

Snake Days 2018 Meeting Summary

By William Benedict



Snake Days Meeting attendees

Sanderson, Texas may be a small West Texas town, but it is a mecca for reptile enthusiasts. Nearly 100 people attended the annual SnakeDays event in Sanderson this year from June 8-10th. This year the horned lizard was the highlighted reptile of the year. Nights were filled with road cruising and cut walking to search for snakes, lizards, amphibians, and invertebrates that call West Texas home. On Saturday, we all gathered at the convention center to share stories with each other, bid on the silent auction, purchase

equipment and gifts from vendors, and listen to a series of great lectures.

Paul Crump, the Texas State Herpetologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, started off the lectures by discussing H.R. 4647, also known as the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This proposed legislation would provide \$1.3 billion per year of federal revenue to fund state-based wildlife conservation. If passed, Texas would receive \$60 million per year to protect species of greatest conservation need

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such as the horned lizard. Leslie Nossaman, President-Elect for HLCS, encouraged us to ask our state representative to support the Act, and directed us to the HLCS blog (<http://www.hornedlizards.org/hlcs-blog>) to learn more about the Act and how to find our representative.

Bill Brooks, one of the founding members and former president of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, gave a talk about the Society's history as well as the story of "The Legend of Eastland's Old Rip." Not being native to Texas, I had never heard of the tale before, but I have to say it was hysterical to hear. This story goes to show how much Texans care about the horned lizard, and the resources and time that is dedicated to restoring this species to areas of its historic range.

Dr. Carl Franklin from the University of Texas at Arlington demonstrated his infatuation with the common turtle species in Texas. He drew the crowd's rapt attention with his big, animated personality and elicited many laughs with the interesting stories behind the pictures he shared of sliders, snappers, soft-shells, and muds. His work often attracts the curiosity of local residents, and he loves to encourage their interest as they learn more about Texas turtle species.

Dennis Magee, the former president of the Florida Herpetological Society, shared memories of his two mentors, Ross Allen and Carl Kauffeld, and the unique experiences he had with them as he grew in his career as a herpetologist.

Marsha May, the Texas Nature Tracker Biologist with TPWD, presented how our phones can be used to track the sightings of both common and rare Texas species. Users can upload pictures of an organism they found, along with its location, to a special app called iNaturalist. Scientists from around the world can use the uploaded observations for research, such as population studies on vulnerable Texas species. This app gives people a great opportunity to interact with their environment and contribute to the conservation of species such as horned lizards.

Dr. Corey Roelke from the University of Texas at Arlington displayed how systematics and evolutionary relationships are determined today by using local herpetofauna as examples. He used the multiple skink species in Texas to show how evolutionary biologists are reconstructing phylogenetic trees. Systematics is important because it depicts a sense of biodiversity which is being lost at a high rate due to human activity. Species can be tracked as new species are found and others are lost. Conservation utilizes systematics because species change over time at a faster rate than others, and tracking those changes can give insight as to what is happening in the environment today.

Dr. Ed Wozniak, the Regional Zoonosis Control Veterinarian with the Texas Department of State Health Services, spoke about inclusion body disease (IBD) which is a fatal viral infection that affects boas (family Boidae) and pythons (family Pythonidae). This is a worldwide disease that has spread via the pet trade.

Big thanks to the SnakeDays board members for celebrating horned lizards this year and for becoming members of the HLCS. Join the fun next year at SnakeDays in Alpine, Texas on July 26-28th!



Meet the 2019-2020 HLCS Board of Directors Election Candidates!

Leslie Nossaman assumes the Presidency as she has been the HLCS President-Elect under the guidance of the out-going President, Jared Fuller. Elections for our new leaders occur every two years and we have a great slate for the incoming board. Enclosed with this issue of *Phrynosomatics*, is the ballot for our incoming Board of Directors. We've included an autobiography for each candidate on the ballot so you can get to know them. Tear the ballot out of the newsletter. Please review the candidates, make your selections and mail the completed, stamped, and stapled ballot to the address preprinted on the reverse side of the ballot by December 15, 2018. Thank you for voting!

