

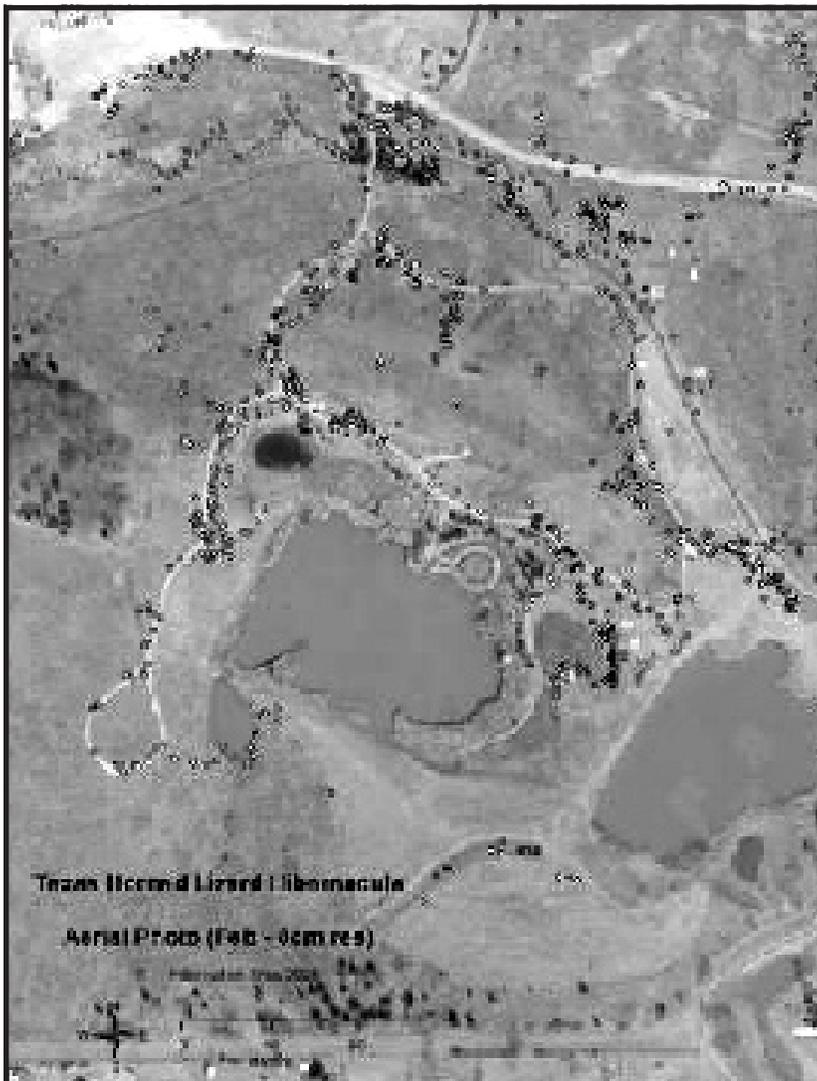


Our purpose is to document and publicize the values and conservation needs of horned lizards, to promote horned lizard conservation projects and to assist with horned lizard management initiatives throughout their ranges.

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## **Texas Horned Lizards at home at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma**

*by Ray Moody*



Tinker Air Force Base (AFB) is the largest single-site employer in the State of Oklahoma and home to large bodied aircraft such as the E-3 Sentry, Navy's E-6A, and the KC 135 Re-fueling Tanker. It is one of the world's largest aircraft depot maintenance facilities. But, it's also home to the Texas horned lizard, *Phrynosoma cornutum*, an Oklahoma species of special concern and a threatened species in Texas, due to recent dramatic declines in numbers. How is this possible for a highly industrialized Air Force Base nestled into an urban setting of a major metropolitan city? That's part of what the research at Tinker is about and how the military mission can continue to coexist in harmony with the lizard.

Biologists and researchers at Tinker AFB and Oklahoma State University are three years into a comprehensive study to better understand the ecology of the horned lizard at the base. Specific objectives of the study are to quantify lizard distribution, habitat use, life history characteristics, behaviors, and to find a way to monitor lizard population trends. Also a major focus is to share the information learned to help conservation efforts across the range of the horned lizard.

