



Phry'no'so'ma'tics

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

February 1991

A Monthly Newsletter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society

"A New Name and Mission...Future Survival for 'Horny Toads' Unites All"

Congratulations to us! We have witnessed the birth of a healthy, new organization to be named the **Horned Lizard Conservation Society**. Its purpose will be "to collect information about horned lizards, conduct and support research into the causes for the population decline of horned lizards, raise funds, build membership, buy, sell and lease real property, develop habitat and propagate horned lizards with the aim of restoring their populations." In addition to selecting a new name and adopting a purpose statement at the January meeting the membership also elected a temporary board of directors: Bart Cox, Deborah Denner, and George Perry. This group will put together a set of bylaws which will be the initial blueprint for the charitable corporation and hopefully will have this ready for review by the general membership at our February meeting.

Bart's Notes

Hopefully most of the boring political stuff at meetings is behind us now and we can get on with things that will have a real impact on horny toad populations! Specifically we can begin to consider a variety of exciting options which I'd like to group under three headings: money, propagation and membership. At our February meeting I'll give a brief report on our present financial situation. Then I'll ask Lea Stone to give a presentation on the work her propagation committee has been doing and the plans they have made. At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, I frankly think we can anticipate a breathtaking presentation from the visionary Ms. Stone. After months of organizational BS, finally some talk about plans to work with living breathing horny toads!

Part of Lea's presentation will touch on the anticipated financial requirements for the Committee's propagation plans. The idea being that the reason we are raising funds (above basic operating costs such as the cost of

mailing out this newsletter) is to fund efforts like propagation, research and education. I think that there's a lot of money to be made off T-shirts, so those of you with artistic talent (or who know artists) be prepared to volunteer for work on a new T-shirt committee. Also, Spring is coming to Austin. What better time to think about staging a day long folk/rock benefit concert? Those of you with friends in our music community or who might have experience with other festivals, now is the time to come to the aid of your society.

Another issue which I feel merits our immediate attention is membership. If we are to succeed in restoring horned lizard populations to the levels they were in the 1940's and 50's, we're going to need all the help we can get. There is no doubt that the spontaneous enthusiasm we have witnessed here in Austin also exists in other cities. In the near future we need to send forth 'missionaries' to these cities to help organize additional chapters of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. I would particularly like to see a chapter

in Phoenix or Tucson, because that would dispel any doubts as to how Austin or Texas dominated this society might happen to be. I anticipate being fairly busy with organizational tasks (like 501c (3) myself over the next few months, so we will be proposing a new Chapter Development Committee soon.

If you want to do something to bring back the horny toads, the place to do it is working on one of our committees. At the meetings we report on what the committees have done and are planning to do in the future. If you are not already on a committee, join one! If you are on a committee and don't have something to do, call the committee leader and ask for a work assignment or suggest something you can do on your own. Please don't wait for someone to call you and give you a specific assignment. Let's take the initiative. Be imaginative! Enterprising! Above all attend our February meeting. It should be our most exciting meeting yet. Let's get busy and bring 'um back!
-Bart Cox

NEXT MEETING: February 12, 7PM • Austin Nature Center

Name Debate

For those of you who missed our January meeting and missed deciding on our group's name-it was the most exciting one yet! At first, we had about ten names to choose from-everything from "Horney Toaders" (which sounded like a bowling team) to "ThePhrynosomatics" (which sounded like some nerdy scientists with lots of medical problems). After much debate, "fist fighting" and voting, the choices were narrowed from five to two. Then the real fun began. On oneside there were the *nativelborn-again-Texans* that wanted Horned Toad used in the name. On the other side, were the *proper intellectuals* who insisted that Horned Lizard was correct and we would look like weenies without it. Naturally, alot of Texans don't care what others think-'Horny Toad' describes it best. Again, "fist fighting" broke out. In the aftermath, Bart Cox arose, counted votes and declared that Lizard had won. Mild skirmishes persisted over words like "Texas" and "Preservation", but were handled with minimal bloodshed. The Horned Lizard Conservation Society emerged. Horny Toad Lovers are planning revenge through T-shirts. -Bill Davis

Call for Logo Begins

Now that we have a name, we need a recognizable symbol (a logo) for our group! For obvious reasons it should be: an image of a horned toad (lizard). There are several distinct categories to choose from:

- 1.) a realistic, full bodied image of a horny toad,
- 2.) a realistic close-up of a horny toad's head,
- 3.) an American Indian image from picto-graphs, pottery, etc., or
- 4.) an abstraction of a horned lizard taken from any of the categories above.

I encourage all interested members to contribute an idea in the form of a drawing at our next meeting. Even the sketchiest idea can be redrawn , so

don't let a lack of professional artistry deter you from submitting an idea.

Personally, I feel that a horny toad image taken from Indian designs would be the most ideal logo, as it would strike a nice balance between realism and stylization. Also, the horned toad was revered, if not worshipped, by many Southwestern Indian tribes. These tribes believed the critters could tell your fate, even control your health. I think that using one of their designs would signify both a link between the past and present as well as our group's own reverence for horned lizards.

We could choose to have one logo for our letterhead and all official documents and choose another (several?) for t-shirts, coffee mugs, etc. We also need some suggestions for t-shirt designs, the more humorous and eye-catching, the better! -Mark Lind (Editors note: a design from Lynda Layle has already been submitted.)

Know Your Ants!

On the first sunny day of the year about fifteen members of the propagation committee met in two sessions with Dr. Vargo in his lab at the Brackenridge Field Laboratory. Each session lasted about two hours. Dr. Vargo described twelve species in detail and ably answered many questions on a variety of ant topics.

Dr. Vargo is a Research Associate with the University of Texas Department of Zoology. He is currently studying native and imported fire ants and is widely consulted for his expert knowledge.

A low aging brick building on the west end of Lake Austin Boulevard houses the indoor labs. Dr. Vargo is among many at the field station devoted to the study of the Austin ecology. A large conference table strewn with journals and periodicals dominate the main room. On one wall a bulletin board depicts with maps and graphs the explosive invasion of the Imported Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*). Dr. Vargo pointed out that as the number *invicta* colonies increased a

corresponding decrease in the number of native species was observed, as was the number of individuals observed on a per colony basis.

S. invicta has been implicated in the demise of our beloved *Phrynosoma* sp. The propagation committee headed by Lea Stone has set out to study this issue. Dr. Vargo stated that one of the best controls for the *S. invicta* is a healthy population of native ants. With 15,000 named species ~of ants worldwide and nearly 60 described from the Brac Tract a standardization of language is crucial to the systematic study of ants. Common names are inadequate to describe the many genera; ants are simply too diverse and complex.

Scientific names are both utilitarian and beautiful. Enunciated clearly they become biological poetry full of meaning. The text that follows is the author's attempt to familiarize the lay reader with the seemingly mysterious process of organismal nomenclature.

The animal kingdom is described in terms of a system of classification codified by the Code of Zoological Nomenclature. This system has been the standard by which science has maintained universal integrity since 1901.

Before Linneaus (1707—1778) plants and animals were named using combinations of Latin words often describing physical characteristics . These names were often long and cumbersome. The code prescribes that names be Latin or 'Latinized' words. Thus an animal described in English would be recognizable regardless of the readers linguistic bias. Latin is used because it is universal and static.

Scientists use a scale of nine classifications. Phylum is the most encompassing, sometimes comprising thousands of genera. Species is the most specific term. Only one type of animal takes this name. Animals may share a species name if it is shown that are capable of interbreeding. With this system any animal can be precisely pinpointed in relation to all others.

Today we use the binomial system. Each kind of animal or plant bears two