

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 15, Issue No. 1

FEBRUARY 2010

Hope for the Future – Young Horned Lizards Abound at Matagorda Island

by Lee Ann Linam

By Lee Ann Linam

Though the weather was hot, the horned lizards were out during an HLCS field trip to Matagorda Island on the central Texas coast July 30–31, 2009. Staff at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge again provided wonderful arrangements for six HLCS members and two video crews during the overnight trip.



*Texas Horned Lizard with florescent dusted patch leaving a trail on the ground behind him.
Photo by Stefanie Leland.*

Matagorda Island, located in Calhoun County, is a 38-mile-long barrier island accessible only by boat. Over its long history it has been used by Civil War soldiers, as a cattle ranch, as a U.S. Air Force World War II training site, and most recently as a National Wildlife Refuge unit jointly managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Fort Hays State University (Kansas) graduate student, Ashley Inslee and her field assistant, Georgina Jacquez, were our hosts for the trip. Ashley is studying habitat use and diet of horned lizards on the island and has also been hired by the Fish and Wildlife Service to coordinate Kemp's Ridley sea turtle surveys and conduct other biological work on the island.

Ashley piloted our boat over to the south end of Matagorda Island, passing brown pelicans and a magnificent frigate bird on the way. Our first objective was to conduct some road cruise surveys for horned lizards while traveling to check some drift fences on the north end of the island. During the long drive over

the length of the island we captured one adult horned lizard and two juveniles, helping Ashley to pass the 100 lizard mark for this season! Data were collected on the lizards, and the female was marked for fluorescent powder tracking. A small patch of rabbit fur was glued to her belly, and the patch was dusted with fluorescent orange powder. The fur eventually comes off but usually the fur is removed once the period for tracking is complete. She was released at her original point of capture, with the intent that we would return later that night to track her path using black lights. Ants were also collected at the site, as Ashley is using isotopes in the ants and in horned lizard tissue to determine the diet of the lizards.

Continued on page 3

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Before our arrival Ashley had activated some drift fences on the north end of the island that had been fitted with funnel traps. We made a stop to check those fences, but, despite some previous success she had in capturing snakes and small mammals in the traps, nothing was there that day. Like most of Texas, Matagorda Island has been experiencing drought conditions, and wildlife activity appears to have been very slow over the past several months.

After a picnic lunch on the beach where we also enjoyed looking at the numerous sand dollars and other sea shells, we traveled south on the beach to a location where Turtle Patrol volunteers had seen the tracks of a Kemp's Ridley sea turtle approximately two months earlier. Seven Kemp's Ridleys nested on Matagorda this year, and normally volunteers work with

refuge staff to collect the eggs so that they can be incubated and given a head-start in captivity; however, volunteers and staff were unable to locate this nest for collection, so staff had been hop-

ing to detect hatchlings on the beach. Although we were there during the predicted hatching period, we did not have the luck to see the young turtles.

No more reptiles were seen on the drive back to the bunkhouse for dinner; however, we did manage to complete a very nice raptor list for the trip, including sightings of caracara, white-tailed hawks, osprey, a peregrine falcon, and an aplomado falcon, which has been reintroduced to the island by the Peregrine Fund. Watering holes were also full of bird life, including many roseatte spoonbills, wood storks, black-bellied whistling ducks, mottled ducks, and black-necked stilts.

As darkness closed in we traveled back to the site where we had found the female horned lizard earlier in the day. As



Georgina Jacquez and Scott Kiester sample the vegetation where a horned lizard was found while Lee Ann Linam records data. Photo by Alan Fisher.

Ashley and Georgina turned on their black lights, a glowing orange trail appeared through the recently-burned cordgrass. With a bit of detective work we could see where the lizard had paused during the day, where she had climbed up into vege-



Carolyn Todd with horned lizard. She is being filmed by TPWD videographer Alan Fisher. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.