Mason Lee - President-Elect

I'm a master's student of wildlife biology at Texas A&M (whoop!) and the senior conservation technician in the Department of Conservation and Research at the San Antonio Zoo. I am in charge of the daily care for the 39 Texas horned lizards we currently have as part of our reintroduction project, and I train new staff and interns on their husbandry. My favorite part of this project is getting to educate others about horned lizards! I do a lot of outreach events on and off zoo grounds and via Facebook videos, a nationally-aired TV program, and magazine and newspaper articles.

As an extension of my love for conservation and education, I organized the zoo's first Salamander Saturday in 2016, an annual event started by the Foundation for the Conservation of Salamanders (FCSal). I am proud to say that we have since raised over \$1000 for FCSal! I am in the process of organizing what I hope will be a similar event for horned lizards at the zoo. I also lead the FrogWatch citizen science program at Palmetto State Park for zoo volunteers and park visitors. Last year, I extended this program by partnering with a professor at Texas State University to give local high school students, our zoo teen volunteers, and park visitors the opportunity to test frogs and toads for chytrid fungus.

I had the wonderful opportunity to be Secretary of the HLCS last year. During my time on the Board, I created an Instagram account for the HLCS and have been posting more regularly on the Facebook page, in addition to answering emails and Facebook messages from members and followers. These additional postings have allowed our content to be shared with hundreds of new followers/viewers. I hope to continue on as President-Elect so that I can continue educating the public, sharing our mission, and expanding our reach on social media!

Ryan Zach - Treasurer

I am a longtime nature lover, herp enthusiast, and self-proclaimed Phrynosoma Junkie! I have spent the last 30 years working with Reptiles in different capacities. I have spent the last 18 years in professional roles at St. Louis Zoo, Zoo Miami and currently as the Collections Manager of Reptiles at the Phoenix Zoo.

I have worked with Phrynosoma in captive populations for over 15 years and have participated in Phrynosoma field work with researchers from University of Arizona and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. I am an avid outdoorsman and field herper and love College Football (Go Canes!) I spent 6 years as a reservist in the United States Air Force and come from a proud Air Force family.

I would love the opportunity to help continue to support and carry on the great work done by the Horned Lizard Conservation Society by stepping into one of the officer positions.

Dalton Neuharth - Secretary

I am currently a MSc student at Texas State in San Marcos, TX studying lizard communities within burned and unburned forest in Bastrop Co, TX. I received my BSc of Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Texas A&M University in 2015, where I served as the president of the TAMU Herpetological Society for two years. I worked there for a few years as a research assistant, primarily on lizards, including Dune Sagebrush Lizard and Spot-tailed Earless Lizard. While none of my projects have specifically focused on horned lizards, most have been within their range and I always enjoy the chance to photograph these charismatic lizards.

I grew up in Central Texas in the 90s so I remember my grandparents and parents talk about seeing them all the time, but I never really got that opportunity until I got a little older. I can remember being pretty captivated by the idea of seeing one in the wild and I read about them and looked at pictures. Behind our house, we had a harvester ant colony that my mom made sure my dad didn't poison (with the fire ant mounds throughout the yard) just in case a horned lizard did live nearby, but I never saw one outside a zoo until I began college. I do remember the first round-tailed horned lizard I saw pretty vividly; it was a juvenile and was about the size of my thumbnail, which was quite the experience.

George Perry - Director At Large

I am the original founding board member of this organization. I am also the original editor of Phrynosomatics newsletter and actually named the newsletter Phrynosomatics. I am the former Director of Austin Nature and Science Center, 1980-1987. And am the former Executive Director, Bat Conservation International, 1987-89. I am a former board member for the Westcave Preserve, Travis Audubon. I did my graduate studies at University of Texas, Austin, College of Education, Science & Math Center.



Horned Lizard Conservation on Social Media

You like HLCS in real life...now let's make it Facebook official!
Did you know that you can now connect with HLCS on Facebook and Instagram? Liking and following our pages will give you access to exclusive horned lizard content. See page 2 for the links.

