

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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NOVEMBER 2009

## El Paso Zoo Receives Three Horned Lizards

by David Wojnowski and Carolyn Todd

On July 25th 2009 Griselda Martinez, Collection's Supervisor for the El Paso Zoo, arrived at the El Paso airport compliments of Southwest Airlines with three Texas Horned Lizards (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) ready to deliver them to their new home at the El Paso Zoo. After a short Q & A between the media and Rose Janice, Education Specialist, the three travel weary lizards were on their way to the zoo. It has taken much planning, networking, and cooperation to get these three amigos to their new home.



*Horned Lizards arrive at the El Paso Airport. Rose Janice, El Paso Zoo Education Specialist, is on the far left. All the other equally happy people are Southwest Airlines employees who helped with the transfer of the three horned lizards shown here in their transport cages. Photo by Bob Jacquemotte.*

Flashback to two years ago: This story actually started just over two years ago when Steve Marshall, the new Director of the El Paso Zoo, was mountain biking with a friend, when all of a sudden Steve noticed an unusual looking lizard just off the trail. Stopping suddenly, he and his companion jumped off their bikes and stared at the

### ***Phrynosomatics* going Electronic**

**Please read the article on page 4 for full details. It is essential that we receive a reply from you so that you do not miss future issues.**

wondrous reptilian creature at their feet - a Texas Horned Lizard!

When the new zoo director returned to his office the next day, the idea that the El Paso Zoo might one day exhibit *Phrynosoma cornutum* began to materialize. After allowing the idea to marinate, Steve asked Animal Curator, John Kiseda, to look into

the matter. After a short while, with so much to do at a zoo, the groundwork for this new project was passed to Griselda Martinez who, as a lover of herps, graciously embraced the responsibility.

Griselda's first major move to make this idea come to fruition came in June of 2008 when she attended the Southwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (SWPARC) meeting in Austin where one of the main sessions was a workshop on horned lizard research and conservation. This is where she met some of the most well respected, knowledgeable and experienced horned lizard experts in Texas! (e.g., Gad Perry, Wendy Hodges and Lee Ann Linam – just to name a few, as well as a host of dedicated graduate students doing cutting edge horned lizard

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research). David Wojnowski also met Griselda at this meeting and they discussed ways to facilitate the zoo with their quest to obtain some horned lizards for exhibition and possible use during educational programs.

In the summer of 2008 Lee Ann Linam, TPWD, and Carolyn Todd, HLCS co-founder and horned lizard rehabilitation expert, contacted Griselda and offered to give the El Paso Zoo the opportunity to have three horned lizards that were displaced from their native habitat. However, because of the special needs of horned lizards to maintain the lizards safely, all parties decided to allow the critters to overwinter with Carolyn in Austin, giving the zoo time to put together all the necessary conditions to ensure the horned lizards a safe and healthy transition from Austin to El Paso.

As the lizards in Carolyn's keep awaked from their winter slumber, Griselda was busily making the arrangements needed before she could pick the lizards up in Austin; she met with the El Paso Zoo veterinarian to go over quarantine protocols, oversaw the construction of temporary and permanent

housing, consulted with Shana Fredlake, lead keeper of the Fort Worth Zoo Texas Horned Lizard breeding program, as well as secured a vendor for the steady supply of live ants they would need for the hungry horned-wielding saurians.

(For a great video of the Fort Worth Zoo's newest batch of baby Horned Lizards see: <http://myprops.org/content/Video-New-batch-of-horned-frogs-hatches-at-Fort-Worth-Zoo/> and for a short press release about the Texas Horned Lizards at the El Paso Zoo see: [http://www.elpasozoo.org/pressreleaseasp?selection=press\\_2009\\_07\\_29](http://www.elpasozoo.org/pressreleaseasp?selection=press_2009_07_29)).

During the spring of 2009 David Wojnowski accompanied Griselda and Rose to Tucson in order for them to meet with Wade Sherbrooke, author of *Introduction to Horned Lizards of North America* and Stéphane Poulin, curator of herpetology at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum who has successfully bred several species of horned lizards, as well as confer with ASDM education staff. The trip was a success and Griselda's confidence grew as she contemplated her future spiny charges. Griselda, Rose and

David would like to extend a big THANK YOU to Wade and Stéphane for sharing their expertise with them and to Craig Ivanyi, Executive Director for Living Collections and Exhibits at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum for an earlier meeting with Wade,

Stéphane and David and for the use of the facility.

