

# Phrynosomatics

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.

October/November 1993

The Newsletter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society

## Spike and Spot, The *Traveling* Toads!

Abraham Holland of Pleasanton is the youngster who is single-handedly responsible for the designation of the Texas Horned Lizard as the official State of Texas Reptile. Abraham, his brother Noah, and his Home-Teacher-and-Mom Sandra are on the move again. They are single-handedly taking on south Texas.

Abraham and Noah are now Spike and Spot, the Traveling Toads! They now have a road show to teach about horny toad conservation. In August the Holland boys met with the Market Trails tourism committee of the Alamo-La Bahia Historical Corridor, representing 21 communities, of the Alamo Area Council of Governments. Everyone present was given a HLCS membership form.

All these activities are Abraham's Pre-Junior 4-H Wildlife Project. What a project! Abraham is getting far-flung attention for his work. A man from Texas Christian University called to thank Abraham for making their school mascot, the "horned frog" the state reptile. A relative in Virginia put an article about Abraham and the horned lizard in her local newspaper.

Best of all, Abraham's Pre-Junior 4-H Wildlife Record Book, which includes his horny toad work, received a Blue Ribbon in County 4-H competitions, and went on to win a Blue Ribbon at District—19 counties! Pre-Junior record books can't go beyond county. Noah Holland will be old enough to enter

4-H competitions next year. Noah will also work for horny toads.

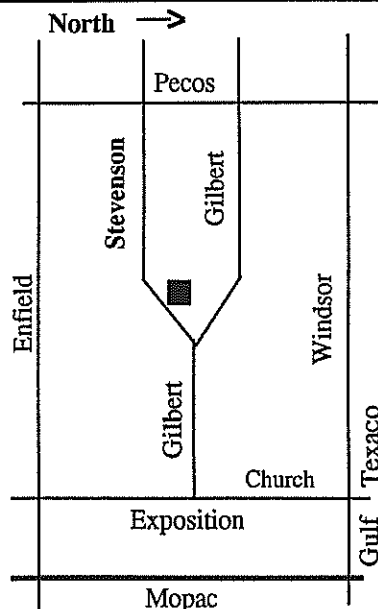
The children plan to go to California for next year's Annual Horned Lizard Conference.



Abraham "Spot" on left and Noah, "Spike" on right

## Upcoming Events

**GENERAL MEETING**  
At the home of Carol and Landon Lockett  
3210 Stevenson in Austin, Texas. 512/476-1951  
Usual time: 7:00PM on Tuesday, November 9, 1993



Attention: Southern California Horned Lizard Chapter. How about scheduling "The Traveling Toads" for a conference presentation? They will need a corporate sponsor to meet travel expenses. Any company executives are invited to call Mrs. Holland directly. (210) 569-4821 The Traveling Toads are putting together a fundraising project to finance their trip: Horned Lizard patches and postcards. We'll hear more about this later.

Mrs. Holland is certainly an excellent example of the best of home-teaching.

*Editor's Note: The Traveling Toads have also been to Eastland, TX, home of Old Rip. Since their visit we have received a Texas Horned Lizard Sighting Survey from Eastland County and a lovely note. Thanks for the update, Eastland*

## New Research and Recovery Chair

Join the Board of Directors in welcoming Martin Whiting as our new Chair for the Research and Recovery Committee.

Martin Whiting has a Master's Degree in Wildlife Sciences from Texas A&M, in population ecology of the Concho Water Snake, *Nerodia harteri paucimaculata* in artificial habitats. He serves as Heritage Zoologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in the Resource Protection Division. His duties are primarily surveying for threatened and endangered species, mainly

reptiles and amphibians, on Armed Services properties through the state. In addition he is conducting research on horned lizards to determine differences in size and kind of food eaten by horned lizards as they mature from hatchling size to adults.

Wendy Donaldson, former chair of the committee, has re-located to Arizona to conduct field surveys for horned lizards for the Arizona Fish and Game Commission. She continues to serve as the Vice-President of Research and Recovery for the National Board of Directors.

The Research and Recovery Committee now meets at Martin's office at 3000 South I 35, Suite 100. Join us there!

