



The HLCS 5th National Conference, June 2002 A Hot Time in a Cool Location

by Roger A. Repp

If you weren't there—you should have been!

Before launching into what will amount to a summation of the activities of the HLCS Conference 2002, this author wanted to first extend his heartfelt thanks to those who made it all possible. As one who at least occasionally attends research-based symposiums, this one wins the award as "the most fun."

First and foremost, the HLCS is in debt to our beloved President Elect Wendy Hodges. Whilst being chased by her usual myriad of tailwinds, she found a way to pull this conference off with style. Only those of us who have ever planned such an event can begin to understand what it takes to put something like this together. Such effort has been known to make grown men cry!

Our esteemed President Bill Brooks lent support in ways too numerous to enumerate here, and Clare Freeman stepped up to lend support by purchasing gift items to distribute to attendees. Tom McCain generously donated some of his exquisite miniature horned lizard replicas, and Bette Armstrong crafted some ingenious fabric horned lizard bookmarks—not to mention baking us some of her yummy horned lizard

cookies. (Great feats of gluttony and greed were observed when it came to the distribution of these tasty treats.) Scott Messec jumped right in there with his computer skills, and issued "hot off the press" conference programs. Joyce Roach included copies of her book "A Horny Toad's Christmas." Many speakers selflessly paid their own expenses out of pocket to present at the program.

Most importantly, Wendy brought the wine, and had the wisdom to put one sage in the ways of purchasing beer to that task.

So, we had gifts, we had pro-

grams, we had speakers, we had wine, we had beer. Life was good! What made life better was the magnificent setting in which the conference transpired. The HLCS owes a deep debt of gratitude to the Southwestern Research Station (SWRS) near Portal, Arizona, for hosting the affair. In particular, we are grateful to Wade and Emily Sherbrooke for their assistance in securing the grounds, and to Diane Smith for her cheerful help with the final preparations of the same.

The SWRS is nestled in a canyon of the northeastern Chiricahua

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Upcoming Events

Old Rip Festival (Eastland, Texas)

September 21, 2002

contact Bette & Jim Armstrong (jimbett@eastland.net)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo (Austin, Texas)

October 5-6, 2002

contact Bill Brooks (bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu)

Earth Day Celebration (Belton, Texas)

October 22-24, 2002

contact Bill Brooks (bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu)

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View from the SWRS - photo by Jim Armstrong

Mountains. This author could go on and on about the virtues of this splendid place, but he is by nature lazy. Since the SWRS's website has already produced descriptive prose about the surroundings, we quote their own words below (Source: <http://research.amnh.org/swrs/environ.html>):

"The Southwestern Research Station is located at 5400 ft elevation in riparian habitat, surrounded by oak-juniper-pinyon pine woodlands. Within a short drive up or down the Chiricahua Mountains, which reach nearly 9800 ft elevation, five Life-zones can be encountered; Lower Sonoran, Upper Sonoran, Transition, Canadian, and Hudsonian. Biogeographically, the Chiricahua Mountains are located at crossroads between distinct desert and mountain biotas. At lower elevations, some species are derived from the Sonoran Desert to the west, whereas other species are elements

of the Chihuahuan Desert to the east and south. At higher elevations, there is a mixing of plants and animals from the Rocky Mountains, to the north, and the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains of Mexico. The uniqueness and diversity of the biota is well recognized by the bird-watchers who visit Cave Creek Canyon as one of the top birding localities in the United States."

This was obviously written by a bird lover, as the blurb makes no mention of the fact that within a half hour's drive, three species of horned lizard can be encountered. Said species are *Phrynosoma cornutum*, *modestum*, and *hernandesii*. If one would care to travel an hour and a half northwest, a fourth species, *Phrynosoma solare*, can also be found. But it is understandable that lovers of lower life forms would forget to mention the important critters that cohabitate their region.

The late June date that was cho-

sen for this conference was selected because during normal years, this is when the summer rainy season begins. The onset of the summer rainy season brings about a transformation of the reptiles and amphibians in the area. The first rains trigger explosive movements of these critters, and it was our hope to capitalize on this phenomena.

