



Old Rip Festival and Bryan's Old Rip Antique Car Show

Just the Facts . . . The first "Old Rip" remote-controlled horned toad race was held September 19, 1998, in Eastland, Texas. "On your mark! Get Set! Go!!!" was the sound heard during the antique car show JUDGING TIME of Bryan Jackson's Antique Car Show [aka Bryan Jackson's HL Race of the Century].

. . . the Competitors and the Rules . . . Larry Wisdom of Blooming Grove, TX, and Bette Armstrong of Eastland, TX, designed and made these first-of-a-kind remote-controlled horned toads. There were no limits as to size or what materials could be used.

. . . and the stakes . . .

The conditions set for the race: Best-Two-Out-Of-Three Races. The winner takes all [the other racer's remote-control horned toad].

The event . . . according to Bette

The crowd surrounded the race track. Don Nicholas of Eastland graciously accepted the honor of holding up the finish line sign, which read "CAUTION HORNY TOAD X-ING".

Round One... the first race was ready to begin. Bryan held up his megaphone for "On your mark! Get Set! Go!!!"

The Eastland horned toad took off, doing a few zigs and zags on the race track. Coming up strong was the Blooming Grove toad straight as an arrow. The crowd began to cheer as the horned toads made their way down the track. The finish line was getting near, and the Eastland toad crossed the finish line FIRST!

Bryan then turned to the Eastland toad driver, Bette Armstrong, and asked her, "Who taught you to drive?"

Round Two... Back at the starting line, Bryan started the two remote-controlled horned toads on their way with another "On your mark! Get Set! Go!!!" The crowd cheered, there was a cloud of dust, and the two toads took off in the straight and determined path.

This time the Eastland toad and the Blooming Grove toad were neck and neck *zooming* down the track. As the finish line came and went, however, the Eastland toad was declared the winner!

The prize ... Larry Wisdom of Blooming Grove, TX, presented his remote-controlled horned toad to Bette Armstrong of Eastland, TX, to which she declared, "I am very proud of this prize!" **Next year ...** Larry says he will be back for revenge. We both would like to challenge anyone else who would like to join in and compete in the remote-controlled horned toad race of Eastland.

Hope to see all of you there!!!

The event . . . according to Larry

My version of how I lost the September 19, 1998, horned lizard (HL) race in Eastland is a little different than Bette's. Bette had informed me that an earlier race (Feb. '98) was conducted in the Eastland courthouse on slick concrete floors. So I purchased a radio-controlled racer with the smallest wheels available and mounted a 6x life-size HL on the chassis. It was low to the ground and worked great on my lab floor.

When I arrived in Eastland for the race, Bette would not let me see her racer. She kept it close at hand in a black bag. When she wasn't looking, I was able to feel the wheels on her racer. To my horror, they were huge and had better tread than the mud grips on my truck!

Bette then informed me that the courthouse was locked and we would be racing on concrete where the auto show was being held. The track was anything but smooth. It was like the Edwards Plateau had shifted east and now went down the middle of Eastland. I had lost before the race had even started. My racer was like a low-rider trying to transverse the Palo Duro Canyon. Bette's racer, on the other hand, had wheels and tread capable of transversing the Grand Canyon. [I later learned from Jim, her husband, that she had been practicing on this very track for several days!]

The race was just pathetic! My HL racer kept banging its nose into the concrete cliff, trying to get over, while Bette's big-tire monster didn't even slow down over the hump. Bette's parting words after she had won the race AND my racer were: "Turn it off! Turn it off! I don't want you to run down MY batteries!" *Next year, I'll get even...*

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Letter from HLCS President

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Scott Henke

Well, 1999 is already upon us and we're getting ever-closer to the new millennium. However, I have it on good authority that horned lizards are prepared for Y2K. Actually they feel that since they have an extra three months compared to the rest of us (*i.e.*, emerge from hibernation in March), most of the computer problems should be worked out by the time they arrive on the scene.

The flat-tailed horned lizard lawsuit is still active; however, there has been no major changes in its status since the last newsletter. I'll keep everyone updated as events with the lawsuit occur.

I am happy to report that our Society is growing. Richard Stark has been successful in establishing a Chapter in Oklahoma, and Lester Milroy has been contacting folks in Nevada to help establish a Chapter there. Both Chapters are a welcome edition to our Society and I thank both Richard and Lester for their hard work and efforts in making additional chapters a reality. As you recall, creating additional chapters and increasing our membership was identified in last year's survey as a priority.

I have sent a survey to each state wildlife and natural resource agency to

gather information concerning the collection, transport, trade, and sale of horned lizards in each state. I hope the information gathered will identify states that have weak regulations in place concerning horned lizards as well as identify states that have regulations in place that should be emulated by fellow state agencies. My goal in conducting this survey is to demonstrate to state agencies the need to strengthen regulations concerning horned lizards and reptiles in general. Typically, reptiles are one of the forgotten natural resources within most state agencies and, as a group, receive minimal funding. To date, very few surveys have been returned, but I will stay on top of this effort and keep members posted of the final results.

Although the opening paragraphs have been positive by announcing our progress, there is a down side. The Horned Lizard Conservation Society desperately needs your help. We are a Society based on volunteer help from its members. Although we have exceptionally dedicated members who have done a wonderful job for our Society, the plain truth is that a small group cannot successfully run the entire organization.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Several members have been in office since the inception of our Society. Because we are a volunteer Society, life often gets in

the way of completing desired tasks for the HLCS. Sometimes things don't always go the way they are planned, especially when working with volunteers who have other full time positions and families. New responsibilities with "paid" jobs arise causing delays in our abilities to respond quickly to the needs of our Society. We have all been there sometime in our respective careers. With this in mind, please be willing to come to the aid of the HLCS. No special skills are required, just a willingness to help. To give some insight about the help needed, Clare Freeman would like help with our accounting books and mailing the newsletter, Bill Brooks could use some assistance with updating the web page, Pam Allison welcomes articles for the newsletter, and I could use help with arranging our semi-annual meeting. Ideas to better the HLCS are always welcomed. Basically, there is something for everyone. Please contact me and let me know that you are willing to help. Believe me, we will never turn down your help. I can be reached at:

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Welcome, Oklahoma and Nevada Chapters!

HLCS Membership Demographics by Clare Freeman

Have you ever wondered about our demographics? How many members HLCS has and where they live?

A newsletter mailout is one way to find out, and 261 newsletters were sent in June 1998: Sixteen to other organizations or societies and 245 to HLCS members.

We have one member in Germany; 11 east of the Mississippi River; one each in Arkansas, Hawaii, and Utah; two each in Nevada, New Mexico, and Washington; three each in Colorado, Missouri, and Oregon; four in Oklahoma; eight in

Arizona; and 26 in California. Arizona is close to having enough members to become a HLCS Chapter (ten voting-level members are required).

Texas has 177 members with the Austin area having the most at 37. Thirteen members reside in the Houston area, 17 live in and around Dallas, and the Ft. Worth area can claim 20. Denton and Wichita Falls share six members as do Sherman and Irving. Seven members live in the Eastland-Stephenville area, five in the Lampasas-Killeen area, and ten members come from around Waco. San Angelo is home to another six members and Colorado City and Abilene each have one. Along the coast again, three mem-

bers are in Victoria and two in Beaumont. San Antonio boasts eight members and another six live in towns such as Seguin and New Braunfels. Six more members live in the vicinity of Artesia Wells and Kerrville. Another six call Kingsville and other south-Texas cities home. The Panhandle has a total of nine HLCS members and five others live in or near Midland, but only two members live in the Trans-Pecos.