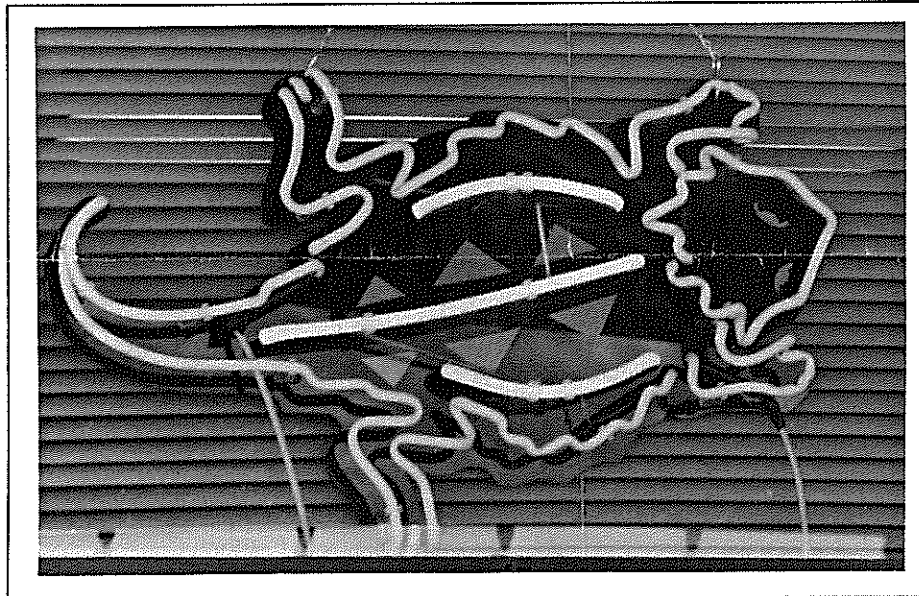


photo by Joyce T. Snodgrass

## I Think I saw a Giant Pink Horny Toad!

by Joyce T. Snodgrass

A big new horned lizard has been sighted in Williamson County—mainly, at the South San Gabriel Animal Clinic in “beautiful downtown Leander” at 1005 S. Highway 183. This vision of pink and purple neon was commissioned by Dr. Frank Stiles as the newest decoration of his veterinary practice “cause he thinks Horny Toads are Neat”. I haven’t seen any of the usual size critters near this location, but Dr. Stiles claims there were some just a couple years ago in the field next to

the clinic (and this is on 183!) so maybe there is hope for Williamson County. The South San Gabriel Animal Clinic has been in this location for 3 years, and has a variety of other interesting decorations—from another neon piece with a dog, cat, and mouse, to an array of “old collected things” in the office. You can also get copies of our HLCS information there in the lobby. Another old timey feature of this vet is the White Star Farms Farmer’s Market which features lots of fresh

## The Traveling Toads

The itinerary for Spike and Spot for the next few months is listed below.

I realize that most are already past; but it gives an idea of how busy these boys have been. If any of you members happen to be in these areas on these dates; stop in and say Hi! and Thanks! for the excellent job they are doing.

- 8/93 Atascosa County Commissioners (Jourdanton) Introduction
- 8/18 AACOG La Bahia/Market Trails Tourism Committee (Mico, Medina County) Program
- 9/18 Eastland “Old Rip Fest” (Eastland County) Parade, Viewing Stand, Booth and Program
- 10/9 Three Rivers “Fallfest” (Tips Park) Program and Booth
- 10/12 Jourdanton 4-H Program
- 10/18 FEAST (Family Educators Alliance of South Texas) (San Antonio) Program
- 10/22 Stockdale Headstart (Wilson County) two Programs
- 11/8 Black Hill 4-H (Atascosa County) Program
- 11/13 Castroville Market Trails Day (Medina County) Booth
- 11/? Mesquite/Black Hill 4-H Citizenship Project Group (Atascosa County) Program
- 2/9/94 Campbellton 4-H (Atascosa County) Program
- 2/12/94 San Antonio Stock Show 4-H day Booth
- 3/12/94 Atascosa DAR (Pleasanton) program

local vegetables, eggs, jellies and salsas for sale on the porch in the light of the Big Pink Horny Toad. The Farmer’s Market is open from 2 - 6 PM every Friday and from 8 AM - 2 PM on Saturdays. So, if you should find yourself traveling out 183—whether chasing the Steam Locomotive or just going for a drive—don’t forget to watch for the Glowing Big Pink Lizard!

# Little Lizard, Big Legend in Texas

by Terry Lee Jones  
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

He has been buried alive, introduced to the president, cast in films, turned into jewelry and given away as a freebie with fill-ups at gas stations.

But after all those experiences in the public eye- and perhaps partly because of some of them- he hasn't been seen much lately.

He's the horned toad, that sleepy-eyed eater of red ants that many Texas remember from their childhood, when a popular pastime was to rub the critter's belly.

"In my time, Texas was just crawling with them," said June Rayfield Welch, 65, a history professor at the University of Dallas who recently wrote a tiny tome on the toads, which are really lizards, not amphibians.