The first year of the study 50 lizards were captured. Last summer an additional 54 were captured, with 17 of those being tracked via

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radio transmitters within Tinker's urban greenway and wildlife reserve. Once lizards were captured, morphological characteristics were recorded along with microhabitat type and Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates. Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags, rice-grain sized microchips, were implanted in the lizards. These glass encapsulated microchips are used to identify individual lizards. Lizards of suitable sizes were outfitted with radio transmitters (1.3-1.8g) for tracking. Data was collected using handheld PC's equipped with GPS and ARC Pad Software and was differentially cor-

rected and imported into Arc Map, which was used to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) layer for the lizards at Tinker. The GIS layer has over 1200 capture/relocation points with home ranges, nesting, and hibernation locations pin-pointed over a high resolution digital color aerial photograph.

were tracked to hibernacula where interesting site characteristics such as south - southwest facing slope aspects and soil depths of 3-12 mm were observed.

Information such as this is vital to proper management of sensitive species such as the Texas horned lizard, especially in a highly dynamic environment such as an industrialized military installation. This clearer understanding of how the Texas horned lizard has flourished at Tinker AFB may be key to understanding the lizard in other urban environments. Such knowledge will foster informed management and decision-making regarding the species across its range. Such management in return would promote more robust and stable populations. This would lessen the potential for federal or state listing as threatened or endangered species, thereby, precluding potential land use and other restrictions on the military or land owners.

*Yes, in this scenario  
both humans and nature win!*

**Note:** *The principle investigators in*

Many interesting observations about the Texas horned lizards habits, life history and needs are starting to emerge as a result of this study. For example, lizards were found to utilize a mosaic of vegetation types from bare ground to densely vegetated areas of forbs and grasses. Lizards were closely associated with nature/walking trails and disturbed ground (even discounting the bias of initial captures along trails where visibility is better).

Home ranges were also found to be linearly aligned along trails and roads and averaged 0.65 ha for adults. Lizards at Tinker were also much smaller (average snout to vent length for females was 68.4 mm; for males 59.4 mm) than those that have been studied farther south. Three female lizards were tracked over the summer to nesting locations and clutch sizes (17-20 eggs) were recorded. Eleven lizards



# Southern California Chapter News

## Lester G. Milroy III, Chapter President

Spring sprung this year after California received record rainfall over winter and the wildflowers bloomed and were plentiful. As the season progresses, the threat of wildfires also grows. Numerous areas have become overgrown with vegetation, a large part of which are non-native grasses. The non-natives continue to have a significant impact on horned lizard habitats by degrading basking areas and making movement difficult because of plant densities. There does appear to be an increase of harvester ant nests in many areas. With an increase in food resources, the horned lizards should see a population upswing next year.

Many horned lizard habitats are threatened by the rapid increases of development and the failure of developers and planners to properly identify sensitive species.

Environmental Impact Reviews and Environmental Impact Statements may identify some areas as sensitive, but the pressure to develop is extremely high and the protection of sensitive areas is mitigated. The mitigation may involve land swaps, but that does not take into consideration the quality of the habitat lost. An area proposed for development may support horned lizards but the new land swap area does not. Many people ask "why not just salvage the horned lizard populations and translocate them?" That might be an ideal situation but to date, most translocations of horned lizard populations have failed.

Now the question is "Why do most translocations failed?" That is a very good question. But there is yet to be

a definitive answer. Many factors are considered in the translocation process. Habitat quality provides optimal plant communities for horned lizards to utilize for shade and protective cover. Prey densities, the number of ant nests and variety of ants, are considered. Soil types and strata are considered. Predator-prey ratios are considered. Buffer areas between natural, undisturbed habitats and areas that are disturbed by human activity, are considered.

Many, many factors are considered in a translocation process.

Horned lizards have been moved to areas that are very similar and very close to their original habitats and areas well within the normal range of the species and failed.

They have been moved to areas considered "high quality" or "higher quality" habitats and failed. Why the continued failure?

I have made five translocation attempts with San Diego Coast Horned Lizards in the past 8 years. Four attempts were made using two groups of 6 males and 6 females, one group of 3 males and 9 females, and one group of 5 males and 7 females. The fifth attempt used a grouping of 5 adult males, 5 adult females, and 12 hatchlings (which included 3 males and 9 females). The hatchlings were released within a large enclosed area to monitor. The adult horned lizards in each group carried radio transmitters to monitor dispersal and track their locations.