Demographics based on the mailout of the fall newsletter have yet to be compiled, but Oklahoma is soon to form the third chapter of HLCS. The numbers are there and a committee is in place to complete the formalities.

Horned Lizards and Commercial Trade in Nevada

by Lester G. Milroy, III — President, HLCS Southern California Chapter

On December 10, 1998, I attended a meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, and addressed the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners to express concern over the practice of commercial collection of horned lizards for the pet trade. The horned lizards involved in commercial collection are the Short-horned Lizard, *Phrynosoma douglassi*, and both northern and southern subspecies of the Desert Horned Lizard, *Phrynosoma platyrhinos platyrhinos* and *Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum*, respectively.

Brad Hardenbrook, a biologist from the Nevada Division of Wildlife, presented the opening information concerning the history of the commercial collection of reptiles in Nevada and data compiled concerning numbers and kinds of reptiles collected. Data sheets were provided to show what species of reptiles were collected, as well as their numbers and the areas where they were taken. The time frames reported were 1986-1989 and 1991-1998. According to the data provided, the Desert Horned Lizard was the second most common reptile species collected. The number of Desert Horned Lizards collected in Nevada for the period of 1991-1998 was 30,392. That averages out to be 4,342 Desert Horned Lizards per year. For the period of 1986-1989, the total number of Desert Horned Lizards was 1,070 with an average of 357 per year.

The data also reflected commercial notes identifying the wholesale and retail prices for the different reptiles collected. The Desert Horned Lizard wholesale price was listed at approximately \$3.50-\$4.50 and a retail price of \$8.50-\$9.00 per individual. (I have seen prices for Desert Horned Lizards in pet stores that range from \$25.00-\$35.00 per pair.)

Numerous people addressed the Commission during the open comment period. The Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service each had representatives that addressed the Commission, as did several herpetological societies and the University of Nevada Las Vegas. All spoke against continued commercial collection of reptiles in Nevada.

However, seven commercial reptile collectors addressed the Commission and expressed their opposition to the proposed discontinuation of

commercial collection. They attempted to belittle the scientific community with issues that were not well founded. One issue that was a major focus was that they, the commercial collectors, provided "data" on the populations of the different reptiles because the scientific and wildlife management communities were not doing their jobs. The commercial collectors also belittled the Nevada Division of Wildlife on their management of the natural resources in the state. Several commented that "just because they (the wildlife biologists) just got fancy computers to do the work and had nothing better to do but to attack the commercial collectors with the problems that were not really problems at all."

During all of the presentations, I watched and listened to the speakers. I became more and more disturbed as time passed as to statements made by the commercial collectors. The population "data" they kept referring to was nothing more than a body count, especially for the horned lizards. The only useful information provided by the commercial collectors, that I could see, was the localities of the different reptile populations that they continue to "harvest" for profit.

I was called to speak to the Commission. I identified myself and my background working with horned lizards. I told the Commission that I represented the Horned Lizard Conservation Society and expressed our concern about the commercial collection of horned lizards for the pet trade. I informed the Commission of historical information concerning commercial collection of the San Diego Coast Horned Lizard (SDCHL) in California and the laws that were finally passed to protect it from collection. I also relayed to the Commission that Desert Horned Lizards were protected from "take" in each of the surrounding states of California, Arizona, and Utah. I made it clear that the commercial collection of the Desert Horned Lizard created a major law enforcement problem for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and for the states that share the Desert Horned Lizard. I made it clear that I was not saying that the commercial collectors were taking the horned lizards from the other states, but that the problem of "poaching" did exist.

I gave the Commission a brief life history of horned lizards, the SDCHL in particular, and related information that I have on the Desert Horned Lizard. I attempted to make clear the information that horned lizards are extremely difficult to maintain in captivity and that they are diet specific. I related the information that even pet stores that carry horned lizards promote a diet of crickets and meal worms as the primary food source. When I informed the Commission that different species of Harvester Ants were the primary food item for horned lizards, they were amazed.

I told the Commission that when I have seen horned lizards in pet stores, the horned lizards are kept at inappropriate temperatures and with other reptiles that are not even from the same ecosystems. I also made it clear that although this was not the commercial collectors' fault, it would continue as long as they provided the horned lizards to the pet trade. I also stated that the physical appearance of these captive horned lizards was typically very poor, and that stress and the lack of a proper diet is often apparent.

I requested the Commission to seriously consider removing horned lizards from their commercial collection permits. I questioned the lack of information concerning the Short-horned lizard and was told that there were no collection data available for the time periods reported. It was brought to the Commission's attention that finding Short-horned Lizards was difficult and that none were collected. So my focus returned to Desert Horned Lizards and requested that they be removed from commercial collection. I again addressed the status of these horned lizards in surrounding states within the range of the Desert Horned Lizard and the problems of law enforcement, but I focused primarily on the difficulty of maintaining horned lizards in captivity. I stated that the continued collection of horned lizards for the pet trade was barbaric, not only because of the loss of individuals from the wild reptile populations, but

due also to the high percentage of loss once the individuals are in captivity.

I suggested that if the Commission decided to keep horned lizards on the commercial collection list that they should apply restrictions to the numbers collected, the time of the year collected, and specific snout-to-vent lengths to aid in managing these wild populations. I also suggested that tracking data be required so that populations are monitored and population estimates kept current using the data. I suggested that a simple Lincoln Index using capture-mark-release-recapture be used by commercial collectors to provide data to the Nevada Division of Wildlife.

As I returned to my seat, I received positive responses from numerous people in the audience. As I sat down, one of the commercial collectors asked to readdress the Commission. He told the Commission that there are vitamin supplements available for use in dusting crickets and meal worms so that they simulate ants to horned lizards. As I heard this and began shaking my head in disbelief, the President of the Southern Nevada Herpetological Society stood and addressed the Commission saying that was not the case and that an ant was an ant and a cricket was a cricket. The commercial collector said nothing more.

There is still no word on the Commission's decision, but I hope they will make the right determination regarding horned lizards.

I am giving a presentation to the Southern Nevada Herpetological Society on March 5th and hopefully we can welcome in new members to HLCS and possibly establish another chapter. I will keep you posted.

Lester G. Milroy III, President
Horned Lizard Conservation Society-Southern
California Chapter

Getting the Newsletter to You by Clare Freeman

Getting the HLCS newsletter into the hands of the membership in a timely way has long been a problem for us. We send it at bulk mail rates to all U.S. zip codes and regular postal rates to international members. We sort the newsletters by zip codes for mailing.

The summer issue of *Phrynosomatics* was mailed from Austin on 18 June 1998. The results of distribution: Members in the Austin area received their copies in 1-2 days; Tobias Eisenberg in Rodenback, Germany, in 4 days; Houston in 7-9 days; San Antonio and South Texas in 14 days; East Coast and Arizona in 21 days; and West Coast in 28 days.