"They were more of a Texas symbol, really than the longhorn. But I think that many Texans living now have never seen one. I haven't seen one in 25 years."

Welch's fondness for the "splendidly ugly" little creatures, which state wildlife officials list as a threatened species, prompted the Brownwood native to write "O Ye Legendary Texas Horned Frog!" (Yellow Rose Press; \$10.95).

The book, loaded with humor and offbeat Texas history, is a 104-page attempt to educate Texans about the toad, which is threatened largely

because insecticides have decimated the red ants the horned toad lives on.

Virtually anyone who has ever seen a horned toad has a soft spot for the animal, Welch says.

"They're not cuddly, but they will relate to you," he said. "One of my mother's buddies had a large horned frog that lived in the vegetable garden, and the family would carry him jars of large red ants...If she was a little slow getting the ants down to him, he would crawl onto the toe of her shoe and look up at her.

"It was that ability they had. They weren't pets, but they were petlike. They're so vulnerable."

Vulnerable—despite horns on their heads and spikes all over their bodies, which is why some predators find them hard to swallow.

Although the lizard can bite, it usually doesn't: It prefers to swell to twice its size or squirt blood from its eyes, Welch said.

The blood-spurting is an unsettling ability scientists once dismissed as a Texas tall tale but now accept, though they aren't sure why the animal does it. Neither are they certain why the toad does push-ups to attract the opposite sex.

The lizard may be shy, but it made a convincing monster when its dimensions were magnified years ago in a science-fiction movie or two. And Fort Worth's Texas Christian University long ago deemed the animal tough enough to be the school's mascot, a nod to the

days when the toads swarmed the athletic fields of TCU's old Waco campus.

No discussion of the horned one is complete without mention of Old Rip, Texas' most famous lizard and the center of endless debate, Welch said.

Rip was buried alive in 1897 in a cornerstone of the Eastland County Courthouse, 100 miles west of Fort Worth. He was put there by a county clerk who was curious about old-timers' claims that horned toads can survive for years without light, water or air.

Thirty-one years later, when the courthouse was demolished, the cornerstone was pried open and a toad uncovered - alive and kicking, albeit feebly.

There's no question that a live horny toad came out of the cornerstone that February morning in 1928, when 2,000 people gathered around to see if it would," Welch said.

"The question is, had it been there 30 years?"

Zoologists snort at the idea, saying it's hard enough to keep a horned lizard alive in captivity under good conditions. But Welch's book also quotes people who deride "smart-aleck scientists." They tell of quarrying limestone of digging wells and finding entombed toads that hopped away when the rocks were broken open.

In Rip's case, "there was witness after witness that said there were a metal seal and several layers of brick on top of that cornerstone," Welch said. "Preachers were there to make it authoritative, and they even made the preachers take off their coats so they couldn't have anything up their sleeves.

"One preacher told a fellow: 'I see something in there. Can you pull it out?' Hew pulled out something that looked like a dead leaf. And then it started moving..."

Rip made headlines across the country, and Will Wood, son of the county clerk who dropped a toad into the cornerstone, took the animal on an extended tour, including a brief visit with President Calvin Coolidge.

## Letters to HLCS

Dear Sirs:

I am not a researcher or scientist, I just like these little creatures and hope that my support will help prevent the extinction of them. I have a suggestion for items which could be used for raising money to further support the efforts of HLCS: it is to have decals and patches designed and made to promote the HLCS. Keep up the good work. Sincerely,  
G. V. S., Houston9/93

HLCS: Your sketch is being forwarded to our Marketing Vice-President Bill Davis. Thanks for writing and for caring.

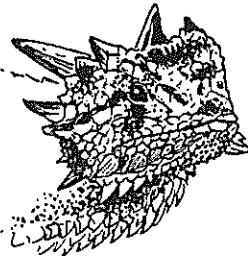


Illustration by  
Hal Irby

# John's Volunteer List for Horny Toad Supporter's

by John Smith

## ☐ Special Events

Have your scouts or class organize a car wash, or organize a concert with your own local musicians and raise money for every Kindergarten — 3rd teacher in your town to have a Horny Toad Curriculum Guide!

Help on the day of the annual conference or workshops: such as greeter, registration table helper, go-fer, slide projectionist, decoration committee.

Invite the Traveling Toads to make a presentation for local teachers and students!

Make copies of the horny toad gift souvenirs list and distribute them at your club meetings.

Come up with your own fund-raiser to support our educational and research efforts.

## ☐ If You Work for a Corporation

Write us for a list of projects to propose for your corporation's support.