On July 24, Griselda flew in from El Paso and arrived in Austin. Carolyn picked her up and they drove to Carolyn's home and she told Carolyn about El Paso and the dedica-



Griselda Martinez with large female horned lizard. Photo by Carolyn Todd.

tion of the zoo to the community and city government's dedication to the zoo. They talked about the new reptile exhibit and the plans to open in the spring of 2010. Carolyn and Griselda laughed together as they compared their adventures and visits with Wade Sherbrook. Apparently, Wade continues to be an interesting and passionate horned lizard researcher and conservationist.

The next morning they shared brunch with friends; Ruth Ann Panipinto, Tatiana Encheva and Voiteh Yaroshevich. Tatiana and Voiteh had never seen a horned lizard and they were very excited. They all talked and shared their vision for sustainability of horned lizards in Texas, and really enjoyed the



Ruthann, Tatiana, and Griselda working at the lizard cage to pack the critters for their new adventure. Photo by Carolyn Todd.

Continued on page 4



Male. Photo by Carolyn Todd.

morning together. As the time to go to the airport was approaching, they all gathered at the cage where two females and one male were awake and eating ants.

Carolyn took Griselda to the airport and wished her well with the lizards. She told Carolyn that she would be the primary caretaker with help from junior staff members. If you were wondering how the story turns out, the lizards are doing very well, thank you. The zoo has plans to put one of the lizards on display in their new herpetarium, at the completion of the building sometime during the spring/summer 2010. So if you are ever in El Paso, take a visit to the zoo and say hello to their three new horned lizards.



Large Female. Photo by Carolyn Todd.



Dark Gray Female. Photo by Carolyn Todd.



## An Important Announcement about Your Newsletter Future!

By Lenee Weldon

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society would like to spend less of our members' money on postage and printing and more on conservation efforts. Our primary expense in this category is our quarterly newsletter, *Phrynosomatics*. In 2010, we will begin delivering the newsletter electronically to our members. Aside from our savings, the major benefits to you are 1) you'll be able to see photos in color and 2) you'll receive

the newsletter faster. It is also a more ecofriendly method to distribute information in this digital age.

We understand that not all of our members may be able to access the newsletter electronically. If you still need to receive a hard copy, one can be mailed to you. Please let us know *in writing* if we should continue sending the newsletter by mail, otherwise, we will send it out electronically.

We also do not have email addresses for all our members, so please send it to us so we can get you the newsletter without any delay!

You can send your email address to: [lenee.weldon@gmail.com](mailto:lenee.weldon@gmail.com)

Other correspondence may be sent to: Lenee Weldon, 926 Terry Trail, Weatherford, TX 76086

Thank very much for your membership and support!



## President's Message

By Joyce Roach

By the time you receive the Autumn issue of *Phrynosomatics*, *Phrynosoma* are hibernating. Too bad Fall is the perfect time of year to be out and about, poking around, and yes, surveying for horned lizards. Nature, however, doesn't work that way. During the Looking Season—Summer hot as Hades—hunts have taken place in locations you will read about in the newsletter. The Society has been doing other kinds of Looking—ways to better reach you, the sustaining membership—and ways to tighten the Society's belt while still maintaining the activities of the Society with funds for grants, celebrations, education and such. But it is the newsletter that most effectively binds us together, informs, educates. To that end, some changes as necessary as the roll of seasons, one to another, are coming. The newsletter will be sent in two formats—one by email that may be printed off, and one in hard copy for the few who don't have emails. Not only will these methods cut the high costs of printing and mailing, but you can see horny toads in living color, have an

easy read, save what you want, have news and information at your fingertips—press a key or click—and even print one out, although we ask that you think about the environment before using paper. Think Green. Or, if you'll let us know, you can have a hard copy sent in case you don't have email. Membership has or is being contacted about these changes. Yes, it will take a little while, but we must hear from you, please.