We are working on finding options that will be more successful to getting the newsletter to you! A calendar on our website is in the works and will help some members. If anyone has any suggestions for faster distribution of the newsletter, please let us know!

Ed. note -- Clare and others in the Austin region see that the newsletter is printed, folded, address-labeled, sorted, and delivered to the post office for mailing. Gasper Holland maintains and prints the address labels. Logistics prevent many of us from helping.

We really appreciate their work in getting the newsletter out!

Where Have All The Horned Toads Gone?

By Carol Rust

Fire ants and human contact dumped them on the Texas threatened-species list, but don't count them out yet. If the legend of "Old Rip" can be believed, this is one tough toad.

The battered truck bounces over bumpy roads that explode into clouds of red dust in the South Texas heat. Unruffled by the unregal ride, two biologists sit in the front seat, intent on the countryside, until one of them spots a tiny flash of movement.

"Awp!" he says quickly (biologist terminology for "There's one!") and points. The other biologist smiles, nods and stops the truck abruptly. They jump out and stride slowly to the point they last saw a horny toad.

They stand and stare several minutes, before they distinguish the red and brown lizard from the red and brown dirt and brush, where it is standing perfectly still to avoid detection.

They made no sudden moves; a horny toad's ability to skitter quickly out of harm's way is one of his few forms of protection — along with his nearly complete camouflage.

Chip Ruthven, his red hair the same shade as the dust that will make beads around his neck at the end of the day, finally spots the critter, leans down and slowly puts his hand at horny-toad level in a much-practiced way. Then he snatches him.

The little toe is missing from his back left paw, which immediately tells Ruthven he's caught the lizard before as part of Chaparral Wildlife Management's horned-lizard catch-and-release program for the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife. (The toes will be studied to see if they bear information similar to that conveyed by the rings of trees, denoting seasons of dryness, rain, famine or bounty.)

A tiny transponder has also been inserted into the lizard's belly. Its data correspond with records kept immaculately by Ruthven as to when and where the lizard was originally found, its measurements and unusual characteristics. The transponder allows the lizard to be scanned, not unlike groceries at a checkout stand, and Ruthven can look up the corresponding number in his records.

In spite of all the information Ruthven already has in this toad's dossier, he gently places the reptile in one of the white plastic buckets partially filled with sand that he carries in the back of his truck. This lizard is destined for even greater things.

That is why Richard Kazmaier, a graduate student at Oklahoma State University, is down here at the management area, 30 miles north of Laredo, this summer.

Although his extensive background in biology doesn't include experience in the work of a seamstress, Kazmaier has sewn 30 tiny backpacks for the first 30 average-size horny toads they find. The backpacks are large enough to carry small radio transmitters; straps are fashioned to fit over the toads' front and back legs.

Ruthven and Kazmaier plan to monitor the toads' comings and goings, the places they sleep and locations they choose for hibernation, using an antenna that causes the radio transmitter to chirp when it is near.

At stake are answers to questions about what is good — or bad — for the horned lizard. Specifically, scientists want to discover how different land-use practices, such as cattle grazing and prescribed land-burning, affect the animals.

The program will keep track of horny toads found on pastures that have been excluded from grazing for 20 years vs. pastures that have been grazed at different levels of intensity. At the same time, scientists will be looking at the effects of grazing and burning on the toads' primary food source — red harvester ants.

"There's no doubt that there's not as many (horned lizards) as there used to be. Even here in South Texas, older people say they don't see as many as they used to. It's just that there's no one smoking gun as to why the population is doing poorly," says Scott Henke, national president of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society and associate professor of wildlife management at the University of Texas-Kingsville. "In the state of Texas, several things contribute: fire ants, pesticides, suburban sprawl, agriculture. But there's no one factor that occurs throughout the state."

Ruthven and Kazmaier have been scouting the area for "candidates" in May, the horny toad's peak activity time. Because the reptiles move about during the day, the biologists were able to maintain daytime schedules while gathering and monitoring.

They were collecting these toads in the morning around the time toads usually wake up and start moving about (the scientists try to be considerate).

A few horny toads later, Ruthven and Kazmaier were bumping their way back to the headquarters of Chaparral Wildlife Management, a lodgelike building entwined in deer antlers and posted with signs to prohibit the killing of rattlesnakes. It houses the state's regional wildlife management office, assorted insect collections and white plastic buckets here and there containing horny toads, rattlesnakes, and Texas tortoises. Populations of all three have dwindled as Texas has become increasingly developed, and the horny toad is on the state's threatened-species list.

"If you're a horned lizard, it's hard to find something to eat in a Kmart parking lot," Ruthven says.

It's also not easy to live a healthy horned-lizard's life if people want to make a pet of you — as people once did.

"They are a Texas threatened species," Ruthven says. "They are protected by law. It's illegal to pick them up and keep them. You can't even touch them. Observe them, but leave them alone."

Ruthven uses the correct title, horned lizard, for the more commonly termed horned toad or "horny toad."

Like other lizards, they have tails and scales instead of a toad's moist skin and would suffocate under water, as would their eggs.

They flourish in hot, dry climates, like that of the Chaparral Wildlife Management area, where Ruthven and Kazmaier have flagged trees with pink plastic ribbons to indicate where they found a particular lizard.

At dusk, another peak activity time for the lizards, they set out to put the animals, now in their new sports gear, back where they found them.

Kazmaier, who bunks in the spartan lodging usually occupied by hunters during deer season and has brought a stack of books to read to supplement his hobby of collecting beetles, sets one of the lizards free. It skitters away, apparently unencumbered by its backpack.

Resembling one of the Ghostbusters with their vapor detectors, Kazmaier pulls the handheld antenna from the truck and holds it in the direction the lizard has gone. A distinct chirping starts up from a nearby bush. Kazmaier smiles.

"It's going to be a fun summer," he says.

Consider the horny toad.

Long before it became a threatened species, the toad's prehistoric and ferocious appearance (and the fact that it fits neatly in the palm of a small hand or in a pocket) made it popular with lizard-minded kids, who could pick one up almost anywhere in a hot, dry climate.

Their fearsome mien also gained horned toads fame in the 1960 low-budget movie *The Lost World*, in which victims were terrified by magnified versions of the creature. But the non-Hollywood types are docile and always seem to have a half-smile on their sleepy little lizard faces. They protect themselves mainly by staying out of sight (or standing *very* still while their natural camouflage works for them). When threatened, they might skitter away or simply inflate their bodies to look bigger and emphasize their bony spines — both of which might discourage swallowing. When they're really cornered, they can squirt blood from their eyes at an attacker.

In 1993, the lizard became the official state reptile, thanks to 10-year-old horned-lizard devotee Abraham Holland of San Antonio, who asked his state representative to sponsor the bill in the 73rd Texas Legislature. (It generated little fanfare save a mocking column by Molly Ivins. What's next, she asked, the mosquito as the state insect?)

The fierce-looking creatures are really lizards, fooling even the zoologist in 1828 who officially christened them *Phrynosoma*, a combination for the Greek words *phryno*, meaning "toad," and *soma*, meaning "body." They don't hop like a toad, although they get their takeout dinner (primarily red harvester ants) by flicking their tongues. Their best-known dinosaur counterpart is the triceratops.