## ☐ Need A Horned Lizard Chapter in Your State?

Write us and we'll send you the actual to-do-a-chapter list. Basically you do a chapter like this:

- a) Decide on the geographic boundaries for your new chapter.
- b) Propose a slate of officers, with at least a President, Treasurer, and Secretary.
- c) Petition for your new chapter by telling us your proposed boundaries, slate of officers, and having it signed by 10 active dues paying members of HLCS.

d) After that, keep us up-to-date monthly on your membership, send in \$10 for every new member, and report on your chapter twice a year.

## ☐ Report on Any Horny Toad News from Your Area

### ☐ Write Grants

We will provide you with information and our grant needs.

### ☐ Work on Curriculum for 4-Secondary Grades

### ☐ In the Austin Area

Help with the newsletter: be a reporter, copy editor, layout editor.

Take minutes at committee meetings.

Mail notices of committee meetings for the committee chair.

Help keep the scientific literature album up-to-date.

Call members in your area about upcoming HLCS activities.

Plan activities.

Help us keep up with membership renewals, correspondence, board meeting notices.

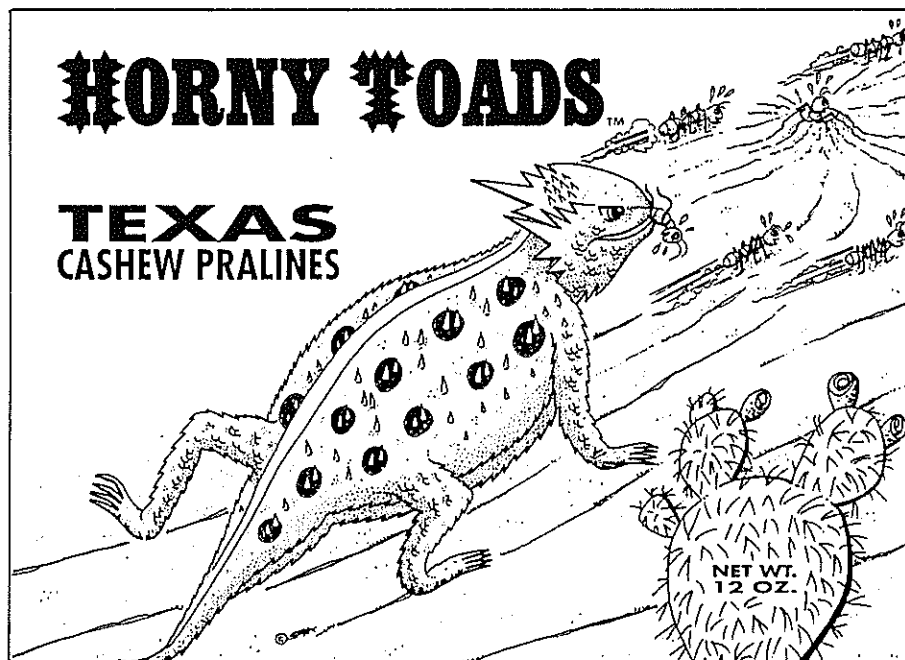
## K-3 Curriculum Ready!

Our curriculum guide for grades K-3 is available for purchase by teachers, organizations and other interested parties. The kit consists of a curriculum guide with information, games, a horny toad song, a sugar cookie recipe, slide narrative, 9 slides and an information packed coloring page. You may purchase the guide at any of our meetings, fund-raisers, concerts or by mail. Mail request to HLCS, P.O. Box 122, Austin, Texas 78767. Make all checks payable to the HLCS.

Cost for the guide is \$10.16 + .84% sales tax, for a total of \$11.00. If you provide documentation that you are tax exempt, your cost will be \$10.16. If you are purchasing this kit by mail please add \$2.00 for postage.

## Horny Toad Candy is Now Available

Armadillo Candy Company has just released it's latest product - **Horny Toads...Texas Cashew Pralines**. No, they are not shaped like horny toads, but they're delicious. You get 12 oz. of the cashew pralines handsomely boxed. The box design and illustration were created by our art director Steve Austin. Just the perfect Christmas gift or buy a box to amaze your friends. Our thanks go to Andy Meager of Armadillo Candy Company for letting us put information about The HLCS on the candy box and allowing us to sell his product. Cost for the Horny Toad Candy is \$11.00 (tax included) They may be purchased at our meetings, fund-raisers and concerts. You can also purchase by mail—please enclose an additional \$2.00 per box.





Then tragedy struck: Within a year of his emergence from the cornerstone, the toad died of pneumonia, the victim of a norther that hit Eastland. But long after Rip was embalmed, his memory lived on.

