



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.

## Little Lizards, Big New World

*By Lynn Seman*



Juvenile Horned Lizard about to be released into his new home. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*

When you look up the definition of conservation, you may find this: “preservation, protection, or restoration of the natural environment and of wildlife.” That’s exactly what San Antonio Zoo Conservation Research team had in mind on Friday, October 9, 2020. For the last 3 years, they have been working on an amazing feat; breeding, raising, and now restoring the beloved Texas Horned Lizard to its natural habitat in the wilds of central Texas.

Fortunately, I was able to witness and be an active participant in part of the journey; the first release of 84 San Antonio Zoo bred and raised Texas Horned Lizards to their new forever home. Being slightly cooler and cloudier than usual, the weather was perfect for the planned release which would give the lizards an advantage for their first day out in the world. After travelling the “roller coaster” road to our meeting place in the rustic ranch lands of the hill country, we congregated along a ranch road lined with purple stands of gayfeather still

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/hornedlizard/](http://www.facebook.com/hornedlizard/)

Facebook member page: [www.facebook.com/groups/HLCsmembers](http://www.facebook.com/groups/HLCsmembers)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/hornedlizardconservation/](http://www.instagram.com/hornedlizardconservation/)

YouTube channel: Horned Lizard Conservation Society

blooming. The excitement in the air escalated as the San Antonio crew arrived!



*Purple gayfeather plant.* Photo by Lynn Seman.

Dr. Andy Gluesenkamp from the department of Conservation and Research-San Antonio Zoo gave us an overview of the memorable morning's plan. We were to divide into three groups and then spread out to the pre-determined locations to release the lizards near red harvester ant mounds that have been carefully marked in advance with GPS coordinates. The lizards varied in ages from 4-month-old to 3-year-olds to simulate a normal community. In addition, they were placed into groups based on logical DNA separations. Each lizard would also have an identifying "belly photo" taken with GPS coordinates to mark its place of release.



Dr. Andy Gluesenkamp giving a presentation to the survey attendees before going out into the field. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*

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The zoo team with the assistance of members of Hays County Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist had previously scouted this location, pre-exterminated any fire ants with a special



Harvester ant den. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*

steam device, and had mapped locations of valuable red harvester ants, the favorite food of the Texas Horned Lizards. Andy explained that because of COVID-19 pandemic, the original plan to use harmonic radar tracking tags did not fall into place. Instead, they would utilize Paul Bunker's Horned Lizard Canine Detection Program. Gren, one of Paul's first trained horned lizard tracking dogs, will come out in a week or so to sniff out as many lizards as possible to check on their welfare.

When the highly anticipated container holding the carefully separated lizard celebrities was brought out of the zoo vehicle, the horned lizard paparazzi went crazy! Everyone who had a cell phone, camera, or just eager eyes were right there to get a good view of the "stars" for the day. The San Antonio Zoo Express was there to video the historic moment, as well as Texas Parks and Wildlife TV film crew, and San Antonio Zoo videographers. Be on the lookout for these videos and interviews in the media! After photos were taken and the directions were given, it was finally time for the lizards to head to their new homes.



Container from the zoo with young Texas Horned Lizards. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*



Photographers taking their photos and videos of the horned lizard containers. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*

The board members from the Horned Lizard Conservation Society including Leslie Nosaman (President), George Perry (Director at large), Dalton Neuharth (Secretary), and myself decided to follow along with Andy Gluesenkamp's group. We arrived at the area beyond a nearby ridge and quickly noticed the wonderful habitat complete with red harvester ant dens. The horned lizards' new home would be classic Texas rangeland with wildflowers, cacti, and Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies fluttering from flower to flower. Andy gave us a walk-through tour of the site pointing out some of the important parts of choosing this location. He highlighted a well-established red harvester ant den that possibly has existed for over 10 years. Next, he explained how the ants groom the area around the den which helps with thermoregulation because the ants need the sunlight for warmth and will move the larva accordingly.

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Leslie Nossaman, George Perry, and Dalton Neuharth (from left to right) releasing their horned lizards into their new habitat. (check out the horned lizard tattoo on Dalton’s arm!) *Photo by Lynn Seman.*

Since this was the historic first release, the crew wanted to make sure that it was properly documented. When the Texas Parks and Wildlife camera team was in place, Andy held the first lizard who was ready to scurry out into the wild. We were all wearing masks because of the pandemic which was probably a good thing not only for that reason, but for protection for the lizards. In addition, we wore gloves to make sure that we did not pass along any unwanted human pathogens to the young reptiles. Andy announced “this is our first horned lizard released into the wild....now y’all don’t step on it!”