The only phenomenon that we capitalized on was the worst drought in Arizona weather history. In Arizona, we had sunny skies from mid-December 2001 to end of June and beyond. During that time period, not a drop of rain fell. The fear of fire then descended on anyplace that had more than two sticks leaning together, and led to the closure of all National Forest land to any entry at all, *especially* camping. This in turn denied conference attendees access to most of the best reasons for staying at SWRS.

As the clock was ticking on its

countdown for the conference, some of the planners suddenly got religion, and started praying for rain. When this didn't work, official proclamations declaring the prudence of throwing a woos on the whole affair began to emerge. These woos letters were firmly rebuked by our next leader: "If you want to woos—fine! But *you* can plan the next one—I did my job!" There was then some anti-woos backpedaling on the part of the would-be mutineers. The great HLCS Conference 2002 Rebellion was behind us. The plan was set, and the plan was on.

Putting all talk of woosing behind us, the conference began with the usual flair that this three-time HLCS conference attendee has grown to expect. The affair began on Friday, June 21, and lizard lovers began to trickle in from various directions. (Many of them *much* later than they had predicted.)

Each of us wondered if we would be shot or merely jailed as we ignored the twenty or so warning signs that lined the only road in to SWRS. These signs said such things as "\$5,000 fine for entering," "I would turn back if I were you," and the scariest of all "Surrender Dorothy." But in spite of the Forest Service trucks rumbling up and down the road, and a stop sign strategically placed on the only straight portion of the road, all attendees were allowed to pass unchallenged.

I arrived at around 5:00 PM, and found Lester Milroy, Bill Brooks, Clare Freeman, Tom McCain and Joyce Roach all sitting on the porch of one of the cabins. Somebody put a can of Bush Beer in my hand, and it would have been deadly impolite to do anything but drink it. While doing this, it was my privilege to witness President Brooks slaughter an article on horned lizards that he was editing for one of the porch people in attendance. I made a mental note to not pass any of my written ramblings on to Bill for comment



Wendy Hodges giving her presentation. - photo by Jim Armstrong

in the near future. "Bush Editing" seems to make him a bit ornery.

As Bill began a sentence-by-sentence dissection of the paper in hand, we had plenty of time to gaze on our surroundings. Directly across the parking lot stood a narrow footbridge, which led to the building that served as our dining quarters and recreation hall. As is the wont of most foot bridges, this one crossed a narrow stream bed, which given the drought situation, had enough water in it to maybe submerge an ant. To the east of our recreation hall stood a tree-studded meadow of sorts. The widest open area in this meadow contained a swimming pool whose water temperature was such that perhaps a stoic polar bear might use it as such. At the east end of the frigid water hole was another footbridge that led back to the dormitory and business area of the compound. These buildings were set to the south side of the gravel road that led from the parking lot. A triangular shaped patch of mowed grass lay between this road and the stream. There was a horseshoe arena set up here, and a couple of young folks were tossing a Frisbee around.

The quaint surroundings were accentuated on all sides by the tow-

ering, jagged peaks that embraced them. In any direction one looked, the awe-inspiring spectacle of the Chiricahua Mountains stimulated the visual senses. It was a waste of eyesight to look anywhere else. The craggy peaks rumbled upward, verdant forests carpeting the slopes wherever they could gain purchase. The symmetry of the forested-studded slopes was interrupted by abrupt and towering rocky battlements of gray and brown hues. At the base of each majestic prominence, rocky rubble collected in massive pockets that in some places obliterated the forest in its pathway. In other places, the rubble, also known as "talus," actually mingled with the steep forest floor.

Those of us whose love of reptiles extends beyond horned lizards feel a special bond for these talus slides, for they contain the montane species of rattlesnakes that are perhaps the most sought-after rattlers in the world. The snake guys were just a little bit twitchy throughout the conference—such was their angst to mingle with this rocky substratum. But the almighty fear of fines forced all to remain on level ground.