Eastland, never much of a tourist attraction before, pulled out the stops and used horned toads as a marketing ploy, with gas stations giving complimentary toads to customers who filled up their tanks.

Even today, the body of Rip-or and impostor- is displayed in a show window in the courthouse, "a West Texas Lenin," Welch said.

But some Laredo companies went too far capitalizing on Old Rip, Welch said.

They made jewelry by putting baby toads into a substance to from a mold, burning them to ashes and then pouring metal into the mold, much as a statue is cast.

When a horrified Texas Sen. Joe Christie, a onetime Eastland resident, learned about that in the 1960's, he worked for legislation to protect the horned toad, Welch said.

These days, anyone who captures, kills, injures or sells horned toads for any reason other than propagation or research may be fined or jailed.

Recently, an Austin-based group called the Horned Lizard Conservation Society was formed to study the animals, relocate them in the dry, dusty areas they favor, and even breed them.

*Editor's Note: This is an article clipped from Country World by my mother. It appeared in their August 19 issue and was originally in the Fort Worth Star Telegram. I am grateful to them and Country World for allowing us to reprint it.*

## Fall Horny Toad Concert

Our annual Fall Horny Toad concert will be held on Sunday, November 21, 1993 at The Waterloo Ice House at 1106 W. 38th Street in Austin from 2 PM to 7 PM. All our merchandise will be on sale.

The Musical lineup remains tentative at this time, but we hope to have all the performers from last year with maybe a surprise or two. Look for upcoming announcements in your mail, in the weekend section of the Austin American Statesman and in The Austin Chronicle. Admission will be \$5.00 for adults and children are free. This has become a fun gig for the concert goers and musicians alike. Come on down and enjoy the fun. That's all folks... Steve



### HERE'S WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT

"Loaded with humor and offbeat Texas history..." Terry Lee Jones

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

"...a book that warns of the possible extinction of the little lizard, not just from being used as trade items by Texas Boy Scouts, party favors on the French Riviera or as jewelry, but, Professor Welch says, because of fire-ant pesticides that also kill red ants, the toad's Texas staple."

A. C. Greene

Dallas Morning News

"A new book by Dallas writer JUNE RAYFIELD WELCH aims to explain why the desiccated body of a Texas horned lizard occupies a show window in the front wall of the Eastland County Courthouse...a West Texas Lenin."

Austin/American-Statesman

"Welch's delightful tale, brimming full of humor and history, is cute enough to give 'HORNY TOAD HATERS' something to reconsider and readers a real good time."

Laura Greer

Eastland County Roundup

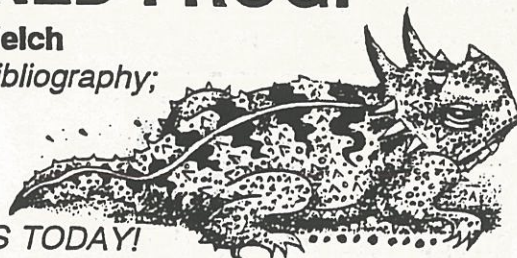
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by June Rayfield Welch

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# What's Up?

## Notes from the President

We received a long letter from a member who had several comments. Some of those comments inspired me to point out some things about our organization and to say *mea culpa*, guilty as charged, to some of the comments.

Sometimes HLCS does take an inordinately long time to cash membership checks. Forgive us, we are volunteers with full-time jobs "on the outside" and families who would like to see us more often. I'm awfully proud of the good work we are doing and I love every one of our volunteers dearly.

Tired of our ads for T-shirts and "beer busts?" [We and the many professional musicians who donate their talents call these "concerts."] They and a generous donor paid the salaries for the Status Survey researchers. It was nip and tuck, too. Now we are paying for the first editions of the K-3rd grade curriculum. We'll try to keep costs down by paying our non-existent staff even less!

The persistence-time article did indeed make a blatant point, but it wasn't laughable, it was scary. We simply can't expect isolated populations of horny toads to survive indefinitely: genetics and random chance events will not allow it. It is an enormous challenge facing our Research and Recovery Committee.

And lastly, it is true that we don't always use "spell-check" before printing the newsletter. But we love our editor for doing the most demanding and relentless volunteer job of them all! Thank you, Collene, I know how busy your livelihood keeps you, and we are grateful to you. Remind us to double your pay—to two times zero!

Oh, one more point. For our readers who want to hear how to be good steward of existing horned toad populations, we have indeed been remiss in not speaking up earlier. We have worried about sounding simplistic, about sounding preachy, about not knowing everything. We'll make it the focus of the next newsletter.

### President

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Steve Austin  
512-327-4517

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