All translocations failed within 3

months, even though the resources available would have supported each small group without problems.

And so it goes.

The 13th Annual Environmental EXPO was held at California State University, San Bernardino on April 23, 2005, in celebration of Earth Day. Conservation presentations were everywhere.

The HLCS displays drew constant crowds and everyone learned that there are 13 different species of horned lizards. The vast majority of people had no idea that there were 13 different species.

They do now!

Most folks had their stories of seeing "horny toads" as kids and the fond memories they recalled. They question that was asked by all, "What happened to the horny toads?"

My reply was in the form of a question back to them. What was different in the places where they used to see the "horny toads?"

Their replies were basically the same: Development, off road vehicle damage, and illegal dumping.

People learned what causes the continued loss. Now, can they or will they be part of the solution in reducing the continued decline of horned lizards? That remains to be seen.

Well, I guess it is time to get back to the field and keep an eye on the horned lizards.

It is also time to practice on the



# New Mexico Chapter News: *Our First Official Meeting*

Anthony Hotopp called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, March 26, 2005, and introduced Chapter President Tom McCain. Tom offered a brief synopsis of the horned lizard species found in New Mexico including the latest discovery, the regal horned lizard, which was recently confirmed from the southwestern corner of the state.

Doug Johnson was introduced to discuss the Thorny Devil of Australia. Doug has lived in the opal mining district of Australia for over twenty years. The Thorny Devil is a species with many similarities to the North American Horned Lizards. Like horny toads, they are seldom seen. Although ferocious in appearance, they are friendly. Thorny Devils are insectivores and their primary food is ants. They are also revered by the aborigines and are sometimes kept as pets. Doug said the Aborigines open the thorny devil's mouth and insert a stick attached to a line. The thorny devils cannot spit out the stick and are led around as if on a leash.

This is but another horny toad related legend that we wanted to pass on for your amusement but by no means propose as confirmed fact. Tom brought our association's alliance with the New Mexico Herpetological Society. The two organizations plan to share and co-sponsor outdoor activities for the upcoming summer. Everyone added ideas and offered to participate in the promotion and publicity for those events.

Also discussed was the desire to attract more individuals and families to the New Mexico Chapter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society.

Karen Villanueva volunteered to help as she works in this field full time. Jim, volunteered to help with publicity releases and with connections of his own in the media. Tony briefly related the story of Harriet, the short horned lizard, who was returned to New Mexico from Texas and returned to her native habitat through the efforts of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society (see HLCS Newsletter Volume 10, Number 2). Jim and Karen both felt the story and accompanying photos could be used to generate favorable publicity in the local press and increased membership. Karen also indicated that numerous small newspapers in the area would be happy to list our meetings, outings and excursions at no cost.

The group also discussed finances, tax exemptions, and non profit status. Bill Benton, a professional accountant cleared up some misconceptions and agreed to counsel the group on financial issues.

The meeting concluded with a fine video produced by Lester Milroy of California on the Coastal Horned Lizard. All found the video to be informative and entertaining. Snacks and sweets were provided by our host, Tom, and daughters



# HLCS National News

## by Wendy Hodges, President

### *National Board of Directors Says a Fond Good Bye*

Roger Repp, HLCS Treasurer, resigned his position effective in September 2005. Roger, we really appreciate your service and insights, and hope we can still tap those insights in the future. While we need to find a new treasurer, you could never be replaced!

In his notice to the National Board of Directors (NBOD), Roger said, "One of the biggest pleasures of doing this job for four years has been witnessing the outpouring of love for horned lizards. As a passionate lover of all species of reptiles, who devotes nearly every waking moment thinking about them, I can assure you all that there is no other type of reptile that receives this kind of attention. Keep up the good work guys. The horny toads need you." Roger will focus his time now on a long-term love of his, monitoring reptiles near his home in Arizona.

Until elections are held for new officers, the NBOD has appointed a replacement. We are very fortunate that Bette Armstrong has generously accepted the duties as interim Treasurer. When Bette was recommended for the position, the following description was included, "Bette would make the best National Treasurer of all. She is really wired quite tight in fiscal matters." I couldn't agree more. Bette also currently handles the HLCS membership services, so we cannot thank her nearly enough for taking on the job of two directors!