Guests continued to arrive, and



Joseph Collet and Lester G. Milroy III - photo by Jim Armstrong

all were kept busy checking in to cabins, scoping out the grounds, mingling in small knots, renewing old acquaintances—all the sorts of things one might expect at a gathering of horned lizard lovers. At twilight, a representative of SWRS gathered the group in the courtyard of the recreation hall to lay out the ground rules. This being done, some of us were ready to defect to communist China—where certain freedoms do still exist. The fear of fire at this place was necessary, but bordered on fanatical nonetheless.

The entertainment for this evening was supposed to be an open forum for impromptu slide show presentations by the general membership. When we learned that our favorite beverages would not be allowed in the hall, the slide show idea ground to a whimpering halt. Those who wanted the slide shows went off chagrined to pursue other forms of entertainment. The remainder of us gathered around the picnic table and entertained ourselves with talk of anything under the moon (I do believe horned lizards were discussed at some point.) Another favored pastime was spotlighting the hapless skunk, fox and ringtails that also called the place home. One can only

hope that their retinas are designed to withstand 1,000,000-candle power of light boring in on them.

Most of us awoke the next day nursing some form of whopper, and gathered for breakfast. The meal times at SWRS are announced with the clanging of a bell. The meal protocol is rather simple: if you ain't there at the proper time, you don't eat! A few stragglers learned this rule the hard way, and were subsequently punctual for the remainder of the meals.

Following breakfast, the business meeting of the HLCS transpired. President Brooks led this effort admirably. A treasurer's report indicated that we had money. Following this, there was an hour devoted to those who do nothing crucifying those who do everything. The gist of all this was that our webmaster has about 1,000 hours worth of work ahead of her in order to please the general membership. Horned lizard "baseball cards" were discussed. One can imagine kids of the future wishing to trade six *cornutum* for one *mcallii*, with *asio* perhaps commanding the highest respect. Bette Armstrong made a pitch for membership going back to fiscal year (or was it "physical

year?") memberships, as opposed to the January to December only system currently in practice. I think we passed this motion, and it will someday appear in our bylaws. Two solid candidates for the President-Elect position were nominated—and they remain in hiding to this day. (See Bill Brook's full up version of the business meeting elsewhere in this newsletter.)

The meeting ended precisely at 10:00 AM, which was coincidentally feeding time for the horned lizards that are kept on the grounds. (The HLCS is an organization that has its priorities in the right order.) I did not attend, but am told that ants and horned lizards were involved. Everyone had fun, except for the ants, which were kind of spoilsported about the whole affair.

And then, it was time for the conference to officially begin. Once again President Brooks presided over the gathering. He welcomed everyone with his down-home Texas style, and reminded our speakers of things like time limits and the cattle prods that would be used to enforce them. This being done, it was quiet on the set, and the presentations began.

Since the exact order the presentations occurred is a blur to this author, he chooses to follow the order set forth in the program. Hence, some of the accounting may not be in exactly correct sequentially. But this author can promise this: all the talks occurred on Saturday, June 22.

The Oklahoma contingent of the HLCS was well represented by chapter President Richard Stark. Richard presented a talk on daily movements of Texas Horned Lizards in Oklahoma. In order to follow individual lizards around, said lizards captured were liberally doused with fluorescent powder. This would leave a trail that Richard and company could follow to ascertain movements. When all was said and done, Richard was able to define movement patterns,

and ascertain that during the month of May, the males had significantly larger home ranges than the females. One might guess what these males were up to?

Also from Oklahoma, Julian Hilliard brought us up to speed on the efforts of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's (ODWC) effort to identify locations of Texas Horned Lizards in their state. ODWC is relying heavily on the public to notify them of sightings, and they are then synthesizing the known habitat using GIS (geographic information systems) technology. ODWC is then able to produce maps of known areas of occurrence, and utilize the habitat of the known areas of occupancy to zero in on possible new territory. This program is in its early phases, but the approach is an admirable and solid effort, which will doubtless form a solid foundation for future studies. A special thanks for the "pretty pictures" of that DANDY male *cornutum* Julian!