Instagram

Name: Horned Lizard Conservation

What: See pictures of horned lizard species from around North America and learn interesting facts about each

Facebook

Page Name: Horned Lizard Conservation Society

What: Stay up-to-date on the most recent horned lizard conservation news



Holiday Gifts

The holiday season is coming and have you completed your shopping yet? Did you know that the Horned Lizard Conservation Society has over 20 items for sale? The Society has a fantastic inventory of clever and cute horned lizard items that are appropriate for kids of all ages. Here is a general listing of what you can find:

T-shirts – 6 different kinds

Pins

Tie Tacks

Earrings

Necklace

Key Ring

Guardian Angel

Hood Ornament

Bolo Tie

Prints

Cards

Christmas Cards

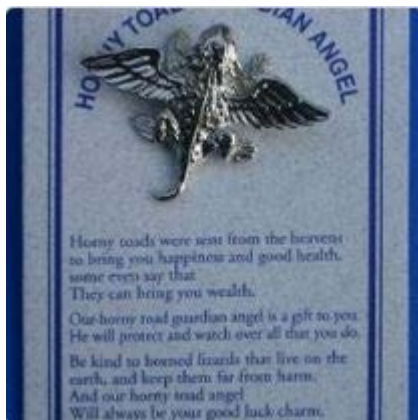
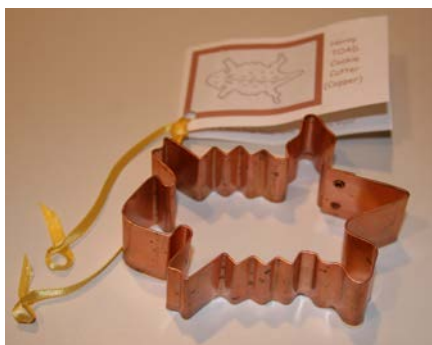
Magnet

Bumper Sticker

Rubber Stamp

Books – 3 different kinds

These items would make a wonderful holiday gift for family members or friends. And the proceeds from the sale go to benefit horned lizard conservation. For more information go to the Horned Lizard Conservation Society website www.hornedlizards.org and then select Store and you can find all our items for sale there.



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HLCS Elections
P. O. Box 122
Austin, TX 78767

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2018 BALLOT

Please select a candidate below or write in a candidate of your choice. Please make sure the person has your permission to write their name on the ballot as a write-in.

President-Elect

_____ Mason Lee
_____ other (write-in): _____

Treasurer

_____ Ryan Zach
_____ other (write-in): _____

Secretary

_____ Dalton Neuharth
_____ other (write-in): _____

Director At-Large

_____ George Perry
_____ other (write-in): _____

YOUR NAME: _____

Ballots should be postmarked by December 15, 2018!

If you don't want to mail through the post, you can email your vote to Leslie Nossaman at:
peoranun07@gmail.com

Be sure to add your name to the email so we can keep track of it.

President's Message

It has been my pleasure to serve as the President of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society for the last two years. Over this period, the board and our volunteers have accomplished a lot! We have seen continued growth, and are currently at an all-time high for memberships and funds! This has allowed us to increase the number and amount of grants awarded, which has direct benefits for conservation of horned lizards. We also had a very successful biennial meeting in Goliad, TX, with a diverse range of speakers and topics. Our meeting was followed by two successful and enjoyable surveys, during which we located Texas horned lizards!

In other recent news, the Society has seen the establishment of an Instagram account, as well as a significant increase in activity on our Facebook page! Through social media accounts, we aim to increase engagement with our members while attracting new folks to the cause!

As my term ends, I would like to thank everyone for their continued support. Our society would cease to exist without our members and all our volunteers. With a full board, our society's future is indeed bright. Leslie Nossaman, our president elect, will become our president on January 1st 2019, and I have no doubt that she will excel in fostering new ideas, providing exemplary leadership, and aiding in the continued growth of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. She will undoubtedly work hard to further our mission of the long-term conservation of the lizards that we all know and Love. Lastly, I would like to encourage everyone to get involved via volunteering or running for a position on the board!

It's been my pleasure!

Sincerely,
Jared Fuller



Horned Lizard Research Grant 2019 Applications

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 2019. 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 any other funding sources available or received for your project. 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 Leslie Nossaman: peoranun07@gmail.com. The deadline is January 1, 2019. The decision will be announced by January 31, 2019.



Member Highlight

Lynn Seman

Horned Lizard Paparazzi - by Lynn Seman – HLCS Membership Services Officer

Yes, that's me with a camera doing a "faceoff" with a Texas Horned Lizard. I admit it. I am a member of the horned lizard "paparazzi." In addition, I am a lifetime member of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society and serve as the membership services officer since April of 2017. My duties involve organizing the membership list, mailing out "welcome" packets with membership cards, and sending out renewal notices. Every now and then, I also punch out some foam horned lizards and assemble them to give out at special events.