Easy to catch for anyone with a lizard-attuned eye, the horned lizard became the perfect novel pet from a hot, dry state or country. The toads were sold as pets all over the United States, usually to die soon in confinement. (Dr. Benjamin Spock had not written a book as to their care and feeding; hence, the lizard wizened.)

They were such a rage in the 1940s that the U.S. Department of Agriculture even issued a bulletin about horned toads and their rural requirements to discourage such commercial exports, but the bulletin ended on a cheery note about how many "pests," such as the red ant, the creature destroyed. It probably did more harm to the horned lizard than good.

In 1897 Texas Christian University in Fort Worth adopted the horned lizard as the school mascot, but for reasons not entirely clear, called it a horned "frog."

So plentiful were horned lizards in the 1950s that a Humble oil station in the West Texas town of Eastland gave one away free with each gasoline fill-up. (The owner paid children a nickel a head as a toad-finder's fee.)

Now, it's illegal to even touch a horned lizard in Texas because of its status as threatened. Just how threatened it is, however, no one knows, because little consistent data have been collected over the years, says Henke of the conservation society. Texas Parks and Wildlife has recently started a horned-lizard watch program, through which citizens can help the state count the lizards where they live.

"If they live in an area where there aren't any lizards, it's just as important to verify that information as it is in areas where lizards are found," Henke says.

Texans' fondness for the horned lizard may help its chances for survival. "There is certainly a large public appeal for the lizard," he says. "Texans aren't going to let their lizards go without a fight."

Nor will they let their horned-toad legends die. Legends like Old Rip.

Old Rip's is a story about years of imprisonment and deprivation and of a tenacious spirit that insisted on survival. Of long-held secrets that only death could dislodge, of disputed resurrection, public astonishment and front-page headlines. Of kidnapping, a cover-up and a law officer vowing retribution.

And of a body, now encased in glass and marble in the Eastland County Courthouse. Is the story of Old Rip the horny toad true? Could he really have survived in the closed-off cornerstone of a courthouse for 31 years?

TEXAS CHAPTER NEWS

Results of the Quilt Raffle!

The extended silent auction ended on November 30, 1998. Bette Armstrong persevered and won the quilt donated to HLCS by Mary Surginer.

Bette sent her check in the amount of \$300 to the HLCS in Mary's name and, she says, will *really love* having it!

Thanks again, Mary!

Paradise in Texas (a Texas Legend)

The devil was given permission one day
To make him a land of his own
special sway.
He put thorns on all the bushes and
trees
and mixed up the sand with millions
of fleas.
He scattered tarantulas along all the
roads,
put spines on the cactus and horns on
the toads.
He lengthened the horn of the Texas
steer
and added a foot to the jackrabbit's
ear.
He put three devils in every bronco
steed
and poisoned the feet of the centi-
pede.
The rattlesnake bites you, the scor-
pion stings.
The mosquito torments you buzzing
his wings.
The heat in the summer is a hundred
and ten,
Too hot for the devil and too hot for
men.
And all who remained in that climate
soon bore
cuts, stings, bites, scratches galore.
Welcome to Texas!

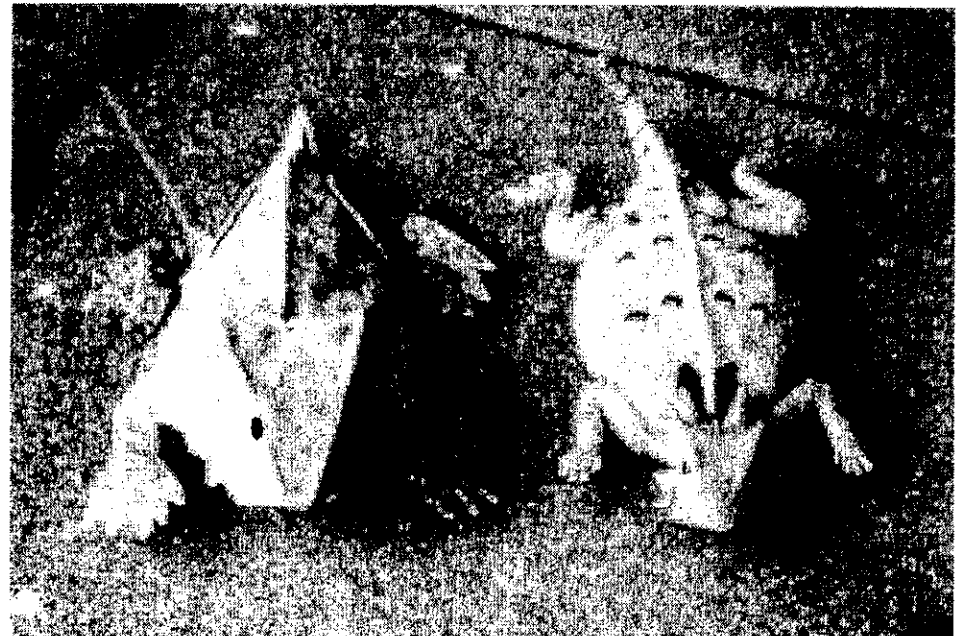
as published in the South Texas Traveler,
and provided by Sandra Holland.

from Eastland 19 September 1998



The competitors! Can you make heads or tails of this photo?

MANY HL THANKS to Bryan Jackson, owner of Bryan's Auto Parks of Eastland, TX, for letting "us" be a part of his "OLD RIP ANTIQUE CAR SHOW".



Bette Armstrong's (now) TWO remote-controlled horned lizard racers! Larry says he will be back for revenge! (Larry's creation is the HL on the right!)

TEXAS CHAPTER NEWS

Austin Expo '98

The fundraiser at the Expo '98 in Austin, Texas, was a great success! "Lil" Rippy, the stuffed horned toad doll donated by Bette Armstrong of Eastland, TX, began as the center of attraction as it was to be raffled off to young and old HL admirers at \$1/chance.

Sarah Davis of Austin, daughter of Marketing Director Bill Davis, arrived at the scene. When she peered into the jar, however, she saw the lone one-dollar bill that had yet been pledged.

Taking matters into her own hands, Sarah gathered up "Lil" Rippy in one

hand and the all-but-empty jar in the other. In no time, Sarah had remedied the empty jar! and, some would argue, had replaced "Lil" Rippy as the center of attention at the event.

Her hard work paid off and she and "Lil" Rippy earned \$63 for the HLCS. Pat Horak from Irving, TX, held the winning raffle ticket and promised to give "Lil" Rippy a safe and secure home.

-- Photo and story contributed by Bette Armstrong.

*Ed. note--*You can tell from the pix that HLCS rarely has to resort to hard sells!



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Acting Secretary/Historian

Public Information Report ... by Sandra Holland, VP-Public Affairs

Information. I like to hear about what is being said at festivals, and receive newspaper clippings. This helps me be knowledgeable when telling members of the public about HLCS and our little reptiles. I will pass on what I hear through this column. Please share!

Publicity. (1) Texas Parks & Wildlife has sent out a media release titled "Volunteers shed light on Texas Horned Lizard, other species". It mentioned the Texas Horned Lizard Watch and the Endangered Resources Program. Our local paper published an article "Special from Texas Parks and Wildlife" from this same press release.