Georgina Jacquez measuring the height and type of ground cover where a lizard is found and recorded. Photo by Scott Kiester.



Carolyn Todd (center) is holding a captured adult horned lizard for data collection. Ashley Inslee (from the US Fish and Wildlife Service) and Scott Kiester look on. Photo by Alan Fisher.



Georgina Jacquez holds ants that have been collected from where horned lizards were found. Scott Kiester is in background. Photo by Alan Fisher.



Horned lizard with attached rabbit fur patch. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.

tation—perhaps to cool off, and, finally, where she had stopped and buried herself in for the night.

Part of the crew then continued on to another site where another horned lizard had been previously fluorescent-marked. The group was able to interpret two days of movements, only to discover that the lizard had returned to the exact same spot where she was originally captured and marked!

These marking studies are shedding remarkable “light” on how horned lizards use the habitat available to them and may offer man-



Juvenile Horned Lizard. Photo by Stefanie Leland.

agement guidance for the agencies managing the island.

Early the next morning the sun was up and hot and so were we—this time surveying the south end of the island, probably the area with the densest horned lizard population. Quickly someone spotted a juvenile horned lizard, and, as data was being collected on that lizard, volunteers began walking further down the unpaved shell road, checking the median and roadsides. Young horned lizards were everywhere! During a couple of hours we captured one adult male horned lizard and about nine more young horned lizards. It looks like it was a good production year on Matagorda Island!

By noon we and the vehicles were covered in dust, so we began the clean-up process and re-



Stephanie Leland with juvenile horned lizard. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.

loaded ourselves into the boat for the trip back to the mainland and the boat dock at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. As we drove home, I’m sure thoughts of sand and sun and nickel-sized horned lizards--all awaiting a future HLCS field trip--filled all our heads...



HLCS Has a Birthday Coming Up!

By Bill Brooks

2010 is a big year for the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. In November of 2000 the HLCS held its first organizational meeting. This year we will be 20 years old! Birthdays are a time for the Society to look at where we have been and plan for where we want to go. To this end, we are planning a 20 year anniversary edition of *Phrynosom-*

matics and we are hoping many of our members will contribute to this edition. As a retrospective, we are planning on republishing some of our favorite articles from the last 10 years. (We published a best of *Phrynosomatics*, the first 10 years, in 2000.) Leslie Nossaman and Bill Brooks are making a list of the major articles from the last 10 years and these will be listed in our May 2010 issue. Hopefully you, as mem-

bers, will contact Bill with your favorites after reviewing this list or now if you already know!

As we look forward, we are also interested in your thoughts and ideas regarding how the HLCS is doing and how we should improve in 2011 and perhaps the next 10 years. We want your thoughts. Please contact Bill Brooks at <bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu>.



2010 Biennial Meeting and Twentieth Anniversary Observance

By Jill Heatley

HLCS will hold their biennial meeting on April 29–May 2 in College Station. This year's conference also commemorates the Society's 20th Anniversary. Scientific and popular presentations about horned lizards will be given on April 29–30. A field trip is scheduled for May 2. The meeting will be held at the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical

Sciences at Texas A&M University in conjunction with a veterinary meeting for continuing education entitled Conservation Horizons.

Since this meeting will also commemorate the Society's 20th Anniversary, the organization is fortunate to have some whose membership has been retained since the founding year of 1990. A special presentation relating to that

history is planned.

Jill Heatley, president-elect, who is planning the meeting, asks for prospective presenters to email their titles to her at jheatley@cvm.tamu.edu. by February 7. Papers of popular nature should include statement of content. If selected, abstracts are due March 20. More information can be found on the HLCS website www.hornedlizards.com.



Important Reminder about *Phrynosomatics* Future!