Elections to fill the National positions in the HLCS are needed. Our last round of nominations to fill these positions came up empty handed, and we are long overdue for new officers for three positions: President, President-Elect, and Treasurer. Membership Services is an appointed position and the other positions are held by the Chapter Presidents. A call for nominations and elections will appear in your mailboxes in the next few months. Please seriously consider taking an active role in maintaining your organization. The HLCS is rich in talented individuals that help in many ways. If you are looking for more involvement, nothing says that better than serving in a leadership role.



Cheers from Roger Repp (left) and Gordon Schuett (right) in the Suizos (photo by Ryan Sawby).

## HLCS Website Update

Have you visited the HLCS website recently: [www.hornedlizards.org](http://www.hornedlizards.org)?

Did you know that in the last year our website was seen by 51,930 visitors – with an average of 3,995 every month? The average number of page views every month is 13,584. Wow!

While we don't do major updates all the time, we frequently add information to the site. You can easily find news about upcoming chapter events and highlights of updated material on the front page. Most recently, abstracts from the Horned Lizard Workshop held in Lubbock June 4-5, 2005, were posted on line.

You will find that the scientific literature section has been updated and increased by nearly three times the original size. You will find titles and bibliographic information on over 300 articles published in scientific journals (and this is by no means a complete list of citations). Articles range in date from 1852 to 2005.

*We also have the latest revision of the HLCS species brochure that you can print out and share with anyone you wish.*

# The *Phrynosoma coronatum* of Table Mountain

by Jason Shedd

I became fascinated with the genus *Phrynosoma* some time in high school, when this group of unique lizards quickly replaced Gekkonids as my favorite lizards. Growing up in Chico, Butte County, California, I just assumed that I would have to venture to central California or adjacent Nevada in order to see a horned lizard. Studying Robert Stebbins' *A Field to Western Reptiles and Amphibians* before bed every night during high school, I thought the range of *Phrynosoma coronatum*, the Coast Horned Lizard (CHL), extending up into the Butte County area was just an exaggeration.

Having made that assumption, I put no attention on looking in my home county for horned lizards and finally saw my first CHL at the age of 15 at Mission Trails Regional Park, San Diego, which is down the street from my grandparents' house.

As it turns out, Stebbins' range maps are more accurate than I had assumed. It wasn't until later, towards

the end of my college days at California State University, Chico, that I got back into the local environmental circle and heard that horned lizards could indeed still be seen in Butte County! Oh, the time wasted! The location reported by most people is known as North Table Mountain (usually referred to simply as Table Mountain), a three to four mile-long geological phenomenon positioned southeast of Chico and northwest of the town of Oroville in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Having researched CHL specimens and sighting records from the Butte County area a little more, it turned out that there are (or were) a small handful of other known localities, but the consensus seems to be that Table Mountain is the most reliable place to see this species, as



well as the most accessible. Much remaining possible CHL habitat in Butte County sits on private lands, but Table Mountain is a California Department of Fish and Game Ecological Reserve, open for the public's enjoyment and education.

From Highways 70 and 99, Table Mountain appears as a flat, virtually treeless, elevated formation that looks as though its top was lobbed off. Once on the mesa, undulating prairie and rocky cliff sides that lead to Gray Pine- and Live Oak-grown canyons become more apparent. With its open expanses of grassland, lending to an eclectic display of spring wildflowers, and interesting geology consisting of areas of flat, exposed Basaltic bedrock outcrops, Table Mountain isn't exactly the most characteristic horned lizard habitat.

Though there are harvester ants present, they do not appear to be in great abundance. And what about loose soil? There is not much of this necessary component of a horned lizard's microhabitat either. However, loose soil that *is* present has been created by two other animals. One is Botta's Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), which creates mounds of dirt atop its burrow, which typically



heads down into the earth at a steep angle. Whether or not the lizards use these mounds for burial or egg deposition is unknown, but may be likely.

More commonly encountered on the mesa are the burrows of another rodent, the California Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys californicus*). Heading into the ground on less of an incline than the gopher burrow, the mouth of a kangaroo rat burrow is left open with a pile of loose soil in which the resident rodent dust-bathes. Kangaroo rat burrows are also far more common than gopher mounds at the edges of the open rocky outcrops upon which CHL's thermoregulate.

