

SALUTE TO SCOUTING

Among February's celebrated anniversaries is the birthday of Scouting. Many of us acknowledge the debt we owe to Scouting. Adult VHS members are encouraged to lend whatever aid they can to local Scout Troops, Explorer Posts, neighborhood and district scout leaders. Adult members can do this most appropriately by coaching scouts who may wish to qualify for merit badges within our field of interest. These are "REPTILE STUDY" and "ZOOLOGY" in the Boy Scout program, and (for the Society's lady members) the "REPTILE and AMPHIBIAN" badge in the Girl Scout program.

AN ELEMENTARY AND WELL-BALANCED COURSE IN HERPETOLOGY comes neatly packaged, compressed into a 60-page booklet with ample photos, good illustrations and readable text. The price, complete, is 35 cents. We refer, of course, to one of the many fine pamphlets in the Scout Merit Badge series titled simply "Reptile Study." The author of this valuable booklet is one of the nation's leading herpetologists:

Roger Conant, Curator of Reptiles, Philadelphia Zoological Garden. The contents can serve as a basic minimum fund of knowledge for those who profess a more-than-casual interest in herpetology. Acquisition of this pamphlet and an understanding of its content is a goal for VHS student members. Scouts who aspire to a knowledge of amphibians and reptiles should set out early to gain this award.

Of general interest, the REPTILE STUDY pamphlet may be found in local school or public libraries in your community. It is ideal as a first book for high-school age beginners in herpetology. The more sophisticated should employ it as a "refresher." Even the well-informed may discover in it those facts which are often assumed by writers of the more advanced texts to be "basic knowledge." Look over its contents; brush up on areas where your background information may be on thin ice. A book which would go far toward supplementing this small pamphlet is "THE NATURAL HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICAN AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES" by Dr. James A. Oliver, published by D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., Princeton, (1955) and available in the larger public libraries.

VHS ENCOURAGES ITS MEMBERS TO TAKE PART IN THE SCOUTING PROGRAM. Adult leadership is always needed in the community. Many times the unavailability of an adult counselor in Reptile Study or Zoology discourages a Scout from further pursuit of his interest in these fields. An interested Scout goes to his Troop Leader and asks for the name of a counselor. As is too frequently the case with these topics, there may not be an examiner listed. Check your local Scout Troop leaders and Explorer Advisers to see if there is a place for you in the ranks of the adult merit badge counselors. If there is -- Offer your aid.

Scout headquarters can supply a folder on the duties of a Merit Badge Counselor: (1) a 16-page, pocket-sized, leaflet -- "Merit Badge Counselor GUIDE" published by BSA in 1950 as folder No. 3086, National Council New Brunswick, N.J. (2) an application form on "The Merit Badge Counselor -- Opportunities - Duties - Qualifications." (VHS cannot supply.)

TO THOSE PERSONS ALREADY LISTED AS COUNSELORS in Reptile Study Merit Badge or the "Reptile and Amphibian" badge, VHS lends a hand -- whether they are affiliated with this Society or not -- by providing materials useful in coaching Scouts. We welcome their affiliation but we do not wish to interfere. We will endeavor to provide them maximum help within our means such as data on local reptiles and amphibians, check lists, popular guides to Virginia herpetofauna, and other items. These, they may keep on file for reference or pass on to the Scouts who come to them for information. SEND US YOUR ADDRESS.

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EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO PLACE THE REPTILE STUDY MERIT BADGE BEFORE SCOUTS as a desirable award. This should be done in balance with the other subjects in the Nature series. REPTILE STUDY is a "optional" or "elective" badge. That is, it is not required for attaining EAGLE Scout rank; nor should it be. It is an important piece in the total picture of our natural surroundings. It should not be neglected.

EACH SCOUT TROOP, EXPLORER POST, or CUB PACK should have its own team of "naturalists" -- three or four boys (or girls) properly coached in nature subjects. Quite naturally, personal specialties will develop. As a part of such a team, ideally, each troop should have its own "troop herpetologist" a Scout or a leader who is able to identify the local reptiles and amphibians with a degree of competence satisfying the needs of safety and wildlife conservation.

A COURSE IN REPTILE STUDY WILL BE GIVEN IN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA AREA

Early this spring (dates and places to be announced) a course will be held in the Northern Virginia counties in Reptile Study and Reptile and Amphibian badges. This will consist of an evening indoor color slide and motion picture orientation session; a Saturday morning trip to the reptile and amphibian exhibits at the U.S. National Museum and the National Zoological Park. The course will be provided on a trial basis to all interested National Capital Area Council Scouts and Scouters who earnestly seek to qualify for Reptile Study Merit Badge or who hold the badge and want a "refresher". If successful here, the idea will be shipped to Richmond and Norfolk for a re-run. VHS hopes to gain the co-operation of all of those groups and talented individuals who may lend training aids and personal expertise to this effort.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AT USNM and NZP WILL BE USED DURING NORMAL VISITING HOURS -- FIRST (INDOOR) MEETING WILL SET SIZE OF GROUP.