Next was a topic near and dear to my heart, and should also be with every lizard loving Texan. The HLCS has joined forces with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to reintroduce Texas Horned Lizards to a place where they once occurred. The ad hoc field tech for this project is Scott Messec, and he presented the very early results of this effort. As a report of what is happening occurs elsewhere within these hallowed pages, I will only say that the initial reports are a mixed bag. Reintroduction of reptiles is proving to be more difficult than it sounds with a number of species. As this is a topic that I have some personal experience with, I will make a bold prediction here: it will be tough to get the adults to adjust. However, the young have a strong chance of becoming established. Hats off to Scott and Dr. Hodges for their efforts to take on this worthy project—we wish you well.



Tom McCain, Lester G. Milroy III, and others at SWRS. - photo by Jim Armstrong

Tricia and Annamarie Saenger traveled all the way from New Hampshire to present their three year long study of Texas Horned Lizards in Willcox, Arizona. Young Annamarie did most of the talking on their study of the horned lizards that lived in their former neighborhood. On their own initiative, they began walking transects of the streets in their area, marking lizards encountered with various colors of finger nail polish for identification purposes. Each lizard was thoroughly processed, and released at the site of capture. Annamarie showed us slides that demonstrated habitat preferences, as well as charts that showed mass fluctuations of recaptures. This study was an admirable example of a family that just decided to do a NIKE with the animals that they loved.

Joseph Collet next rocked our arena with a presentation that featured morphological observations that may point to hybridization between Flat-tailed and Desert Horned Lizards. The color patterns of both dorsal and ventral sides of 11 horned lizards in his possession set up Joe's hypothesis that he was dealing with hybrids of the two species. Joe then showed us a series of remarkable ant

close-ups, and gave those so inclined a lesson in identification of the same.

Representing the Utah State University, Kirk Setser then graced our stage with a talk about the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard, and its habitat usage at Ocotillo Wells State Vehicle Recreation Area (OWSVRA). OWSVRA is located smack dab in the northwest corner of Flat-tail habitat in southeastern California. As such, the substratum is slightly different than the norm for them. Using charts and graphs, Kirk was able to show us such things as minimal overlap of individual's home ranges, an increase of overlap during mating season, as well as trends that seem to indicate Flat-tails show more home range stability here than other places.

From the University of Arizona, Kevin Bonine traveled from Tucson to present on the subject of how the leg muscles and body construction of horned lizards compare with other lizards. He contrasted horned lizards with spiny and sand lizards, and highlighted both the morphological and physiological differences between these lizards. Perhaps Dr. Bonine's work will someday assist scientists in genetically creating a race of "super lizards" who can eas-



Jay Meyers collecting horned lizard stomach contents. - photo by Jim Armstrong

ily outrun their quarry!

It is unclear which direction Wendy Hodges arrived from, or where she went after the conference. It is rumored that she has a home someplace, but this author doubts that she darkens the doorway of it often. Nevertheless, for at least 15 minutes, all in attendance knew where she was. Whilst basking content with this knowledge, we had the privilege of hearing Dr. Hodges inform us about the differences and similarities of live-bearing (viviparous) and egg-bearing (oviparous) lizards in terms of habitat usage. Generally speaking, viviparous lizards can be found at higher elevations, where having young that are live born would be a prudent survival technique. The ancestor of horned lizards appeared to have evolved at mid to high elevation in north central Mexico. Early in the evolution of the group, species representing the two modes of reproduction separated from one another and oviparous species migrated to lower elevations while viviparous species remained at higher elevations.

Representing Northern Arizona University Jay Meyers, with his co-author Anthony Herrel in tow, gave

a great talk on the feeding mechanisms of horned lizards. While conventional wisdom dictates that horned lizards are traditionally (NO! I *won't* use that RIDICULOUS word) ant eaters, there are some species that have as little as 20% of their diet devoted to ants. Jay et al. set about studying the diet and jaw mechanics of the various species. They even went so far as to use what I call a "Bite-o-meter" to measure jaw strength of each species. (I'm sure that it, like ant eating, has a fancier name). Those lizards that specialized in ants as prey items had less jaw strength than those that included hard-shelled insects and arthropods. Jay wrapped up his talk with great video sequences of horned lizards eating bugs. This video received numerous requests for encores!