In keeping with the Looking Season theme, you can tell from postings in the newsletter that we all look for more than horned lizards when we're out. How we look and what we find is personal with all of us. Last fall, I made a trip to Jack County, my childhood home, and wrote the following in a journal:

"My friend and I had an enchanting day yesterday in Jack County where we explored the places of my growing up and took photos of fall foliage. One especially haunting place was Dark Corner where there is a cemetery and abandoned one-room church. Isn't that a wonderful name—Dark Corner—filled with foreboding, mystery. An anthropologist would have

loved seeing the headstone and inscriptions, several belonging to children. Some of the graves were embellished with rounded mounds of concrete in which were embedded muscle shells running in a vertical and horizontal pattern. Sea shells have often appeared on tombstones but the ones I've seen are embossed into the granite or marble. These were, of course, homemade things. There were also cairns but instead of piled rock these were great chunks of stone stacked in a kind of pattern. They were unmarked; some of the same kind of stones were placed upright and used, obviously, to mark someone's grave, but whose was unknown. Just over the hill, but out of sight until you drove on up the dirt road, were dozens of wind turbines dotting other hills. The contrast was surreal—an old, old cemetery holding the bones of some of the very earliest settlers in Jack County, their headstones like index tabs to the distant past; and turbines standing like sentinels on the ramparts, gathering the winds with their trinity of blades--weapons to grant access to an uncertain future. Dark Corner—yes, indeed."



## Correction from our August 2009 Issue

By Phrynosomatics Editorial Staff

In the published issue the last two sentences on page 3 read:

"After dark, Chick took Danny, and Laura road hunting. They found Red Spotted Toads,

Couch's Spadefoot Toads, kangaroo rats and tarantulas."

What it should have said was:

"After dark, Chuck took David, Danny, and Laura road hunting. They found Red Spotted Toads,

Couch's Spadefoot Toads, kangaroo rats and tarantulas."

The Newsletter Staff apologizes to Chuck Reburn for the misspelling of his name and to David Wojnowski for omitting his name in the article.



# Congratulations to Grant Award Recipients 2009!

Three grants were awarded earlier this year for horned lizard research. The recipients are **Ken Morgan, Victor Bogosian, and Megan Lahti**. Their project descriptions are included in this article.

## **By Ken Morgan**

I chose to study Blainville's Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) for my Master's thesis at California State University San Marcos, because I am fascinated by their adaptations to being dietary specialists. Dietary specialists are often able to exploit an underused food resource in an environment but this may also make them more prone to extinction. Historically *P. blainvillii* occurred throughout much of coastal and inland California, but in recent years their populations have suffered significant declines. This has been particularly evident in coastal sage scrub habitats, the predominant habitat in which they occur in southern California.

In addition to habitat loss, urban encroachment has allowed the non-native Argentine Ant (*Linepithema humile*) to invade and dramatically alter the native ant community including displacement of the harvester ant species (*Messor and Pogomyrmex sp.*) that are the primary prey of Blainville's Horned Lizards. As a result they are currently listed as a species of special concern by the state of California. One key to the development of conservation

plans will be a detailed understanding of their food resource needs. One way this could be accomplished is by establishing the distribution and quantity of ant mounds needed to support Blainville's Horned Lizards.

The goal of my study is to better understand the food resource needs of this lizard and their foraging behaviors. Because horned lizards rely on crypsis for predator avoidance, telemetry is necessary to repeatedly locate specific individuals for observation. The grant I received from the Horned Lizard Conservation Society was applied towards the refurbishing of transmitters in order to track their movements.

At the conclusion my project, all harvester ant colonies in the study area will be mapped using GPS and the activity areas determined using GIS. The location of my study site during the 2009 season was the Elliot Chaparral Reserve (University of California Reserve System) adjacent to Miramar MCAS.

Previous horned lizard studies have taken place at this site in the past. My study will be continuing April through July 2010 at which time I will update my progress to the Horned Lizard Conservation Society.

## **By Victor Bogosian**

My work focuses on the issue of translocation of animals that are in danger of habitat loss or destruction due to human development. This conservation

strategy is commonly used by local, state and federal authorities as a response to unavoidable development of habitat used by animals. However, research suggests that translocation is often unsuccessful, with animals that are moved either returning to their original locations, moving out of the designated translocation area, or perishing due to predation or human-influenced mortality.