(advertisement)

COLOR SLIDES ( 2" X 2" ) OFFERED

(advertisement)

Rough Green Snake	(@ 55 cents each)	Common King Snake
Brown Water Snake		Broad-banded Copper-
Tropical King Snake	European Water Snake	head

16 domestic and foreign Amphibians (mostly frogs) at 50 ¢ a slide.  
Six Lizard slides at 50 ¢ a slide.

A TWO-DAY (WEEKEND) TRAINING COURSE FOR ASSISTANT CAMP NATURALISTS MAY BE OFFERED by the VHS in June, 1961, based on experience obtained in conducting an early spring Reptile Study Merit Badge course. The course, for camp naturalist assistants, or prospective assistants, will be limited to Virginia (and nearby) herpetology. This will be undertaken as the most practical way to launch a broad program aimed at spreading an understanding of the Virginia herpetofauna. It will be a training course for those who, a few weeks later, will be scattered to summer camps in all parts of the state.

Officers and adult members of VHS will make every endeavor to accept invitations for short visits to summer camps during the coming season. This will be done as a part of our program of co-operation with the camp naturalists. The great hope is that we can do this without disturbance to the regular nature program operated by the camp -- and in the interest of the Reptile and Amphibian census which we will have underway by early summer. It may not be physically possible to visit each camp -- even if invited to do so. The season is short and when we consider that this can only be done "in the spare time" of the individuals involved the problem begins to take focus.

THROUGH THE ASSISTANT NATURALIST TRAINING (in herpetology) we believe we can explain the need for careful observation, note-taking and preservation of specimens of scientific interest -- alive, or if necessary, in formalin for placement in one of the depository collections. With the weekly turnover in camps, we must depend upon contact through the camp naturalist and his staff for information relating to "discoveries" of interest. We will be pleased to announce these in summer and fall Bulletins with credit to those responsible for the "finds" reported. A blank for reporting such information will be supplied with future VHS Bulletins. (Watch for news of this spring and summer's census.)

X A SPECIAL BULLETIN FOR THE BIOLOGY AND SCIENCE INSTRUCTORS IN THE VA, X HIGH SCHOOLS is now taking shape. We are currently gathering ideas which can be passed on to this group. Co-operation with these instructors is another way to broaden the base of information about the local herpetology. This, we hope will turn out to be a two-way street with information and news of unusual specimen finds going both ways!

We have a list of the biology and science instructors in all of the state's high schools. This has been provided by the State Board of Education in response to our appeal. Since we do not solicit membership in the educational area, but prefer to leave this to the personal option of teachers themselves "when the spirit moves," we trust you may understand our need to have dues outstanding paid up to launch this approach on as wide a front as may be borne by our limited finances. If we have the material which will capture the imagination of this group the contributions to our program will follow. The VHS goal is not to create interest in herpetology where it does not exist, but to provide materials and information of use to instructors for their use, if desired, and for the benefit of interested students.



Excerpted from "NOTES ON CAVE-ASSOCIATED VERTEBRATES" by J. E. Cooper which appeared in the BALTIMORE GROTTO NEWS, Vol.3, No. 10, 1960.(FT)

(John E. Cooper is affiliated with the National Speleological Society and is involved in a project entitled "Cave-associated Herpetozoa of the United States" -- The first section, "The Cavernophilous Salamanders of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia" is nearing completion. He asks IF ANY MEMBERS or FRIENDS of VHS know of any herpetological record for caves anywhere in the U.S, WRITE HIM -- J.E. Cooper, 3329 Ripple Road, Baltimore 7, Maryland.)--

During the past couple of years (late 1959 and most of 1960) several cave trips were organized for the express purpose of collecting and recording cavernophilous amphibians in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. Some of the results of these deliberate speleo-herpetological investigations and a few random cave trips, including chance observations on non-herpesian vertebrates, are presented in the following . . . notes: (The Editors have picked up the Virginia notes)