By Lenee Weldon

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society needs to spend less of the budget on postage and printing and more on conservation efforts. Our primary expense in this category is our quarterly newsletter, *Phrynosomatics*. In November 2009, we began delivering the newsletter electronically to our members. Aside from our savings, the ma-

ior benefits to you are 1) you'll be able to see photos in color and 2) you'll receive the newsletter faster. It is also a more ecofriendly method to distribute information in this digital age.

Knowing that not all of our members are able to access the newsletter electronically, a hard copy can still be mailed. Please let us know **in writing** if we need to continue sending

the newsletter by mail. If you did not receive the November issue by email, please **send your current email address to:** lenee.weldon@gmail.com

Other correspondence may be sent to: Lenee Weldon, 926 Terry Trail, Weatherford, TX 76086

Thanks very much for your membership and support!



2008 Grant Recipient Report

By Emily Henry

From May to November of 2008 I used radio transmitters to re-locate Texas horned lizards (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)



An adult lizard with the radio-transmitter assembly

on the Beach Ranch, which is located about 20 kilometers east of Post, Texas, to observe how they used their habitat. Each time an individual was found, I centered a quadrat over the lizard and took an overhead digital photograph which was then analyzed to determine the percentages of vegetation categories within the quadrat.

I repeated this process at a random point ten meters away from each lizard location in order to quantify the vegetation for the ranch in general. The percentages for lizard and random plots were then compared to see if the lizards used a cat-

egory more than its availability. I divided the day up into three time periods (sunrise to 11:00, 11:01 to 18:00, and 18:00 to sunset) to see if horned lizards used different types of vegetation at different times of the day.

Overall I found that the lizards used vegetation categories differently from their availability during the afternoon and evening. Bare soil and grass were used less during the afternoon while woody vegetation

was used more. In the evening, woody vegetation was again

used more, although to a lesser extent than in the afternoon, and grass was used less.

Considering that the behavior of Texas horned lizards is often determined by their need to thermoregulate, many of my results were unsurprising. Individuals were often found on bare soil during the morning hours, which is to be expected because they bask at this time to increase their body temperature after the cooler night.

During the afternoons, bare ground was replaced by woody vegetation as the preferred category. The use of grass, mostly short buffalograss, also dropped off during the afternoon. Temperatures on the ranch often rise above 40°C, which causes the lizards to seek protection from the sun to keep from overheating.

In general, grass and forbs



A female horned lizard in the photo quadrat

were often used on the Beach Ranch, but never more than their availability. I suspect that these categories are very important, but their prevalence on the ranch kept them from appearing to be selected for. On numerous occasions I found lizards

burrowed deep into the center of a grass clump during the heat of the day. I suspect that the protection afforded from this cover from both predators and the elements is equivalent to if not greater than in woody vegetation. Other grasses and forbs may be more intermediate in terms of cover offered, and therefore used only as temporary respites.

Rock was rarely used outside of human-affected areas such

as driveways and landscape beds, and never as a perching or basking site, and thus does not appear to be an important component of *P. cornutum* natural habitat.

In summary, my findings support the conclusions of previous research that Texas horned lizards need a habitat with variety of vegetation types in close proximity. Bare ground is important for basking and feeding, while plant material

provides both shade and protection from predators.

The use of woody vegetation more than its availability at all times of the day is perhaps the most surprising and significant piece of information gathered during this study. This is a category not often considered crucial for this species, and its importance should be recognized in future management activities.



Horned Lizard Research Grant 2010 Applications

By Gad Perry

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society is dedicated to protecting horned lizards by documenting and publicizing the values and conservation needs of horned lizards, promoting horned lizard conservation projects, and assisting with horned lizard management initiatives. Towards those ends, the HLCS periodically sponsors research that has direct conservation applications. To learn more about the society and past grants, go to <http://www.hornedlizards.org/>.

We will be offering two \$500 grants in 2010. These are intended to encourage the participation of non-academics in conservation. Preference in one will be given to people not associated with academic institutions; for the other, preference will be given to undergraduate or graduate students. For both, projects that have direct conservation implications, including public education, will receive a higher priority.