My study area is Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma, which has a population of Texas horned lizards that are threatened with unavoidable habitat loss through development. Air Force Natural Resources personnel are interested in translocation as a last-resort option to prevent the loss of horned lizards on the base, and I am interested in using habitat suitability models to predict the location of optimal translocation sites. I have collected data on lizards at Tinker for 3 years and have begun analyzing them.

I intend to use funds awarded to me by the HLCS to explore lizard survival and habitat interactions with ongoing habitat modeling exercises. Funds will also be used to determine if skeletochronology (i.e., bone annuli counts) can be used to estimate the age of Texas horned lizards.

If this technique proves reliable, it will allow us to create a detailed demographic assessment of our horned lizard

population. Our research areas will be useful to biologists and managers interested in conserving horned lizard populations.

### **By Megan Lahti**

I am currently a Ph.D. candidate working with Dr. Edmund Brodie Jr. in the Biology Department at Utah State University. My research is entitled, "Status of a Dwarfed Population of Short-horned Lizards (*Phrynosoma hernandesi*) and Great Plains Toads (*Anaxyrus cognatus*) in the San Luis Valley, Colorado."

The San Luis Valley (Valley) is an alpine valley in south-central Colorado at ~7,800ft elevation and surrounded by mountain ranges exceeding 14,000ft. Although 14 species of reptiles and amphibians are known to occur in the Valley, only the short-horned lizard and Great Plains toad are dwarfed (Hahn 1968; Hammer-

son 1999). Species inhabiting the Valley are disjunct from non-SLV populations, particularly the Great Plains toad (Degenhardt et al. 1996; Ham- merson 1999; Stebbins 2003). Throughout the greater portion of their ranges, both species have broad distributions; the short-horned lizard occurs from southern Canada to southern Mexico throughout the central portion of North America from Kansas to Nevada while the Great Plains toad occurs from Canada, throughout most of the Midwest, to the southwest, and into Mexico.

Although there is clinal variation in body size throughout their greater ranges, the size discrepancy in the Valley is abnormal for the geographic region. Excluding the research that initially reported this dwarfism (Hahn 1968), no studies have investigated this phenomenon. My research has three objectives: 1.) describe the degree and patterns of morpho-

logical variation of Valley populations of lizards and toads, 2.) determine whether Valley populations have unique genetic identities and determine their biogeographic histories, and 3.) Examine the effects of a reduced body size on their natural/life-histories. Morphological, genetic, and natural/life-history information will be used in conjunction to determine the taxonomic status and conservation status of these unique populations of lizards and toads.

This is my third field season and my research efforts are currently focused on collecting natural/ life-history data for a population of lizards occurring in stabilized sand dune habitat near Mosca, CO. Grant funding will be used to cover transportation costs to various study sites throughout the Valley and purchase field equipment (i.e. an electronic field scale and thermometers).



## **Horned Lizard Research Grant 2010 Applications**

*By Gad Perry*

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 periodically 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 two \$500 grants in 2010. These are intended to encourage the participation of non-academics in conservation. Preference in one will be given to people not associated with academic institutions; for the other, preference will be given to undergraduate or graduate students. For both, projects that have direct conservation implications, including public education, will receive a higher priority.

To apply, send a proposal detailing the goal of the study,

the rationale for it, and how your work would benefit from this opportunity. The proposal may not exceed 1000 words, excluding up to ten references. In addition, send a resume or CV and have a single letter of reference sent to: Dr. Gad Perry, Department of Natural Resource Management, Texas Tech University, Box 42125, Lubbock, Texas 79409-2125, USA. Submission by e-mail (to [Gad.Perry@TTU.edu](mailto:Gad.Perry@TTU.edu)) is greatly preferred. The deadline is 1 March 2010. The decision will be announced by April 30.



# Member Spotlight: Bill Brooks

By Bill Brooks



Bill as the Caddo Monster, Caddo Lake, Texas. Photo by Bob Brooks.