(2) At the Witte Museum in San Antonio, we were looking at displays of old newspaper articles about the alligator pit used during the Depression for income. Abraham pointed out that among the snakes and 'gators in the picture were several horned lizards. They appeared quite large. One was in the mouth of a 'gator. An employee said there were several reptile pits and for that newspaper photo of long ago, they combined the

snakes, 'gators, and horny toads in the same pit.

(3) Granite film company of England visited Eastland to research "Old Rip".

(4) The *Reno Gazette Courier* called for comments about commercial collecting of HL, and *Vivarium* magazine asked us to provide them with an official statement about commercial collecting.

(5) A *Houston Chronicle* reporter and photographer spent parts of a year with various members working on a story about HL. The result was a huge story with lots of pictures in the Sunday supplement. Unfortunately, several names were misspelled in the printed story.

(6) I have also been contacted by a newspaper feature writer who knows our family personally and who is interested in doing stories about the state symbols. She has other projects in the works, however, so it may be a while...

Festivals. In June, the Holland family participated in two Friday Family Nights at South Park Mall, using the coloring sheets and the wonderful lizard models created by Larry Wisdom. We put the models in a terrarium with sand and leaf

litter. Since everything in the terrarium was brown, not everyone stopped to look. A few would recognize the horny toads and be surprised to find that they weren't real.

At the second Family Night I placed a bright red sign on top of the terrarium, that read, "Guess which horned lizard is real." The visitors had so much fun. They would ask if they got a prize for a right answer. We would tell them no, but they would be embarrassed if they got the wrong answer. When they found that there were NO "real" horny toads, they would say, "Good joke!" In any case, It gave us the opportunity to tell them about the horny toad's environment and legal status. . .

Other Information. A nursery school in San Antonio called about scheduling a Traveling Toads program, having seen an old brochure, but it has not yet happened.

Vacancies. Melisa Montemayor is no longer president of the Texas Chapter. Carolyn Todd has taken over during the interim. There are also other vacancies in the Texas Chapter! Volunteer!

The few eyewitnesses who are still alive when he was freed swear they saw it or saw others who did.

Then there are the skeptical younger citizens, who roll their eyes, and shrug their shoulders or just grunt with acknowledgment of a hoax that's gone on for years.

Old Rip, they say, is a first-class rip-off.

But if you live here, Old Rip goes with the territory. Being a citizen of Eastland means you've at least *heard* it's true.

Here's how folks tell it:

County officials were gathered in 1897 to dedicate the new courthouse, complete except for a cornerstone waiting to be filled. A galvanized-iron box to be placed inside was fashioned like a time capsule, containing important items of the day, such as a Bible, the county charter, newspapers and the like. A small, local band played for folks who gathered. Justice of the Peace and trombonist Ernest Wood saw his son Will playing around the construction site with a horny toad, a common plaything in that day, since the fierce-looking but docile lizards were easy to catch, and there were plenty around.

Right before the box was shut, Ernest Wood plucked the lizard from his son and tossed it in among the books and important papers. (The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals hadn't yet made major inroads in Eastland.) Then the cornerstone — and lizard — were mortared shut.

Fast-forward 31 years.

The old courthouse is being torn down to make way for a new one. The city is gathered, again, for this momentous occasion in 1928. (There isn't a lot of other entertainment.)

A tractor pulls down the last brick pillar of the courthouse, and the Methodist minister, F.E. Singleton, pulls the box from the cornerstone.

According to the later historian Edwin T. Cox, someone lifted up the horny toad and, after a moment, it wiggled. A roar of amazement went up at the sight, and then someone (not one of the ministers) summed up the general sentiment, which Cox

recorded: "Well, I'll be damned."

Sleepy Eastland was all of a sudden on the map.

A headline about the toad's resurrection took top billing over Charles Lindberg receiving medals for his solo flight across the Atlantic. The quote "It wiggled" went out over international news wires.

Reporters, photographers and fans thronged to Eastland to see Old Rip, named after Washington Irving's legendary fictional Rip van Winkle, who took a 20-year nap. Old Rip was exhibited in a store display window in an aquarium with a sand floor and plenty of red harvester ants to eat.

A few months after his resurrection, the lizard was kidnapped from the window by a local man who'd lined up a traveling show. Law officers apprehended him in El Paso on his way to California, freed the man and put the toad back into the hands of Will Wood, now grown.

Wood, by general consensus the rightful custodian, scheduled his own traveling show with the reptile all over the country, including Washington, D.C., to meet President Calvin Coolidge. (The president is rumored to have broken several other engagements to see the creature.) Representatives from the Smithsonian Institute weren't so hospitable. They snubbed both Rip and his resume.

The famed lizard may have fared well entombed in the courthouse cornerstone, but his health declined when he regained freedom.

Maybe it was all the excitement, the constant flash of the photographers' bulbs, the hectic schedule, never a moment to burrow in the sand and leaves by himself. Whatever, he died of pneumonia in February 1929, once again making banner headlines in Eastland:

"Old Rip Is Dead."

He lay in state at a local funeral home while special equipment for a lizard-embalming and a like-size casket could be procured.

Folks drove for miles to pay their respects. Final tributes were paid, poetry read, eyes dried.

And Old Rip went into the new courthouse, this time in a marble-and-glass casket in the lobby.

Abraham and Noah Holland had never been so happy as they were the day their mother finally admitted they'd outgrown their horny toad costumes. This confession came begrudgingly from mother Sandra Holland of San Antonio, who loved to travel to festivals and classrooms and give talks about horned lizards while her sons demonstrated reptilian habits.

(And the confession came three years after the costumes were made, long after boys that age have outgrown anything.) But not before she'd incorporated their information into a science project, other school projects, a 4-H demonstration and anything else she could fit it into, until — alas — the day came when the boys were simply too big to pass for toads, even with proper identification. Noah, who experienced a growth spurt earlier than his older brother, Abraham, really hated the costume as he got taller. He had to walk around with his neck bent and his arms and legs straight, his gait resembling that of Frankenstein.

But they *were* cute as Spike and Spot, the Traveling Toads. They never failed to grab attention in their canvas costumes with crowned headgear, their tails dragging behind.

Holland documented every appearance they made with pictures, a journal and some videotape, which she gladly shares today. On the wall of their San Antonio home, which they share with seven cats and father/husband Gasper Holland, is a copy of the Texas House resolution proclaiming the horned toad the state reptile.

The two retired traveling toads have been home-schooled by mom since childhood. Like most moms, she's reluctant to let them grow up.

"Hold up the red poster about what horny toads eat and do like you used to do," she entreats them in the company of visitors.

Abraham holds it up; Noah rolls his eyes. Maybe he's thinking ahead a few years — to when he brings a girlfriend home.

The first time the Eastland Jaycees dreamed up the kidnapping, in 1961,

it was hilarious. The whole town was abuzz. Who stole Old Rip?

They even left a ransom note, although no one can remember what it demanded, other than publicity.

Only Eastland County Judge Scott Bailey knew the Jaycees had sought and gotten permission to kidnap the toad.

Of course, they returned it, only to kidnap it again during their next fund-raising project.

Then, one year, someone (arguably sick of the Old Rip folklore) kidnapped it and didn't leave a ransom note. The Jaycees honestly didn't know a thing about it.

Eastland citizens became agitated.

A man who was running for county sheriff swore he'd bring the perpetrators to justice just as soon as he was elected.