More accessible to a horned lizard, not only because of location, but also because of the construction of the burrow entrances, which are usually tilted at an angle as they are built into up-sloping ground, kangaroo rat burrows may provide shelter for the CHL's of Table Mountain. As there are no other compatible sites for CHL burial due to the thin soils over bedrock, I suspect a symbiotic relationship is occurring between the lizard and rodent species.

Without the mounds created by Botta's Pocket Gopher and finer dirt piles created by the California Kangaroo Rat, it does not seem plausible that a horned lizard population could exist on Table Mountain. And as there is no shade provided by shrubby plant growth whatsoever in the vicinity of where the horned lizards are found, I suspect the open, available burrows of the kangaroo rat are used by the lizards for regulation of body temperature and possibly hibernation and refuge from predators. (I have witnessed Western Fence Lizards (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) on Table Mountain utilizing kangaroo rat burrows as retreats.)

Although Table Mountain is one of the few remaining areas in Butte County where the CHL can still be found, the feat is not accomplished without effort. Population densities of much of Table Mountain's herpetofauna appear to be low on the open mesa, aside from the common California Newts (*Taricha torosa*) and Pacific Treefrogs (*Pseudacris regilla*) that breed in ephemeral creeks running through the landscape during winter and early spring.

Even fence lizards are not as ubiquitous as they typically are throughout the rest of northern California. While walking amongst the irregular, bumpy terrain of dark lava rock where many people (so many I have lost count) have said to look for horned lizards, discouraging thoughts usually set in rather quickly after few or no fence lizards are detected. Knowing that fence lizards are present but uncommon, imagine trying to find a horned lizard!

The majority of people who have told me of their horned lizard finds on Table Mountain have basically stumbled upon the cryptic little devils by accident. I am now in my third year of cognizant searching, although in 2004 it stopped raining in the area some time in March and I spent little time on the mesa between April and July as temperatures rose drastically for the year.

This year, an El Niño winter has kept temperatures low to mild and soils have remained wet into late spring. As of June 2005, I have spent many hours looking for the elusive Table Mountain horned lizards at various times of day on several occasions, sometimes on my own and other times with search parties (even walking in formation)...to no avail.

The most recent sighting I am aware of is from the afternoon of April 30, 2005. Having gone back to the

## Horned Lizards Research Recently published:

Stark, R. C., S. F. Fox, and D. M. Leslie, Jr. 2005. *Male Texas Horned Lizards Increase Daily Movements and Area Covered in Spring: A Mate Searching Strategy?* *Journal of Herpetology* 39:169-173.



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# Lubbock Workshop Pulls Horned Lizard Aficionados Together

by Lee Ann Linam

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Jacob Goldfarb, a student at Texas Tech University, shares his knowledge about the radio-tagged horned lizard in hand.  
photo by Bart Drees

More than 40 fans of horned lizards, representing biologists, students, Texas Horned Lizard Watch volunteers, Texas Master Naturalists, Horned Lizard Conservation Society members, and landowners, gathered in Lubbock on June 4 and 5, 2005, to share information and questions about horned lizards. The purpose of the workshop was to offer information about horned lizards to interested members of the community and to allow researchers to meet together to discuss future collaborations and coordination regarding methods and research goals.

Saturday's meeting on the campus of Texas Tech University (TTU) included an assortment of presentations on horned lizard biology, research methods, survey efforts, propagation, reintroduction, and landowner incentives. During a morning session Chip Ruthven of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) presented an overview of Texas horned lizard biology, comparing some life history attributes of South Texas populations with other pre-

liminary findings in the state. His presentation noted that body size, clutch size, and length of active season were greatest in South Texas and declined with increasing latitude. Chris Mostyn (TPWD) and Beth Moeller (Fort Worth Zoo) presented the results of burning and grazing studies on the Chaparral Wildlife Management Area. Chris noted that moderate grazing and prescribed burning seemed to produce higher quality horned lizard habitat as indicated by home range sizes. Beth noted that highest survival occurred in habitats that received winter burns as part of their management treatment. Eric

Hellgren (Oklahoma State University) presented data from Tinker Air Force Base showing that this very urban population of horned lizards is experiencing good survival on a habitat that does not have red harvester ants and covers a small area.