Asking me to write a little bio is like giving a credit card to a shopaholic. I'm not sure any good can come of this. I'm going to start way back... way, way back. I grew up in an idyllic home in San Antonio, Texas. Before 1970, when I graduated from high school, I received the very best education and experiences any child could. My parents took vacations every summer. By the time I graduated, we had set our foot down in every state in the contiguous U.S. plus Hawaii. We had a canoe and paddled all the central Texas rivers. While still at home, I started giving reptile talks. (That means I have been giving talks for over 40 years! -Sigh.)

The summer after I graduated from High School the family went to Florida. I visited William

Haast's Miami Serpentarium, the Ross Allen Reptile Institute, and met Dr. Peter Prichard, the turtle expert. I also scuba dived at Florida's Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

I was really bitten by the reptile bug and had a collection of native snakes, lizards, and turtles. In the '60s in San Antonio Horned Lizards were everywhere. The fall of 1970 I entered the University of Texas. When I would come home on breaks, there were no more horned lizards to be found. I knew then and there that something was wrong. Very wrong. From 1970 to 1973, I had a blast attending U.T. I had so much fun that I forgot to graduate. After a few years of working state jobs, I settled into being a staffer for UT's Biopsychology Department. I worked there for over 25 years before retiring in 2004.

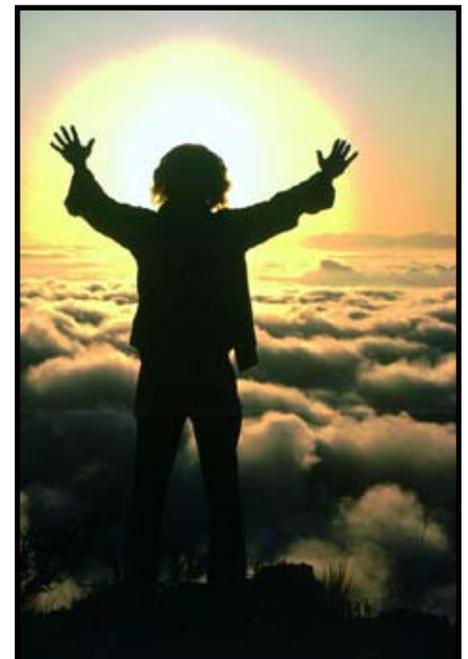
In 1987 I began a long association with the Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve in Austin. I started giving monthly reptile talks. This association allowed me to host the Horned Lizard Art Show there in February of 2006.

In 1990 Bart Cox called the first gathering of concerned people to the Zilker Park Club House, which led to the formation of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. I was there. I missed my little lizard friends and wanted to do whatever I could to help, thus

started a string of booth setting events, EXPOs, surveys, talks, and conventions, which continue even today. In 2001 I was elected National President. After that I served as the TX Chapter President. At the end of my TX Chapter President's term I did something I am very proud of. I recruited Lee Ann Linam, friend and TPWD's head of the Horned Lizard Watch program to run for TX Chapter President. At the end of her term, she was elected National President.

My wanderlust never died. In 1978 I took my first paddle trip to Caddo Lake with my brother Bob. I fell in love with the place and have gone back over 20 times. The 2000 trip was fun because I got to introduce Carolyn, Jim, and Jason Todd to the area.

In 1991 my brother and I lead



Bill at the South Rim of Big Bend, Texas. Photo by Bob Brooks.

a group of friends on a paddle trip through Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend. In 1992 I was the captain of my brother's first Texas River Safari trip. In 1995 I took a commercial raft trip through the Grand Canyon and

Gilbert's study site to help with frog research. In 1999 I visited the Monarch Butterfly's overwintering site in Mexico with Monarch expert, Bill Calvert.

In December of 2000, Pam Alli-

several years before, in 2005, I finally became certified. In 2005 I also became a contract worker for the TPWD and started teaching kids how to fish in Bastrop and Buescher State Parks.



Bill at the Grand Canyon, Arizona. Photo by Bob Brooks.

hiked the Paria River Slot Canyons in Utah. I attended the National Speleological Society's 1996 Convention in Colorado and then drove to the coast of California and kayaked the sea caves of Santa Cruz Island.

In 1997 I toured Costa Rica and visited UT's Dr. Larry

son and I put together the 10th Anniversary Issue of *Phrynosomatics*. It was more of a magazine than a newsletter.