Almost immediately, the lizard found a nearby bush and practically disappeared into the environment. Andy pointed out how well horned lizards use camouflage to blend in which helps them survive until adulthood. I was amazed at the coloring of each lizard with some having an orangish tint and some with more of a white colorization which just happened to blend in perfectly with the fall leaf litter as well as the soil shading.



After the first release, one by one, those who wanted to take part were invited to release a horned lizard. Of course, I jumped at the chance to be a part of this wonderful experience. When the perfect location (not too close to the ant den) was spotted, I gently placed the little lizard down on an open area with cover nearby. Goosebumps normally appear when your body is cold and your hairs are being fluffed to warm you, but occasionally, they form when you recall a memory that exhilarates your senses. This was one of those moments. Watching the little lizard scurry away to freedom in the wild created that “rare type” of goosebumps (and a few tears of happiness).

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Others in our group took their turns placing the lizards in their new home, and eventually, we had released all the ones meant for this location. I, as well as others around me, took a little extra time watching the last lizard we released as it adjusted to the new surroundings. I giggled out loud as I watched one of my released lizards wiggle itself half buried in some dead leaves...only its little tail end sticking out.



We were all extremely careful to watch where we stepped as we finally turned to walk carefully away from the site. I wonder what the lizards were thinking? I wonder what hazards would await them? I wonder if the efforts of the team from San Antonio Zoo would all pay off in the end? One thing I know for sure is that we are all cheering for them to survive and re-establish their existence in the place where they are destined to live, hopefully for many generations to come. In a time when much seems bleak in the world, it made me smile to see GREAT people doing AMAZING things with conservation, and the restoration of a beloved species. Thank you, San Antonio Zoo team, for making a difference and for your passionate efforts with the horned lizard reintroduction project and for allowing us to be a witness to this unforgettable event.

“Do you think that they can see me?” *Photo by Lynn Seman.*



San Antonio Zoo horned lizard team: (left to right) Bekky Muscher-Hodges, Andy Gluesenkamp, Ariana Duffey, Kamryn Richard, Brittany Nunn, Dante Fenolio. Lots of happy faces behind those masks. *Photo by Lynn Seman.*



# Short Bio of Barton Cox, Founder of HLCS

*By Barton Cox*



Barton Cox, Founder of Horned Lizard Conservation Society holding a wonderful poster of a horned lizard that someone gave him. In honor of our 30th anniversary and his published bio, Barton had this photo made and made sure his shirt was from the 1960's in remembrance of all the horned lizards he knew back then. Photo is taken at his favorite spot in Hawaii, Makapu'u Point.

Hello friends of Horned Lizards! My name is Seth Barton Cox. I go by my middle name Barton. I'm positively thrilled to say that I founded the Horned Lizard Conservation Society thirty years ago. I was born in Stamford, Texas in the summer of 1942, moved to Abilene in 1949.

Living in West Texas during the '40's and '50's horned lizards were with us everywhere. So were the ubiquitous harvester ants (we called them "red ants") that scoured clean to the bare dirt four-foot wide circles in the vegetation, much to the dismay of folks hoping to maintain curb-to-curb grass lawns. Horney toads (I'll use the name we all used at the time) could usually be seen staking out hunting territory at points along the perimeter of one of those circles. What a kick it was watching them hunt! No matter how intently I watched, I can honestly say I never actually saw one of their tongues in action as it zapped an ant. I'd see the horney toad point its head at a particular ant, freeze, and then the ant in question would simply disappear. Really, really cool.

Of course we kids learned all the important stuff about our little friends: How they're good luck, and if you harm one or — God forbid! — kill one you'll have bad luck forever; about how when they feel really, really threatened they'll squirt almost half their own blood out of a tiny hole above one of their eyes; or how if you turn one of them over in your hand and gently stroke its tummy with a fingertip it'll

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go to sleep; and how if they're killed and eaten by a rattlesnake they kill the rattlesnake back by lodging in the damned snake's throat.

Sadly, a lot of what we learned was not correct. For example, the story about 'Ol Rip, the horney toad supposedly buried in a time capsule in Eastland, Texas that emerged alive after several decades when the time capsule was opened. "Sadly" because we believed our beloved friends were a lot more durable than they turned out to be.