Texas Horned Lizard (photo taken by Lynn Seman)

Growing up in the Texas Panhandle, I spent a lot of time playing in the dirt with Texas Horned Lizards living in my back yard. Fondly, I remember placing a grumpy little horny



Horned Lizard Faceoff (photo taken by Sandy Underwood)

toad in a shoebox for an afternoon of fun as he unwillingly became my adopted friend for a few hours. I always let him go, however, because even as a child, I understood that wild things belong in the wild. I was "that kid" that would run through the neighborhood yelling at the birds to "fly, fly away!" when the neighborhood boys were out on BB gun patrol.

I love nature, being outside, and have a great respect for wild things and their place in our world. As an adult, I followed in my parents' footsteps and became a teacher. Later, I enrolled in an awesome master's degree program at Texas Tech which allowed me to gain some research experience to enhance my teaching experiences. I taught in Texas public schools for 32 years. I hope and pray after teaching that I made a positive influence on my students so that they will VALUE our planet and its resources.

Now I am retired from teaching

and have become a full-time volunteer. When possible, I volunteer at River Bend Nature Center in Wichita Falls, TX, Whiteside Museum of Natural History in Seymour, TX, and also Lake Arrowhead State Park. I stay fairly busy with various projects from our Rolling Plains Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist, in which I serve as secretary. On a monthly basis, I organize horned lizard surveys in our area for our members and then report our results to Texas Parks and Wildlife, which, of course, is one of my favorite projects in which I continue "playing in the dirt" and looking for my little lizard friends.

To sum it up, my past of being around little critters has taught me that we are commissioned as stewards of this great planet, and that we MUST continue to practice conservation methods to ensure the biodiversity of species. Future generations of children should be able to experience the joy of finding a horned lizard and watching it lap up ants, one by one, just as I did. Being a part of this awesome organization - the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, allows me to do just that!



The Grand Defiant Stance

By Lynn Seman - HLCS
Membership Services Officer



Grumpy Face - Texas Horned Lizard (photo taken by Lynn Seman)

Once in while, you come across a person in your life's journey that is a "kindred spirit". My unofficial definition of a "kindred spirit" is someone you mentally connect with because you feel the same way about something. In my duties on the HLCS board, I found a person such as this.

As the membership services person for the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, I keep track of the membership list and mail out membership packets. When a member joins, I receive a notification, then update the list and then send out a "welcome" message to the new member. When Mr. Alex Cochran joined the HLCS, I sent him the normal "welcome" message and membership card. He e-mailed a reply about how he was very interested in horned lizard research and wanted to help monetarily

with grants for continued research projects. Since then, we have emailed only a few times, but I feel as though I have known him much longer. I forwarded his message and offer to one of our board members.

During our communications, he shared that his health was not the best and that he was "considering the bread crumbs that he leaves behind." He explained, "Though we cannot stop inflation, or guarantee the efficacy of our actions on future conservation, we can still work towards building a robust environment." Recently, I had snapped a photo of a Texas Horned Lizard and thought that he might like to view it also, so I attached it to our email correspondence.

He replied with, "I feel happier every time I see the grand defiant stance of our little friends." This statement made me giggle. I feel the same way.

Sometimes, we don't know the reasons behind what we do or what we feel, but when I see a Texas Horned Lizard standing in the road with its front end raised high displaying a grumpy prehistoric looking face, I feel happier too! If I can, I stomp on my brakes,

jump out of my vehicle, and try to get a closer look without causing too much stress to the little guy. A horny toad sighting never fails to make my day brighter. Not only does it bring back fond memories of my childhood, but seeing a horned lizard rejuvenates my spirits. It connects me with a community of kindred folks who feel the same way.

My hope is that we all can follow the advice of Mr. Cochran and keep our biodiversity intact with a "robust environment" and also keep a watchful eye out for the state reptile of Texas, the Texas Horned Lizard.



Texas Horned Lizard (photo taken by Lynn Seman)

*An earlier version of this article was published in the Times Record News in August of 2018. I am the author of that article and give my permission for it to be republished (with these revisions) in the HLCS newsletter.
Lynn Seman*





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 Families: \$25 for the first person and \$10 for each additional member
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