scared. Mary felt awful. She didn't want to scare him. Joe also told her that Herbie looked as if he was blind.

Mary took Herbie home, and she continued to watch him. She decided to set Herbie free. She placed him at the edge of the carport. He didn't run. The next morning Herbie was still in the same spot. For the next two days, Mary talked to Herbie. He just sat still. Mary worried. He just jumped once.

One morning she came out to talk to Herbie but he was gone. Mary figured

that he finally ran away to freedom. She decided that Herbie was all better. But he was not.

The following day when Mary came home from the university, she noticed something sitting still at the edge of the carport. It was Herbie! He came back to Mary all by himself. He needed her. Mary ran to Herbie but it was too late. This time Mary knew that something was very wrong. He was dead. She was sad.

It is a rare occurrence in this hard world. A horned toad and nice lady became friends. Herbie must have loved Mary because she was good company for him during his last days. He came back to her. Mary would take care of him, and she did. Mary buried Herbie in her backyard she said a prayer, and placed a tiny cross where Herbie rested.

At the University, Joe asked Mary about Herbie. She told him what happened. Joe said it was really amazing that a human could bond across all boundaries with a creature like Herbie. ▲

Newsletter Input

Please help build this newsletter! We need articles, graphics, maps etc. Send to: Marcia Jenkins, c/o The Reference Press, 6448 Hwy. 290 East, Suite E-104, Austin, Texas 78723. Articles of more than 100 words must be: (1) typed originals, or (2) provided on a Mac or PC disk. Deadline for articles is first day of the month. Questions? Call Marcia Jenkins at 454-7778 weekdays or 512-321-7579 eves.

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