My vote (which means less than nothing) for our most entertaining speaker went to Bayard Brattstrom. Bayard was extremely animated and enthusiastic as he spurned the newer "Power Point" type of presentation in favor of the old way of utilizing an overhead projector. He shuffled data sheets and charts on and off this overhead projector with a dexterity that would make a blackjack dealer envious. When he accidentally ar-

ranged a chart upside down, he said, "it don't matter, upside down, right side up—it all points to the same thing." This presentation was a classic Old bull vs. young bull confrontation—and as one now closer to the former, I really enjoyed it! The gist of what Bayard was demonstrating was that the Coast Horned Lizard was not in need of protection through the Endangered Species Act (ESA). While this data was not looked upon favorably by some members of the audience, we must always keep in mind that a scientist's job is to report their findings as accurately as possible. Whether this information is what we want to hear should have no bearing on their stated results.

Sadly, Wade Sherbrooke could not attend this conference. Wendy stepped up to present Wade's talk, which focused on the contrasting vertebral (backbone) line of Texas and Flat-tailed Horned Lizards. The vertebral line on Flat-tails is dark, which would help disguise a lizard who was resting beneath the sparse vegetation of its sandy habitat by looking like the shade line of a twig. The Texas Horned Lizard generally hangs in places where the twig litter is usually bleached, would benefit more from its white colored vertebral stripe. Wade's photos are always a treat. The man is truly dedicated to understanding and reporting all aspects of his first love within the animal kingdom.

Saving the least for last, the HLCS was kind enough to allow this author to present on Gila Monsters. Since this otherwise charismatic lizard is largely under-studied, any information at all is a goldmine. If people walked away with the understanding that monsters can be bimodal in daily activities, are capable of huge movements followed by long periods of remaining sedentary underground, and the young hatch in fall, over winter in the nest, and emerge in spring—then I did my job.



Horned lizard found in Portal. - photo by Jim Armstrong

So many of us started the morning shyly avoiding each other, and ended the evening with deep discussions together about how we could assist each other with future endeavors. That is why these gatherings are critical for researcher and interested others alike. The importance of the camaraderie that a conference generates cannot be overstated.

The time remaining for this conference allowed both Saturday night and Sunday morning for people to do as they liked. For many of us, this involved a pursuit of happiness known as “herping.” Others chose to remain and stand a vigorous watch over the contents of the ice chest. In spite of their vigilance, said contents of the ice chests began to steadily dwindle. A spotlight search for a wayward Ring-tailed Cat produced not the Ringtail, but one Clare Freeman skulking about a shed. This sighting of a very rare mammal was

duly recorded with all the other great finds that night.

The next morning was to be the big group herp trip. It was probably great fun, but this author was in the vehicle that rebelled. While the group turned left, our vehicle went straight. As I was not the driver in this case, I can’t be held responsible for any part of this mutiny. I was held hostage by the three women involved. I was powerless to stop the momentum of this mutinous act.

What would someday be known as the Great Horny Toad Rebellion immediately produced a Round-tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma modestum*). This was lovingly fondled and photographed. While this was being done, yet another mutinous conference attendee joined our party. We continued onward into New Mexico, where we noosed two Collared Lizards (*Crotaphytus collaris ssp*), and ob-

served four others. We also were able to capture and photo the beautiful candy-lime-green and purple mating colors on the bellies of male Tree Lizards (*Urosaurus ornatus*).

And then, the next thing we all know, it is over. I am writing the membership of the HLCS all about it in hopes that you will consider attending the next one. We are all blessed to love and study a reptile that has a very high profile with the general public. It is difficult to imagine any other herp that has enamored so many people. When these conferences transpire, those in attendance get to hear the cutting edge of what research is doing with and for Horned Lizards. The setting is always done in an atmosphere that involves good food, good drink, good fun, and good friends.