In 1960 I left Abilene for UT Austin with my pregnant wife — number one out of what would turn out to be six in number (wives that is, and not all pregnant) ... Not enough time to go into that, really. Suffice to say that my present wife and I celebrated twenty years of happy marriage here in Honolulu this past September (we met in AA... Again, sigh, were their world enough and time...).

In 1963 I received my draft notice, left for the Army, went to OCS, taught Gunnery at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma and returned to UT to finish up my BA in Mathematics, to be followed by UT Law School and a career in law/computer programming/back to law/off to Hawaii, and now retirement.

Upon returning from the Army to UT in 1966 I was so, so very saddened to discover ALL THE HORNEY TOADS WERE GONE! The UT campus had been full of them when I'd left in 1963. How could they all — ALL — have disappeared in just three years? And Jesus wept.

Leslie Nossaman (President of HLCS) has asked me what the inspiration was for founding the HLCS. Well, in the late 1980's I was a computer programmer (COBOL mainframe) working in Austin for the Texas Employee Retirement System and got into Toast Masters briefly. I gave a speech bemoaning the loss of horney toads and calling for the creation of a group dedicated to their preservation. Somebody asked me to repeat that speech on one of the local TV channels. At the end of the speech a phone number was displayed, and the response was enthusiastic. I followed it with a televised call for a first meeting at the Zilker clubhouse and that first meeting (I believe it was in 1990) drew a packed house. Thus, began the HLCS: My crowning glory. So far at least.

I've been a known Democrat my whole life, and when the Republicans took over Texas, I knew my job as an assistant Attorney General in Austin had come to resemble a doomed red ant in the sights of a hungry horney toad. I had worked at a fairly low level, and did things like travel TDY to the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) in DC to bring five year's worth of Federal grant money back home in hopes of surviving, but alas, when Ann Richards lost the Governor's race to Bush The Lesser, I was called in the next day to say goodbye to Texas. The good news is that I'd worked in the ERS system long enough to be vested for retirement at age 60, which, along with Social Security has allowed me to live "comfortably" here in Hawaii.

Having said that, I feel compelled to proclaim: I haven't given up!

Netflix's "Our Planet" opens with a shot of the moon just as earthrise is occurring. It is narrated by the silky voice of Sir David Frederick Attenborough who begins: "Fifty years ago we finally ventured to the moon. For the very first time we looked back at our own planet. Since then the human population has more than doubled... But now in the space of just one human lifetime... wildlife populations have, on average, declined by sixty percent."

I've spent much of my retirement crafting (to analogize in NFL terms) a HAIL MARY. On March 9, 2020, my non provisional patent application was electronically submitted to the federal Office of

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Patents and patented technologies to join to my autumn what I hope will technology, and replace the blades of exist-wider, though closely resemble hope thereby to existing wind reducing fossil It's undoubtedly



Trademarks. My (hopefully) uses Steinmetz Solid stru-gether tubes. I'll be spending years working to demonstrate be a first application of that that application proposes to long, thin, dagger-shaped ing wind turbines with much no heaver, "blades" that more ble the wings of aircraft. I double or triple the output of turbines worldwide, thus re-fuel use by more than half. a long shot, but: Stay tuned.

Barton Cox and his wife, Beth are avid tandem cyclists in Hawaii. They have twice the mileage on their bike than their car! Looks like they are off to another adventure!



## Horned Lizard Conservation Conference

As with many scheduled face-to-face events, the 2021 HLCS Conference that was scheduled for May will be postponed again for safety and health concerns for the participants. We anticipate holding the conference in September which will hopefully give people more time to get those COVID vaccines.

We are looking into a hybrid conference so that we can meet in person and simultaneously share the conference online for those who are unable to make it in person. As more information becomes available, we will let you know. Check the HLCS website [hornedlizards.org](http://hornedlizards.org) and future newsletters for more information.

Registration information will be made available at [www.hornedlizards.org](http://www.hornedlizards.org) in early 2021. Abstract submissions will also reopen soon. Please contact Mason Lee at [masonmlee3@gmail.com](mailto:masonmlee3@gmail.com) for any questions and abstract submissions. In the meantime, we are accepting donated horned lizard items for our silent auction to help raise funds for horned lizard conservation grants!



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Once you select the Horned Lizard Conservation Society as your charity to support, our society will receive 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases. And from then on, every purchase made through AmazonSmile will benefit the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. Every little bit helps!