VIRGINIA: Highland County, Aqua Cave -- When the epigeic stream at Aqua was collected in August, 1958, no amphibians were found. This was scarcely understandable since this is a perfectly fine looking habitat for salamanders. On September 3, 1960, this area was visited again, and despite extensive stone-lifting, only a single specimen of the Northern Dusky Salamander (Desmognathus f. fuscus) was uncovered. Entrance to the cave was gained on this visit and a large population of Long-Tailed Salamanders (Eurycea l. longicauda) was discovered. None of these salamanders were found outside the cave, although they inhabit the epigeic environment around many other caves. A single Northern Red Salamander (Pseudotriton r. ruber) was taken in the back reaches of the cave. Highland County, Marshall's Cave -- The most thrilling members of the Marshall's vicinity fauna, although they have never been recorded from the cave proper (just the talus slides directly in front of it) are the only two poisonous snakes in the Blue Ridge of Virginia -- the Northern Copperhead (Agkistrodon c. mokeson), and the Timber Rattler (Crotalus h. horridus). The initial rattler to come to my attention from this area was taken in August, 1957 by John Glaser, Stevens, and Wasserman. The snake was found while sunning itself on a pile of rocks below, and slightly southeast of, the cave entrance. In August, 1958, returning from a visit to the cave, I captured a beautiful specimen of Agkistrodon in the rocks below the cave entrance. Several minutes prior to its capture this snake had been innocuously sunning itself. . . . No amphibians of any kind were noted in the cave proper. At this time and on September 4, 1960 the epigeic extension of the stream produced many interesting specimens of atypical Desmognathus f. fuscus, a host of larval Northern Spring Salamanders Gyrinophilus p. porphyriticus, and adults of Eurycea l. longicaudata. The surrounding hillside produced giant specimens of Plethodon g. glutinosus, and a sight recording of a single skink. It was impossible to determine whether the lizard was Eumeces fasciatus or E. anthracinus.

Highland County, unnamed cave -- A pit entrance on the Lockridge property off the Burnsville road west of Clover Creek was visited on September 4, 1960 by "Mac" and Bob McMeans (D.C. Grotto, NSS), Leo Lemay, Wanda Lea Cooper, Stevens, Steele and J.E.Cooper. (McMeans is writing a report on this cave and will probably name it, if this has not already been done.) No amphibians were taken in the cave, but the Slimy Salamander (Plethodon g. glutinosus) was found under logs around the entrance. Teeth, tentatively identified as those of a young bear (Ursus americanus) were found in the cave, along with the elderly cadaver of a deer (Odocoileus virginianus). A Big-Eared Bat, probably Corynorhinus rafinesquii fluttered out of the entrance in daylight while cavers were being hauled to the surface. It quickly returned.

YOUR COMMENTS ON CARRYING THE (Md., W.Va.) NOTES REMAINING, WELCOMED

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Midlothian, Chesterfield County, Va. (summer, 1960)

Richmond, Va. area members will be interested in the following notes from their area. Jack Redmond, VHS member, reports the following species taken in and around Midlothian during the summer.

Lizards

Eastern Six-lined Racerunner	2	<u>Cnemidophorus sexlineatus</u>
Five-lined Skink	9	<u>Eumeces fasciatus</u>
Northern Fence Lizard	22	<u>Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus</u>
Ground Skink (Little Brown)	12	<u>Scincella (Lygosoma) laterale</u>

Snakes

Northern Copperhead	2	<u>Agkistrodon contortrix mokeson</u>
Eastern Worm Snake	6	<u>Carphophis amoenus amoenus</u>
Scarlet Snake	1	<u>Cemophora coccinea</u>
Northern Black Racer	3	<u>Coluber c. constrictor</u>
Ringneck Snake (No. X So.)	1	<u>Diadophis p. edwardsi</u> x <u>p. punct.</u>
Corn Snake	1	<u>Elaphe g. guttata</u>
Black Rat Snake	5	<u>" o. obsoleta</u>
Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	1	<u>Heterodon p. platyrhinos</u>
Brown King Snake, Mole Snake	1	<u>Lampropeltis calligaster rhombo-</u> <u>maculata</u>
Northern Water Snake	2	<u>Natrix s. sipedon</u>
Rough Green Snake	2	<u>Opheodrys aestivus</u>
Northern Brown Snake	3	<u>Storeria dekayi dekayi</u>
Northern Red-bellied Snake	4	<u>" o. occipitomaculata</u>

Jack Redmond reports that ten Black Rat Snake eggs were laid and six young emerged and are still doing well. Also three Copperheads were born to the two Copperheads reported.

ARE THESE BOOKS IN YOUR LIBRARY ?

1. A CHECKLIST OF NORTH AMERICAN AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES  
by Karl P. Schmidt

Published by the University of Chicago Press under the sponsorship of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. Sixth Edition, 1953  
Lists all species and subspecies of Amphibia and Reptilia in the United States, their type locality, synonymy, range.

PRICE: \$1.50 (ppd.) (Original price was \$3.50.)

2. COMMON NAMES FOR NORTH AMERICAN AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Prepared by the Committee on Herpetological Common Names of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists.

Plus an index of Common Names. PRICE \$1.00 ppd.

BOTH OF THESE PUBLICATIONS ARE A MUST FOR THE LIBRARY OF EVERY SERIOUS  
HERPETOLOGIST

ORDER FROM: \*Dr. N. Bayard Green, Publications Secretary, ASIH,  
Dep't of Zoology, Marshall College, Huntington, W.Va.  
\*(Faculty member, Virginia Herpetological Society)