Hope to see “ya’ll” at the next one!

Experimental Reintroduction of *Phrynosoma cornutum*, the Texas Horned Lizard, to Central Texas

by Wendy Hodges

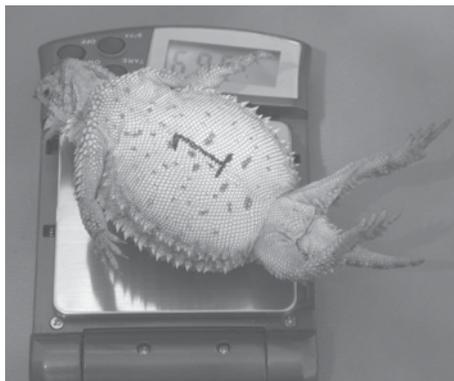
The Horned Lizard Conservation Society (HLCS) received a grant this summer from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for an experimental release of Texas horned lizards on a ranch near Dripping Springs in Hays County, Texas. The grant was offered on a competitive basis from funds generated from the sale of the Horned Lizard Conservation License Plate in Texas. The Texas Chapter of the HLCS is taking the lead on this project, and began funding it earlier in the spring before the grant was received.

The HLCS has maintained a permit for holding lizards illegally collected in Texas and repatriates as many as possible. However, lizards frequently come from unknown locations and cannot be returned. Adult Texas horned lizards obtained from illegal collections and their offspring produced in 2001 were initially used and additional lizards have been added to the release project through the summer. The primary objective of this study is to reestablish a population of *Phrynosoma cornutum* in Central Texas that will survive one year. Secondary objectives are 1). to insure no net loss of harvester ant colonies and 2). gather data on habitat characteristics important to where lizards are distributed spatially in order to better choose appropriate sites for other population reintroductions.

Texas horned lizards, *Phrynosoma cornutum*, have declined in Texas since the 1960s and 1970s. State law protected the species in 1967 in response to large-scale collecting in Texas and exportation



Tim Osting, Bill Brooks, Wendy Hodges and Liz Osting opening a cage.



Marking and weighting a lizard before release.



A released lizard with backpack transmitter.

from the state for the pet trade. Despite protective legislation and later listing as a Texas threatened species, *P. cornutum* continued to decline in response to three variables: loss and degradation of habitat, invasion of *Solenopsis invicta*, red imported fire ants, and use of pesticides or herbicides. Localities where the species disappeared and these factors are not currently present are good candidates for an attempt to reintroduce the lizards. The site chosen for this project has a high density of *Pogonomyrmex barbatus*, harvester ants, the preferred prey for Texas horned lizards, low density of fire ants, which are controlled on site at the level of individual mounds, and open ground mixed with herbaceous and woody vegetation.

The project will follow horned lizards through hibernation until the following spring. We hope data collected from this study will help us understand the process of reintroducing the species to places where it formerly occurred. Up to this point, a corps of volunteers has been instrumental in conducting this research. With funding from the TPWD grant, we can now hire 1-2 persons to track and record more data about the lizards. I would like to thank all the volunteers, the property owners and TPWD staff who have helped us this year: Barney Austin, Bill Brooks, Clare Freeman, Lee Ann Linam-Johnson, Jay Kane, Scott Messec, Bill and Mary Mitchell, Bradford Moncrieff, Tim and Liz Osting, Andy Price, Leigh Sanders, Carolyn Todd.

Chapter Updates and News

New Mexico

New Mexico is now a full fledged chapter.