## HLCS Board 2021-2022 Term Election Results

Congratulations to the new HLCS Board members and returning Board members! The election for the 2021-2022 Board is over!

The official term started January 1, 2021 and the new board has already begun to work hard at horned lizard conservation. Ryan Zach will continue as Treasurer, Dalton Neuharth will continue as Secretary, and Lynn Seman will continue as Member Services Officer. Mason Lee will move into the President position from President-elect. Our two new Board members are Cheryl Jenkins as President-elect and Miranda Vesey as Director-at-Large. The Board now has members in five U.S. states and in all four time zones! Thank you again to the outgoing President, Leslie Nossaman and Director-at-Large, George Perry for all of their wonderful contributions!

This year we used a digital voting process which was very successful and resulted in our largest number of voters ever! Once we received all the votes, we checked that each member was in good standing. Thank you for voting!

It is going to be a fantastic term!

## HLCS 30th Anniversary!!!

On January 25, 2021, HLCS marked its 30th anniversary! On that day in 1991, HLCS was officially chartered as a non-profit organization and given its official name, "Horned Lizard Conservation Society".

HLCS has a few special events and activities planned this year to commemorate this special event. After all, being a conservation non-profit for 30 years and to still be as successful as we are, is really something to celebrate!

## HLCS 2021 Grant Program

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 annually 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 grants again in 2021. In the past, priority has been given to projects that have direct conservation implications, including public education.

To apply, send a proposal detailing the goal of the study, the rationale for it including relevance to conservation of horned lizards, and how your work would benefit from this opportunity. The proposal may not exceed 1000 words. Also include a preliminary budget with as much detail as possible and with any other funding sources available, received for your project, and other grants you are applying for. Word format documents are preferred. In addition, send a short resume or CV (up to 3 pages) for the lead applicant and have a single letter of reference sent to Miranda Vesey: [miranda.vesey@gmail.com](mailto:miranda.vesey@gmail.com). All three documents should be in separate digital files. The deadline is January 1, 2021. The decision will be announced by January 31, 2021.

## HLCS Newsletter Access

As part of HLCS's strategy to save money to better focus what we have, we are asking our members who are receiving the newsletter by paper and post mail to move to having it delivered by email instead. This will save HLCS printing and mailing costs for sending the paper newsletter. It will also save time for our print manager, Taylor Dee.

Digital newsletters are sent by a link to all members who have given us an email address. The link will take you to a version that is in color and if you prefer paper, you can print it out and read it. The post mailed paper newsletter is black and white.

Please consider making the move to a digital copy. We are trying to conserve our money too! To make the change, contact Lynn Seman, the HLCS Membership Services officer at [rlynnseman@gmail.com](mailto:rlynnseman@gmail.com)



## Official Facebook Member Page

HLCS has created a method for communicating between members. This page will also allow the HLCS Board to keep you updated with the latest news and activities and allow you a forum to post your photos and stories and ask others questions and make comments. This page is for the dues paying members and the objective is to provide more value to you!

If you are on Facebook and are dues paying member, look for the official page to be a part of this group. Go to this page and ask to become a group member: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HLCSmembers/> It is easy to sign up and it is fun! Hope to see you there!



## President's Message *by Mason Lee*

Happy New Year, HLCS members!

I am honored to continue serving horned lizard conservation and HLCS as president. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation for the hard work that our past president, Leslie Nossaman, poured into HLCS. We accomplished many milestones under her leadership, including a record number of memberships and horned lizard outing offerings, as well as the publishing of Dr. Wade Sherbrooke's comprehensive account of the horned lizard species.

Please join me in welcoming our two newest board members, Cheryl Jenkins (president-elect) and Miranda Vesey (director at large), and in welcoming back returning board members Dalton Neuharth (secretary), Lynn Seman (membership), and Ryan Zach (treasurer). We are excited to work on new education and outreach initiatives to continue moving HLCS forward during the next two years.

As we continue moving forward and expanding our operations, I encourage you to get involved! We are a volunteer run organization, and the talents of our members is what helps to make HLCS great. Whether you are an artist, educator, fundraiser, activist, landowner, researcher, etc., your talents can help promote horned lizard conservation. I invite you to share your ideas, thoughts, and feedback with us. Please contact me or one of the HLCS board members for more information on getting involved. I look forward to hearing from you, and to seeing you at our upcoming conference and events once it is safe again to gather. I am excited to work with you all to make the next two years fantastic for horned lizard conservation!

May your 2021 be full of good health and horned lizards.





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