To apply, send a proposal detailing the goal of the study,

the rationale for it, and how your work would benefit from this opportunity. The proposal may not exceed 1000 words, excluding up to ten references. In addition, send a resume or CV and have a single letter of reference sent to: Dr. Gad Perry, Department of Natural Resource Management, Texas Tech University, Box 42125, Lubbock, Texas 79409-2125, USA. Submission by e-mail (to Gad.Perry@TTU.edu) is greatly preferred. The deadline is 1 March 2010. The decision will be announced by April 30.



Please renew your annual HLCS membership!!!
HLCS depends on its membership for its conservation and educational presence in the community.

Categories for *annual* memberships include:

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| Corporate | \$250 | | |
| <i>Lifetime</i> membership | \$300 | | |

The HLCS welcomes contributions in any amount you wish to submit and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Member Spotlight: Daniel Martin

By Daniel (Danny) Martin,
HLCS Director-at-Large



Danny Martin with a Texas horned lizard in southeastern Colorado on the HLCS round-tail horned lizard expedition, August 2009. Photo by Laura Rosen.

I was born in 1977 in the railroad town of Newton, Kansas. While I grew up within the city, I was drawn to open spaces and the great diversity of creatures therein. I must admit at this point that Harvey County, Kansas, has few historic records of horned lizards, and those records that exist may be attributed to escaped pets in the early part of the last century. However, I remember reading about horned lizards in field guides and natural history books throughout my childhood, and this particular interest was spurred on by my father, who told stories of catching Texas horned lizards as a child in his hometown of Coffeyville, just 2 miles from the Oklahoma line.

Both my parents and family

supported and enabled my interest in nature by providing me with any related literature, short local trips to natural areas and vacations to far away National Parks, and the patience to humor my ramblings about the coyote I just saw by the creek at Uncle Bob's, or that according to a book I just read, horned lizards do squirt blood from their eyes! It was not until much later, during the summer of 1999 while pursuing a B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Kansas State University that I got to see my first horned lizards in the wild...

I was working that summer for Ken Brunson, the Wildlife Diversity Coordinator for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (and one of the most knowledgeable naturalists I've had the pleasure to know). I don't recall exactly how it came to pass, but one slow day in the office I mentioned that I'd always been fascinated by horned lizards but had never had the pleasure of meeting one. Ken quickly arranged to drive me south into the Red Hills of south-central Kansas. Before the day was complete, we had observed several Texas horned lizards found while cruising the remote dirt roads. After seeing horned lizards up close, I no longer had merely a keen interest in them but became completely hooked!

After graduating in 2000, I moved to Fort Collins, Colorado. It was there that I met

Tom Mathies, a professional researcher of snake physiology and a true herpetologist. Tom was studying a population of short-horned lizards in north-eastern Colorado outside of work, on weekends. I began helping Tom with this 'weekend warrior' research, which provided us with great opportunities to learn more about this widespread species.

I unfortunately missed out on horned lizard work during a 2½ year stint pursuing a M.S. in Minnesota, but have since continued to work on various research projects on my own time. I typically volunteer an estimated 500–800 hours per year working on these projects, and many collaborators have also contributed significantly.

Through my continued involvement with both independent research and HLCS, I have been fortunate to meet and collaborate with great scientists and non-scientists! Many undergraduate students from Colorado State University have volunteered for my projects over the years, and I have in turn volunteered to help graduate students with their research.

I continue to be amazed and inspired by the people I meet, both through my research and HLCS, who care about horned lizards. It is truly exciting to continue learning from others, and I do my best to encourage those who share this interest.

I am also lucky that my girlfriend Laura (also an HLCS member) has been a reliable and willing volunteer and continues to encourage this 'hobby' even though it often takes much of my time outside of work.