He was, and someone produced a horned-lizard body to go back into the casket not long after.

Folks sighed with relief that the lizard was back in its rightful resting place.

But a few insiders know better.

Bailey says the body sitting in the casket is that of an impostor. He's not the only one who shares this information, but "those in the know" are content to let the impostor remain.

"This one has more meat on its bones — it looks better," Bailey says, adding that he could drive right to the real body if he wanted to — "and it wouldn't do anything but hurt some feelings if we were to make a big stink about it," he says.

The general attitude was to let sleeping horny toads lie.

At least it was, until the Armstrongs drove into town.

Bette Armstrong and her husband, Jim, moved to Eastland two years ago, looking for a small town close enough to a military commissary to take advantage of their retirement benefits.

Bette Armstrong had read a column in the Eastland Telegram by editor H.V. O'Brian, bemoaning the fact that after all these years no one had come up with a doll depicting Old Rip.

Armstrong, who had never heard a thing about Old Rip, thought O'Brian was announcing a contest. She and Jim looked up horned lizards in reference books and designed a doll she made from Operation Desert Storm camouflage (bought at bargain prices by the bolt).

She then made her own costume, joined up with the Horned Lizard Conservation Society and picked up

where Abraham and Noah Holland left off.

She headed up the 70th-anniversary celebration of Old Rip, gathering eyewitnesses to give their accounts to groups of schoolchildren, and was definitely the most outstanding member of the Old Rip parade (sweating profusely in her costume throughout).

She officiated at horned toad races using wooden replicas of the lizard.

With the Armstrongs so active on Old Rip's behalf, the lizard's continued popularity in Eastland seems secure. As for their personal opinions on the tale's truth, Bette Armstrong chooses her words carefully, balking at an outright opinion about the event that put Eastland on the map.

Indeed, she casts doubt on whether there was even a horned lizard in the time capsule that day.

"In February they're hibernating, so it would have been hard to even find a horny toad to put in the corner-stone," she finally admits. "But, whatever happened that day, it made some kind of history."

--- story reprinted with permission, from the August 2, 1998, *Texas Houston Chronicle Magazine* and the *East Texas Herpetological Society Newsletter* (ed. Charlona Ingram)

Book Notice -----by Lester Milroy

Krotenechsen, ed. by Bertrand Baur, was published by Offenbach: Herpeton, 1998.

(ISBN 3-9802892-8-1).

Richard Montanucci is co-author. The book is written in Swiss, so your German had better be up to par for reading. It includes 93 photos and 37 graphs and diagrams.

The publisher's address is Herpeton, Verlag Elke Kohler, Im Mittelfeld 27, D-63075 Offenbach.

It is a marvelous book with twelve species of horned lizards covered along with the subspecies of each.

Upcoming Events

Flat-tail Horned Lizard Schedule [update in next issue of *Phrynosomatics*]

- * Opening Brief January 11, 1999
- * Opposition Brief February 8, 1999
- * Reply Brief February 22, 1999
- * Hearing, San Diego, Calif. March 15, 1999, at 11a.m. PST

Ft. McKavett State Historical Park, TX

"Annual Living History Day" March 20, 1999 10 am to 3 pm CST

Old Rip Days at Eastland, TX Saturday, September 18, 1999

Phrynosomatics -- requested submission deadlines --

- Vol. 4, Issue 2 May 1, 1999
- Vol. 4, Issue 3 August 1, 1999
- Vol. 4, Issue 4 November 1, 1999

Please send me your articles, event notices, and photographs for publication! If you are having difficulty meeting a deadline, let me know! -- ed.

MAKING HORNED LIZARD MODELS

Part II: Making the Mold

by Larry Wisdom

The primary prerequisite for a good mold is a good specimen. Any defects or abnormalities will accurately be reproduced in the mold and subsequent castings. Many specimens have had to be rejected because of natural or man-made abnormalities. The most common problems are broken horns, missing toes, incisions, shedding skins, missing skin and muscle tissue, desiccation and rigidity. I have yet to receive a specimen that did not require some sort of treatment prior to mold making to yield a good replica.

Nearly all specimens will have incisions, usually on the belly for stomach evaluation. Most of the time this defect can be neutralized with I.D. tag placement over the incision. Broken horns are cured by burning a tapered cavity in the mold after the specimen has been removed. Other defects require technique beyond the scope of this article.

Interestingly, age of the preserved specimen has no bearing on mold making. Molds have been made with specimens preserved only a few days to others preserved over sixty years. Preserving solution also has not been a factor. Most specimens are preserved in 70% ethanol but 70% isopropyl alcohol and formaldehyde also work well. The latter, however, extracts a price on the eyes during the mold trimming step.

Specimens normally arrive wrapped in cotton gauze saturated in preserving solution. This technique affords good protection during transit. Specimens shipped floating in solution invariable are missing many scales due to abrasion.

Nearly all specimens will have one or more I.D. tags attached to the rear legs. Some tags just have numbers while others will contain dates of collecting and preservation, site location and other data the collector thought useful. These tags must be removed and reattached after the mold has been made. Lost or misapplied tags will destroy the value of a specimen.

A second opportunity to inadvertently destroy a sample is to let it dry out. It is imperative that the specimen be kept wet with preserving solutions at all times.

At this point, let's assume you have a useable specimen for mold making. The first step is to place the lizard on an index card and trace its outline. This takes only a few seconds. The I.D. number is also noted on the card. Mold forms are cut (usually aluminum angle) to fit around the outline. Next, 0.5-inch thick molding clay is placed on a board large enough to hold the mold forms. The I.D. numbers are pressed into the clay using ordinary metal letter/number stamps. This number will now become an integral part of the mold. Next the I.D. number is stamped in a piece of thin aluminum to be placed on the belly of the lizard during the second mold pour and will become integral with each replica.

The forms are measured to calculate volume of silicone mold material required. This amount is weighed, catalyzed and mixed. After mixing it is placed in a vacuum chamber at 29 inches of Hg (pressure) to remove entrained air. The silicone expands three times its original volume during degassing, so the mixing container must be oversized. After a few minutes, the foam collapses and it's ready to pour. It has a consistency of thick pancake syrup at this point.

The specimen is now placed and posed belly down in the form. The feet are pinned to the clay to prevent the specimen from floating out of the silicone. The degassed silicone is poured over the specimen. At this point the specimen will have been out of the preserving liquid less than two minutes, and once covered with silicone will never dry out. The polymerization cure produces a small amount of ethanol to further prevent dehydration. The mold is placed on a level surface and allowed to cure overnight at room temperature.

The next day the forms are removed and the first half of the mold is flipped over after removing the hold down pins. If all is well, you will be able to see where the feet, head, tail and belly are located.

Tweezers and scalpel are used to cut away the thin section of cured silicone in these areas. The technique is to pull the silicone away from the specimen with tweezers before cutting. In this manner it

is almost impossible to inadvertently cut the skin of the specimen.

This step can take 30 to 60 minutes dependent upon size and the specimen could be subject to dehydration. This is prevented by brushing on preserving solution every few minutes with a small artist's brush. If it's ethanol, you get very happy during this step. If it's formaldehyde, you cry a lot. Enough silicone is cut away to facilitate removal of the specimen -- but it is not removed yet. Next a release agent is brushed on the silicone to prevent the second pour from chemically bonding to the first mold section.