The afternoon session addressed a variety of topics. Lee Ann Linam (TPWD) presented data from Texas Horned Lizard Watch that supports the idea that horned lizards are faring best in the western two-thirds of the state, but also offered hopeful results from the Post Oak Savannah ecoregion. Jim Mueller of Sul Ross State University discussed efforts to use line transects to estimate horned lizard abundance, indicating that openness of the habitat and ground temperatures were important considerations in the accuracy of this method. Bart Drees (Texas Cooperative Extension Service) provided an interesting discussion of



Radio-tagged horned lizard tracked at the Beach Ranch.  
photo by Jim Armstrong

options available to control imported red fire ants while maintaining native ant populations. Size of the property, density of fire ant populations, and method of pesticide application are important considerations in selecting treatment methods. Gad Perry of TTU presented preliminary results showing that, among introduced pasture grasses, WW-B.Dahl seems to allow a lower density of fire ants than other nonnative grasses.

Wendy Hodges (UT – Permian Basin) presented results of a horned lizard reintroduction experiment in Central Texas. Although habitat at the site was apparently suitable, survival of the released lizards was extremely low, with no population establishment after one year. Aaron Dickey (Fort Worth Zoo) discussed some of the challenges of hibernating horned lizards in captivity and described the zoo's success with an artificially-chilled system. Mike Miller and Shelly Plante of TPWD then offered a list of suggestions and resources for private landowners who might be interested in habitat improvement and nature tourism for horned lizards on their property.

Following the paper session, a business meeting for the Texas Chapter

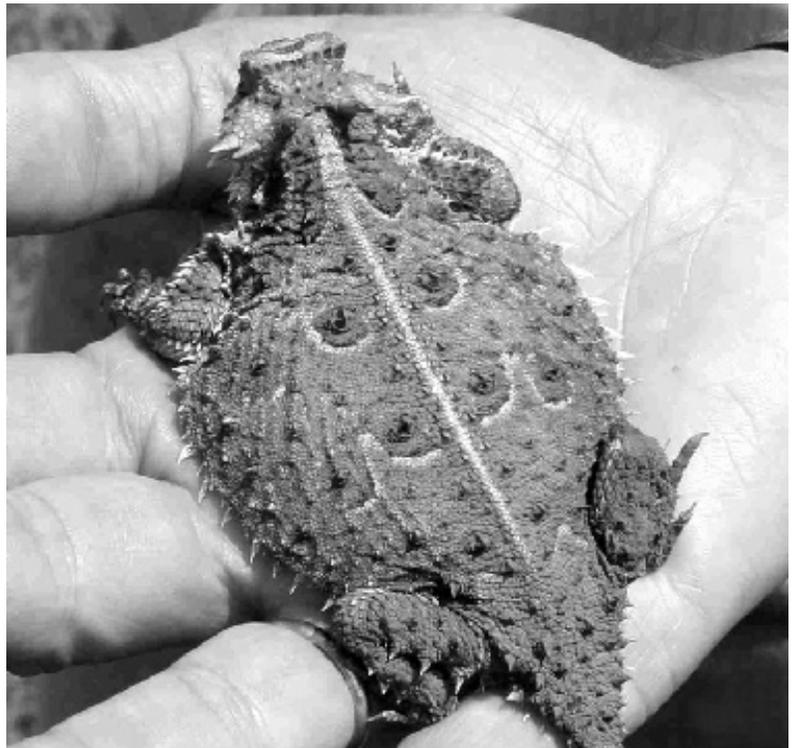
of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society was held and researchers convened to discuss communication, standardizations, and future collaborations.

On Sunday participants enjoyed a field trip to the scenic Beach Ranch in

Garza county near Post. This ranch (8,000 acres) is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Lubbock Audubon Society, Texas Tech University, and others to restore the Rolling Plains ecosystem. They have successfully reestablished prairie dogs and burrowing owl populations using releases from the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Horned lizard research is ongoing at the site, and Tech student Jacob Goldfarb located a horned lizard with telemetry equipment during the group's visit. Field trip participants also found four more horned lizards, three ornate box turtles, and two diamondback rattlesnakes in addition to the many prairie dogs, burrowing owls, and jackrabbits.