Texas

Sept 21 - Old Rip Festival in Eastland, TX, Bette & Jim Armstrong invite us all to attend. There will be a parade, car show, horned toad derby, music, arts & crafts, food, carnival and much, much more. Contact Bette or Jim Armstrong, (254) 629-3976, jimbett@eastland.net

Texas (continued)

Oct 5 & 6 - Texas Parks and Wildlife EXPO in Austin, TX, This booth sitting event is the TX Chapter's largest outreach program. We need volunteers. Contact Bill Brooks, 512-581-0377, bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu

October 22-24 - Belton TX Earth Day Celebration, this is a huge week day event to touch the lives of many grade school children. We need speakers. Contact Bill Brooks, 512-581-0377, bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu

Portal Business

by Bill Brooks

First off, I'd like to thank everyone who came to the crispy Portal, Arizona National Convention last June. I thought the presentations were fantastic and well worth my time. All the attendees I spoke to expressed similar feelings. Thank you Wendy Hodges and your crew for all the hard work you put into this convention to make it as successful as it was. A special thanks goes out to Tom McCain, Joyce Roach and Bette Armstrong for their donations to the "goodie" bags. They were a hit!

When we have a get together like this, it's impossible to pass up the chance to have a general business meeting. I presided over this morning meeting and tried to run it as quickly and painlessly as possible. I think we got a lot done.

Roger Repp gave a treasurer's report and pronounced us healthy. We set a committee to redo the gate-

fold flyer. We accepted president-elect nominations. Good luck to Bryan Morrill and Stephane Poulin. You will find a nomination form in this newsletter. Nominations are not closed. We will accept nominations for a bit longer until we have the national elections near the end of this year. More on this soon.

We also discussed making a horned lizard pattern available to our members for a small fee. Several folks who are into fabric crafts have asked for this. It will be done.

We changed the way memberships run. Instead of having all memberships end in December, they will now run for a year starting at the time you pay your dues.

The most important part of the business meeting, was a couple of small changes to our bylaws. First we made the Member Services Chair an appointed position instead of an elected one. My next motion was to

appoint Bette Armstrong our Membership Chair. You are doing a great job, Bette.

We then streamlined requirements for new chapters. Chapters still have to make a petition to the NBOD for membership. They now have to make biannual membership reports to the Membership Chair. All membership dues go to the national treasury and refunds are made to chapters once a year or on an as needed basis.

We welcomed New Mexico as a full HLCS Chapter. Congratulations!

As you can tell, I left out lots of the details. Like the Portal meeting, I am trying to make this article as short and painless as possible. For more details or clarifications, please contact me directly.

My best to you all. - Bill Brooks, President

Old Rip at Six Flags Over Texas

submitted by Bette Armstrong

reprinted with permission from June 16, 2002 issue of the Eastland Telegram

“Froggy went a courtin’,
unhuh!”

Not OLD RIP—he’s, a toad.

And certainly not courtin’.

He passed that years ago.

He is doing, the thing he does
best—EXPLOITING Eastland and
Eastland County.

the Jersey Lilly Saloon, and his Care-
fully-protected hours are from high
noon until 7 p.m.

He is being provided the ulti-
mate security. And you can know
that OLD RIP is gaining recognition
and publicity far beyond that of even
live performers who are featured at

the popular entertainment park.

There are other exhibits of Best
of Texas quality, but nobody has any-
thing to compare with OLD RIP, the
horned toad that lived 31 years in the
cornerstone of the old Courthouse.

The toad is a celebrity and ordi-
narily reposes in a specially-built
display case on the northside of the
courthouse first floor—viewable
from both inside and out. And visi-
tors pay, respect regularly, coming
off the Interstate 20 to downtown to
view the World’s Most Famous
Toad.

He will return after the Six Flags
appearance.

He was sent off and delivered
there in style and presumably will
return in equal splendor.



Photos taken by Jim Armstrong.

Left: Judge Brad Stephenson, Bette
Armstrong (in costume), Ann Folsom,
and Cal Brim (park security).

And he does it all with little help
from his friends.

OLD RIP is at Six Flags and from
what we garner, he’s the star of the
BEST OF TEXAS FESTIVAL event.

A delegation went down for the
grand opening of the special exhibit
Thursday; which was to have been
opened with a program at 11 a. m.

Among those from Eastland
County were County Judge, Brad
Stephenson, Chamber of Commerce
President Bill Culverhouse, Toad-
Lady Bette (in costume) and Jim
Armstrong and Chamber Executive
Director Ann Folsom.

OLD RIP’s place of honor is in a
specially, designed exhibit in front of



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