The mold is replaced in the forms but with the lizard's belly up. The metal I.D. tag is positioned and a second batch of silicone is prepared and pored on the top of the first section. After the silicone has settled, a pouring ring is positioned on the surface of the still-liquid silicone. The pouring ring will serve as a reservoir for resin when pouring replicas.

The second pour is also cured overnight. The next day the two mold halves are opened and the specimen is carefully removed. Its original I.D. tags are replaced and the specimen is returned to the preserving solution.

Up to this point (knock on wood) I have never lost or damaged a specimen, but sometimes scales can come off during the removal step, depending on the shed cycle the specimen was in at the time of preservation. Any loose scales stay in the mold until the first casting is made. The polyurethane casting resin bonds to the scales and they come out attached to the first casting.

The green mold now has a perfect specimen cavity but two more steps are required before it can be used. First is heat treatment to remove excess ethanol. It inhibits polymerization of the casting resin. This is accomplished in a convection oven at 75 degrees C. for 3-4 hours.

Second, a sprue must be cut for resin to enter the cavity. This is done with a cork borer and finally small vent holes to allow entrapped air to escape are cut with a scalpel or sharpened hypodermic needle (like a miniature cork borer). The mold is now ready to cast replicas.

Making Horned Lizard Models (Continued from page 12)

Have I put you to sleep? Part III will be Casting Replicas. *That is the fun part!*

MATERIALS

Silicone Mold Rubber:

To date I've tried eight different materials for mold making. One of the best is *Smooth-On's Smooth-Sil 910*. This material was first available in 1997 and I now use it more than any other. It will reproduce even the finest detail (even the hair on a spider's leg). It's expensive -- \$110 for a gallon kit, enough to make 5-10 molds depending upon specimen size. It is available from the John Reynolds Co.

Mold Release:

Fresh silicone will chemically bond to cured silicone. To prevent this, a mold release is used. *Smooth-On* recommends *Ease Release 800*, also available from John Reynolds Co. I use a solution of Vaseline petroleum jelly in a 1:2 ratio with odorless mineral spirits (Klean-Strip paint thinner). I apply this with a number 4 ox-hair artist's paint brush.

Metal I.D. Tags:

I.D. tags must be sized to fit the specimen. The easiest material to use is thin (0.012 inch thick) sheet aluminum cut to size. Standard roof flashing works well.

Aluminum Mold Forms:

Mold forms can be made from almost anything non-porous. Tin cans, plastic cups and bottles, all work well if they are the right size. But for convenience, I use 1 1/2" x 2" x 1/8" aluminum angle. This can be cut to size and reused indefinitely. It is readily cut with a hack saw or a chop saw equipped with a metal cutting blade. Cuts must be accurate or mold material will seep through the joints. Wood can also be used if it is sealed and has release agent applied.

Mounting Pins:

The mounting pins firmly attach the specimen to the clay base. At least 4 pins are used, but some times more such as if a specimen is stiff when trying to poise a leg. The number of pins should be kept to a minimum but enough to keep the specimen from floating. Pins or needles

of small diameter are best because the mold will accurately reproduce them along with the lizard. Most of the time I use 0.015" diameter stainless steel insect pins (size 1) from Carolina Biological Supply.

Mounting Clay:

Mounting clay needs to have a firm consistency to adequately anchor the mounting pins. I use Klean-Klay from the John Reynolds Co. It comes in wrapped sheets 0.5" x 3" x 12" in size. Normally, two slabs mounted side by side on the board is large enough for most specimens.

Mixing Cups:

Thorough mixing of the catalyst into the silicone is imperative. Any portion of the silicone without catalyst will not cure properly resulting in a weak easily-torn mold or worse yet mold areas that remain liquid. To insure that this never happens, I use straight-wall clear plastic cups and small batches (usually about 160 grams). The preferred cup is 16-oz Solo Ultra colors (actually they are only tinted). To further insure good mixing, I use a spatula with a square end and add a small amount of pigment. When the pigment is dispersed, you can assume that the catalyst is well mixed. A fail-safe test of thorough mixing is to take the mixing cup (after pouring out the silicone) and place it upside down on a smooth level surface. The residual silicone will drain down the sides. If the cup can be pulled away from the cured silicone the next day, your technique is okay. The pigment is available from the John Reynolds Co. in several colors. The cups are available at grocery stores. The square-end spatula can be made by grinding off the round end of a standard spatula.

Pouring Rings:

Pouring rings are open-ended tubes. One end is inserted into the mold over the sprue. The resin for casting replicas is poured into the ring. This information is listed in this section because a ring cavity, usually only 0.25" deep, is conveniently cast into the mold at the same time the

second section is poured. Short sections of metal or plastic tube can be used. The diameter selected should be proportional to the specimen size. For small specimens, 35 mm plastic film containers with the bottom cut out work great. Sections of straight-walled plastic bottle will work for larger specimens.

EQUIPMENT

Balance: Any laboratory balance capable of weighing with an accuracy of 0.1 grams is adequate. Accurate weighing of the catalyst is even more important in this technique of using two separate pours. If one side of the mold has more catalyst it will shrink slightly and the two pieces will not fit properly. I use an Acculab V-1200 balance available at many scientific supply houses.

Vacuum Pump:

Any good pump capable of pulling 29-30 inches of Hg will work. I use a Welch model 1400.

Vacuum Chamber:

Many vessels are suitable for this purpose. I use a 250 mm diameter dessicator for my chamber.

Convection oven:

Any lab oven capable of +/- 5 degrees C. between 75 and 100 degrees will work. I use a Scientific Products and a Blue M oven for heat treatment of the molds.

Scalpel blades:

The preferred blade is a #11 because of its sharp point. Change blades every time a new mold is cut.

Addresses:

John Reynolds Co.; 2206 S. Harwood,
Dallas, TX 75215; (800) 421-4378

Carolina Biological Supply Co.
2700 York Rd., Burlington, NC 27215
(800) 334-5551

Thomas Scientific; P.O. Box 99
Swedesboro, NJ 08085; (800) 345-2100

AMERICAN HORNED LIZARDS



Coast horned lizard



Coast Horned Lizards live along the Pacific coast of California. They live in a variety of habitats: chaparral, oak woodland, and coniferous forest in valleys, foothills, and semiarid mountains from sea level to 6000 feet elevation. There are two subspecies, the California horned lizard in northern California and the San Diego horned lizard in the south. The coastal horned lizard has more pointed scales and spines than any other kind of horned lizard. There is a light indistinct stripe down the middle of its back. Unlike desert horned lizards, coastal horned lizards have two rows of fringe scales along their sides.



Short horned lizard



Short horned Lizards have the greatest range of all horned lizards. They occur in 15 western states and range farther north than other horned lizards, being the only species in Washington, Montana, the Dakotas, and southern Canada. They can live in shortgrass, sagebrush, and on mountain hillside and valleys as high as 10,400 feet elevation. Their head horns are short and separated at the middle by a wide indented notch. Like the Regal and Desert, they have a single row of side fringe scales.