This past August, David Wojnowski, Laura and I were the sole attendees on the HLCS Colorado Field Trip and documented ten round-tail horned lizards in southeastern Colorado in two days, more than doubling what we know about this species in the state!

The HLCS has been a fantastic opportunity to meet folks who share my fascination for these critters, and the diversity of its members is perhaps HLCS' greatest strength. As the


current Director-at-Large, my hope is to work with others to increase the diversity of HLCS membership even further by reaching out to public and professionals throughout North America.

Texas continues to be an excellent model for conservation and education related to horned lizards, and I hope to help extend the HLCS message to all who are interested. If I haven't met you yet, I can't wait to hear what you have to say about horned lizards! I hope to meet and learn from all of you in the coming years.

My 'real' job is with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. In addition to horned lizard research, in my spare time I enjoy racing my bicycle, wildlife and nature



Danny Martin holding a round-tail horned lizard near Terlingua in west Texas, spring 2009 on the HLCS field trip. Photo by Laura Rosen.

photography, hiking, catching tiger beetles, drawing, and spending time with my friends, family, and cats. Stay warm this hibernation season! 


Horny Toad Blood

By Clare Freeman



I sought to do a good deed last June when I stopped to shoo a horned lizard off the highway. It was reluctant to move so I finally picked it up



and - Bingo! A handful of horny toad blood. I'm lucky enough to have had the experience twice in all my years; the other time was in 1964 and the blood donor that time was *P. solare*. 

President's Message

By Joyce Roach

Of recent note there have been several books out with titles such as *What Cats Have to Teach Us*; likewise *Dogs* and *Horses*. And, one from Bright Sky Press, entitled *Learning From Longhorns*. This last title was illustrated by my beloved and departed friend, Charles Shaw, who also brought life to *Horned Toad Canyon* with not only horned lizards, but cowboys, rattlesnake, longhorn cow and calf, owl, and the magnificent setting of the Southwest—all with personified clarity; yes even the land.

For some time I've wanted to express something about what horned lizards have to teach us. Such an idea might be a far stretch for those who value the kinesthetic value of larger, furry animals. Some might even note that, outside HLCS, it's hard to love a horned, thorny, rough little lizard or to embrace the kind of country he or she usually inhabits—also thorny, brushy, stickery, arid, and rough.

When you read the next news-

letter, horned lizards will still be hibernating. And I will begin work on a special piece for our twentieth anniversary issue that will appear sometime in 2010 about November—"What Horned Lizards Have To Teach Us."

I'd like to make a beginning in the present by introducing Sylvia Manning, the wife of the late Anthony J. Weisman. I never knew the man but became acquainted with him through memorial contributions made in his name to HLCS. He was a member, but I didn't pay much attention to that. Most of you are anonymous to the Society unless we have met you personally. When contributions began pouring in after his death, it became obvious that his family and familiars knew of his interest in horned lizards and provided money in an amount to offer a grant in his name to some deserving researcher. There follows a list of names of those contributing to the grant.

And so begins the first thing horned lizards have to teach, and that is when we champion their cause, make public what

we know, print photos and publish information pertaining to their conservation, needs, perils, and even our own pleasure in these tiny creatures, then others join us and make gifts that last beyond our own and their lifetimes. It follows the old maxim that when you drop a pebble into the water, who knows how far the ripples spread.

How honored I am to introduce you to Sylvia Manning and Anthony (Tony) J. Weisman. (Read related article on next page.)

Names of donors in memory of Anthony (Tony) J. Weisman:

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Calling All Horned Lizard Survey Ideas!

By Lee Ann Linam

Do you know of some great locations for horned lizard surveys? Are you involved in a horned lizard project where you need some volunteer help? Is there just a neat place that you think we should explore?

We're looking for horned lizard

survey ideas for 2010. We'd welcome ideas for any state or any horned lizard species. Please send ideas to Lee Ann Linam (leeann.linam@tpwd.state.tx.us) to help HLCS offer some great opportunities to its members. The 2009 HLCS field trips (Terlingua, Matagorda Island, Fort Hood, and SE Colorado) are going to be hard

to beat, but let's give it a try in 2010!