In 2003 I started working with Nature Quest, an ecotourism event near Garner State Park. I had been giving reptile talks for Master Naturalist groups for

In 2007 I went to help the Arizona Game and Fish Department spotlight, trap, and pit tag the endangered Black-footed Ferret. On this trip I also visited the sky walk above the Grand Canyon, the Wave in Utah and I visited Tom McCain, HLCS member, owner of Horny Toad Connection and the maker of the very best Horned Lizard models you can buy.

In 2008 I was elected president of the Lost Pines Native Plant Society. I still serve the society. How a reptile person got this job, I'll never know.

I'm still active with the HLCS, serving as the merchandise head. I feel I have been privileged to have worked with horned lizards all these years and I treasure the friendships I have made in the HLCS.



**Please renew your annual HLCS membership!!!**  
**HLCS depends on its membership for its conservation and educational presence in the community.**

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The HLCS welcomes contributions in any amount you wish to submit and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

# HLCS Volunteers Answer the Call at Fort Hood

By Lee Ann Linam

A quarter-million acres provides a big challenge for a one-day horned lizard survey, but eight HLCS volunteers answered the call to duty during a recent survey of the Army's Fort Hood Military Reservation. Although we weren't successful in finding horned lizards, Charles Pekins, a wildlife biologist with the Natural Resources Management Branch at Fort Hood, offered the opportunity for participants to glimpse a wide variety of

black-capped vireos, golden-cheeked warbler, and unique cave fauna, with the challenges of many multiple uses of the site. Though much of the habitat looks promising for horned lizards, especially the early successional grasslands



Live fire area. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.



habitats across the reservation as we helped him explore survey options for the site.

Fort Hood, one of the largest public land-holdings in the state, has many diverse habitats, reflecting its location at the juncture of several ecoregions, including the Edward's Plateau, the Cross Timbers, and the Blackland Prairie. The property has received much acclaim for its efforts to manage endangered species, especially

with abundant harvester ants, previous work by Scott Henke found horned lizards only in the central part of the reservation, the Live Fire Area. Thus, we decided to focus our initial searches there.

The Live Fire Area included an area of deeper soils along the edges of Cowhouse Creek. As we walked through those areas, taking care to avoid debris and ordinances ("Live Fire" still applies to a few unexploded

ordinances) a few harvester ant mounds were spotted. However, ants were not on the surface in response to the recent very high temperatures and drought. While some areas of more mature grassland appeared too rank for horned lizards, other areas which had been more recently burned looked structurally good. We did not spot any horned lizards, and in fact, most wildlife activity seemed confined to the moister habitats immediately adjacent to the streambed, where we found a red-striped ribbon snake, Blanchard's cricket frogs, young Gulf Coast toads, Rio Grande



Western Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis proximus*). Photo by Nathan Bendik.

leopard frogs, a six-lined racerunner, and an unidentified earless lizard.

After lunch, during the heat of the afternoon, Charles led us an exploration of some of the moister habitats on the east side of Fort Hood, as we traveled through woodland breeding habitat for golden-cheeked warblers to a beautiful hillside seep spring. There we found slimy salamanders (*Plethodon albagula*), representing a unique dark morph found only at Fort Hood.



*Slimy salamander (Plethodon albagula). Photo by Lee Ann Linam.*

As temperatures moderated we explored the western side of the reservation, road-cruising through some deeper alluvial soils. Harvester ants were abundant in these areas, but no horned lizards or horned lizard sign were seen. Finally, as night fell, we drove up to a mesa ridge-line through black-capped vireo habitat, where we watched a beautiful sunset and an emergence of a cave myotis bat colony. Fort Hood has many caves with abundant cave fauna; population size



*Sunset from the bat cave at Fort Hood. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.*



*Gulf Coast Toad (Bufo valliceps). Photo by Nathan Bendik.*

of this bat colony alone is estimated at 20,000.

Though no horned lizards were found, we did enjoy an intriguing look at many different habitat types and many of the training resources of the army at Fort Hood. Charles is very interested in continuing to look for horned lizards on the site, and Beth Moeller Bendik, one of the survey participants, was able to offer him some advice based on her research efforts in South Texas. Perhaps HLCS can continue to play a role in the future at this biologically diverse site.





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**Coming up in the February 2010 issue—images and stories from Matagorda Island.**