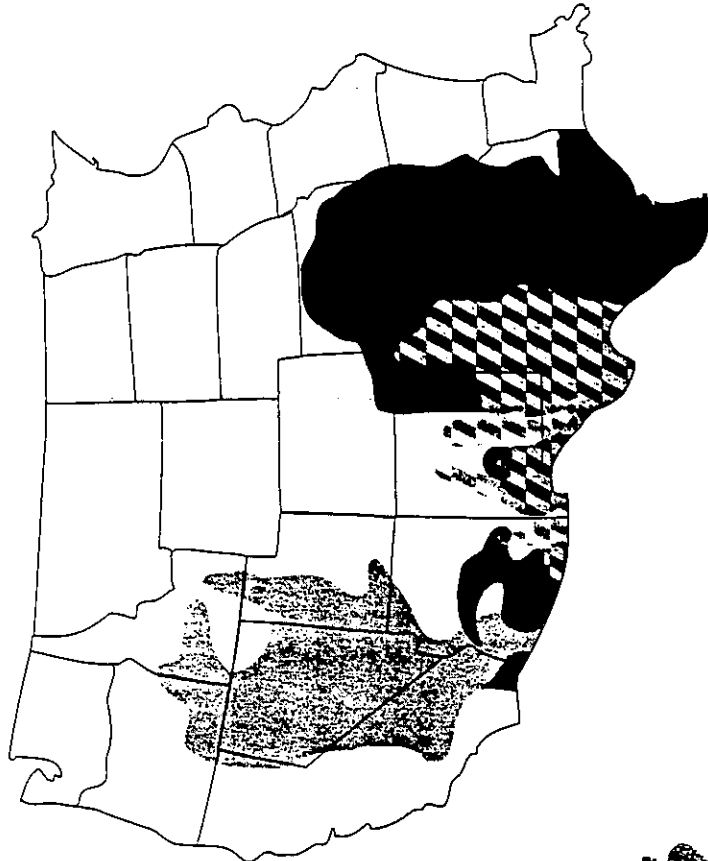
Flat-tail horned lizard



Flat-tail Horned Lizards are found only in southeastern California and southwestern Arizona, in the region of the lower Colorado River. Their long tail is broad and very noticeably flattened. Their two central horns are particularly long and sharp and they've got a double row of fringe scales along each side of their body. Also look for a dark line down the middle of their backs. The other kinds of horned lizards living near the Flat-tails have only one row of fringe scales.

The distribution map, horn outlines, inspiration for some of the drawings by Carolyn Todd and basic information are taken from *Horned Lizards: Unique Reptiles of Western North America*, by Wade Sherbrooke. Published by Southwest Parks and Monument Association, P.O. Box 1562, Globe, AZ 85506.

Lizard images on this page from: *REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS: A FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS*, Robert C. Stebbins, Ed., Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA, 1983. Used by permission.



Regal horned lizard



Regal Horned Lizards are found only in southern Arizona in the warm Sonoran Desert. These horned lizards have a particularly spiny appearance. It is the only species with four central horns which form a regular, complete crown. Like the short-horned and desert horned lizard, a single row of large fringe scales extends along each side of its body. Body colors are often combinations of browns, grays, and black, with a lighter colored, large oval area on the center of the back. (The scientific name *solare* means 'of the sun').



Round-tail horned lizard



Round-tail Horned Lizards are native to western Texas, southern New Mexico, and southeastern Arizona. They are found on desert flats, semiarid plains, and scrub lands. The four spike-like horns are easy to spot. Unlike other horned lizards their upper surface is not spiny. Their coloration varies to match local soil, and they have dark blotches on their shoulders. Roundtail horned lizards are the only type that lack fringe scales along their abdomen.



Desert horned lizard



Desert Horned Lizards have a widespread range. They are found near woody shrubs, cacti, and yuccas in the low flats, washes, and valleys throughout the Great Basin, Mojave, and Sonoran Deserts. In some of their range they overlap with the short horned lizard, but desert horned lizards have a long central pair of horns. Both kinds have a single row of fringe scales.



Texas horned lizard



Texas Horned Lizards are found farther east than any other horned lizard. They live throughout much of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and New Mexico. Their horns are very noticeable. The hind pair are the longest and are almost cone shaped. Their backs are spiny and there are two rows of enlarged fringe scales on their sides. The intensity of their colors differs between individuals and populations.

Warning:

Many people confuse the Spiny Lizards with the Horned Lizards.



TEXAS SPINY



CRESTED SPINY

THESE LIZARDS ARE NOT HORNED LIZARDS!

ONE MAN'S PRESERVE

by Clare Freeman

HLCS gets many queries from people who want to set up horned lizard preserves on their property and are seeking help and information. Unfortunately there is no single source of information and at this time there may not be a good body of knowledge for this topic.



The Hinckley Preserve

Once in a while, though, insights based on someone's practical experience come our way and this is part of the story of one man's very successful preserve.

Dr. Herbert Hinckley is a retired physician living in Littlefield, Lamb County, Texas. Thirty-six years ago, he and his wife Ailene bought an abandoned drive-in movie theatre in Littlefield and built a house on the property in which to raise their growing family.

The drive-in had closed a few years earlier in 1956 or '57, and the caliche and gravel surface had begun to grow up in the usual assortment of opportunistic weeds of the Texas Southern High Plains. All that remained of the drive-in's structures were the projection building and ticket booth; the old screen had been dismantled and removed.

The Hinckleys leased out the front 8 acres to a wheat farmer who deep-plowed the ground before planting. That first crop was so unsuccessful that no other cultivation was attempted in the future and Dr. Hinckley left the land to itself and to his children as a place to grow.

There were patches of grass, probably planted by the drive-in's previous owner; but, gradually, native mesquite shrubs, yucca, cactus and other plants moved in and took over.

Wildlife moved in, too, and today there are thriving colonies of harvester ants whose trails radiate in all directions providing an abundant food source for a thriving population of horned lizards. Looking at the site now, with its trees and wildflowers and waving bunch-grasses and with its insect, bird, and lizard inhabitants, it is hard to believe that this was once a caliche hard-pan parking lot. It has once again become a local attraction -- but for a much different reason.

The Hinckleys' stewardship has consisted mostly of planting an occasional tree and, more recently, light mowing (with the mower blades set moderately high) to promote easier walking and horned lizard watching for the Hinckleys and their visiting grandchildren.

Dr. Hinckley visits his preserve daily, and he always carries grain in his pockets to scatter around the ant colonies. He doesn't know how many harvester ant colonies the property supports but says that they seem to be separated from one another by only a few yards and that there are intertwining trails everywhere.

Horned lizard scats are present all along the trails and around the colony clearings, good evidence that this favorite food of the Texas Horned Lizard is used and appreciated. The earliest horned lizard he saw this past year appeared in March (1998). He has seen numerous juveniles and is anxiously awaiting the emergence of hatchlings from a nest-digging female he observed while planting a hawthorne tree from the Davis Mountains. There are some horned lizards that he sees on such a regular basis that they are on speaking terms, and he keeps a notebook of his observations of the activities of his lacertilian friends and neighbors.

Update from Dr. Hinckley -- *The only thing that did not materialize last year was the results hoped for from the nest-digging female. There was no emergence of hatchlings. After nine weeks, I dug gently in the hole and found nothing. He or she must have been doing something else?*

Please keep us posted, Dr. Hinckley!!!

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