Watch for details in upcoming newsletters, and make sure that our membership chair, Lenee Weldon (lenee.weldon@gmail.com), has your email address, so you can get updated on emerging opportunities.



In Memory of Anthony (Tony) J. Weisman

By Sylvia Manning

Tony and I first met in Canyon High School in Comal County. (Tony would be the Salutatorian for 1962; I was only 4th.) Then we lost track of each other until a class reunion in 1990, when our first conversation in at least 27 years, really and truly, was about horny toads, as of course we'd always called them.

I told him I had at least two at my place down in the Rio Grande Valley. He asked me if there was any chance they were male and female. I hadn't even wondered. Then he asked if there were red ants on the place. Indeed there were. Two years and many conversations later, we moved back to the Valley. We kept a horny toad-friendly place there for many years.

Tony was born in the Valley, where his grandparents had a dairy farm at Mission, but his parents soon moved with him to the New Braunfels area for his father to be a ranch manager for the Catholic Oblates. Tony's childhood in the Hill Country area — both parents working together on the place to rear a family of five. He began early to help grow and preserve food, care for animals, repair machines, do carpentry, devise ways to do things with what was at hand.

He learned to share his father's love for natural history, especially geology. Bernard Weisman taught him how to read the land for its own narrative — and



Sylvia and Tony

to believe that Nature would always prevail.

In 1996 my brother Thomas, handicapped by muscular dystrophy and brain-damage from birth, had no home. Tony gave the next nine years to my brother's needs, drawing deep from those ethics and skills he'd learned in his own childhood home. We moved to an old house in Seguin begun by Joseph Sonka, a Czech immigrant, in 1881. Historic preservation and advocacy for the handicapped became two of Tony's major concerns. With much hard work, he brought the Sonka House back from near ruin even as he gave my brother some of the best years of his life.

In these years he also managed to begin to earn a living through building construction rather than road and bridge construction. He would become a LEED certified Construction Manager

serving Slay Architecture and Engineering in San Antonio.

His way was to work humbly but steadily toward the better day when human beings understood our responsibility to each other and to other species.

Tony died suddenly when his truck veered into a rocky creek bed in Seguin, September 29. He might have been surprised to see how many friends and fellow workers would express their sense of loss for his passing. He certainly would have been pleased by the many donations in his honor to further interest in one of his favorite examples of how Nature shows her intention to survive and prevail, the little horned lizard. He'd thank each donor with his sweet smile.

Some boyhood photos are at <http://www.mem.com/Content-Display.aspx?ID=17291374>.



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Hope for the Future – Young Horned Lizards Abound at Matagorda Island | pages 1, 3 - 4 |
| Lee Ann Linam | |
| HLCS Has a Birthday Coming Up! | page 5 |
| Bill Brooks | |
| 2010 Biennial Meeting and Twentieth Anniversary Observance | page 5 |
| Jill Heatley | |
| Important Reminder about <i>Phrynosomatics</i> Future | page 5 |
| Lenee Weldon | |
| 2008 Grant Recipient Report | page 6 - 7 |
| Emily Henry | |
| Horned Lizard Research Grant 2010 Applications | page 7 |
| Gad Perry | |
| Member Spotlight: Daniel Martin | page 8 - 9 |
| Daniel (Danny) Martin | |
| Horny Toad Blood | page 9 |
| Clare Freeman | |
| President's Message | page 10 |
| Joyce Roach | |
| Calling All Horned Lizard Survey Ideas! | page 10 |
| Lee Ann Linam | |
| In Memory of Anthony (Tony) J. Weisman | page 11 |
| Sylvia Manning | |

***Phrynosomatics* is now sent electronically. Please read article on page 5.**