*Sponsors of the workshop were the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, TPWD, UT-Permian Basin, and TTU. Abstracts of the presentations offered at the meeting can be found at the Horned Lizard Conservation Society website ([www.hornedlizards.org](http://www.hornedlizards.org)).*

*We hope this workshop is the beginning of a series of regular, perhaps annual, meetings that will bring together parties in the region interested in conservation of horned lizards.*



An unmarked female horned lizard at the Beach Ranch.  
photo by Jim Armstrong



Using soil to hide the transmitter adhesive on a marked horned lizard.

# Texas Chapter News

## Field Survey Report

A late season cool front put a big chill on our survey efforts at the Shumla Archaeological School property near Comstock on April 16, but a group of a dozen dedicated searchers still managed to find some horned lizards and enjoy an introduction to the ancient cultures of the Lower Pecos.

About two hours of searching at the Shumla School property in temperatures in the lower 70s finally produced one female round-tailed horned lizard.

The group then decided to move on to Seminole Canyon State Park to take a tour of the rock art there. On a side trip to the Pecos River overlook they encountered another roundtail and a Texas horned lizard.

Thanks to Carolyn Todd for providing a wonderful opportunity and overview of the natural and human history of the area and to the Shumla School for hosting us.

The rugged property of the school does appear to be excellent horned lizard habitat, so we have scheduled a resurvey of the property in August. For the date and other details, contact Carolyn at [ctodd@sulross.edu](mailto:ctodd@sulross.edu)



*Phrynosoma modestum* at Shumla  
*photo by Fannie Messec*

## Upcoming Events in Texas

August (date TBA) – Field Survey, Comstock, survey at Shumla School. Contact Carolyn Todd ([ctodd@sulross.edu](mailto:ctodd@sulross.edu)) for more information.

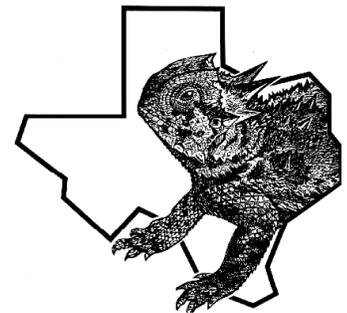
Aug 27 & 28 – the Austin, Texas Herp Show. Booth sitters are needed. Contact Bill Brooks, [bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu) if you can work a few hours Saturday or Sunday.

September 3 – Texas Horned Lizard Fun! at Kenedy. We need fun loving people to person our booth at this, the Horned Lizard Capital of Texas. This is a great festival held just 1 hour south of San Antonio. We have never failed to see a horned lizard there – even on the wettest, coldest days. Booth sitters are needed. Contact Bill Brooks, by e-mail at [Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu).

Sept 17 – Old Rip Festival, Eastland. Booth sitters are needed to support Ol' Rip, the most famous horned lizard in the world! This small town is anything but small town, and the fair is a classic. The HLCS returns to Eastland this year to support Old Rip. Don't be caught snoozing – sign up for booth support now! Contact Lee Ann Linam by e-mail at [lalinam@wimberley-tx.com](mailto:lalinam@wimberley-tx.com).

Oct. 1 & 2 – Texas Wildlife EXPO, Austin. This is the largest sports and outdoors show in Texas. We need as many booth sitters as we can get to person our displays at this, our biggest, outreach event of the year! With enough volunteers, there will be time for all of us to visit the other amazing displays on the grounds of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Headquarters. Please Contact Lee Ann Linam by e-mail at ([lalinam@wimberley-tx.com](mailto:lalinam@wimberley-tx.com)) for details or to help.

Feb. 4-5, 2006 – Art Show, Wild Basin Preserve, Austin – The *FIRST ALL HORNED LIZARD ART SHOW EVER* will be held at the Wild Basin Preserve in Austin. Get on the planning committee now! Your ideas and talents are needed. If this is something you would enjoy participating in, please email Bill Brooks at [Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu).





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#### Upcoming Events

August – Field Survey, Comstock , Shumla School.  
Contact Carolyn Todd (ctodd@sulross.edu) for details.

Aug 27 & 28 – Austin Texas Herp Show  
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Contact Bill Brooks – Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu  
– for details or to help out at these two events.

Sept 17 – Old Rip Festival, Eastland, TX  
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Contact Lee Ann Linam for details or to help out at  
these two events – lalinam@wimberley-tx.com

Feb. 4-5, 2006 – 1st all-Horned Lizard Art Show, Wild  
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