EDITORIAL: Journal HAA 30. It's here. It is not as fat as HAA 29, and my pen contributed more than half of the text. I made a plea in NL 2 for contributions from members. It has not been very successful. At the rate articles are currently being submitted HAA 31 can be expected sometime in 1986! Subscriptions. The cost of printing, xerox copying and postage are outstripping HAA fund. Fee increases can only be avoided if there is an increase in membership. Spread the word. Advertise the HAA to your friends, in schools, at work, etc.

NEW MEMBERS:

H. P. Bates, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, RIOBERGSTEIN 9000 Switzerland.

A. S. Botha, 40 Umata Street, THNES RIVERS, 7630 South Africa.

E. Stüben, PaterkinsonVagen 510, S-1271 JOHANNESBOV, Sweden.

Bennett de Klerk, P.O. Box 29, GEYSERSHOOP, SAP PAUL, Brasil.

M. Beuzryn, 41 Rue des Solitaires, 75013 PARIS, France.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: A. C. Pooley, c/o Crookes Bros. Ltd., P.O. Box 279, LINK HILLS, 2692 Natal.

BOY BITES ATTACKING PYTHON TO DEATH

A report on this incident occurred in HAA 28, Dec. 1982. The following details have been revealed by Barry Porter, Game Valley Estates, Richmond, Natal.

I used to own the land on which this incident occurred and I still live within 2km of the spot. I have made enquiries about the incident and after much probing the following story has come to light through the "rush telegraph".

Firstly, Petrus Mhombu was not herding goats but with his 3 or 4 dogs was enjoying an illegal hunting expedition. He apparently came upon the python and decided to kill it. He dispatched the snake, and as it was a large specimen and fairly heavy, he gripped it by the neck and hoisted it over his shoulder and proceeded to drag it home. It was necessary for him to cross the Ngudwini River to get to his home. The water at the crossing place is about 10m wide with a maximum depth of about 750mm. The sudden stimulus of the icy cold water on the body of the python induced a revival of its reflexes and coils slithered around the boy and began constricting him.

It was at this stage, in desperation, that he began biting the reptile. His screams were heard by people in a nearby hut who rushed to his aid and managed to release him.

This is as close to the true story as I can get and I believe that the stories to the press are both inaccurate and highly dramatised.
A teaching workshop on Amphibian Larval Biology will be held at the 1984 joint meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Herpetologers’ League, and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, University of Oklahoma, Norman, July 30, 1984. The workshop is designed as a mini-course for the non-expert on these organisms; no prior experience in herpetology or systematics is presumed. Among the people who may be interested in this workshop are general biologists, graduate students in herpetology outside of amphibian biologists, freshwater zoologists, developmental biologists and amateur herpetologists. The workshop will include the examination of museum specimens. A syllabus with annotated bibliography will be provided to all those who register. For more information contact:

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EUROPEAN HERPETOLOGICAL MEETING
PRAGUE 1985
August 13-18
Joint meeting of Societas Europaea Herpetologica with herpetologists from Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and USSR.

PURPOSE: The aim of this meeting is to give scientific herpetologists from all parts of Europe and from overseas an opportunity to exchange their views, as well as for personal contacts, both resulting in deepening of scientific intercourse and cooperation in the study of amphibians and reptiles.

PROGRAM: The meeting program will consist of plenary sessions where oral contributions will be given, poster exhibits, general meeting of SEH, social gatherings, and one-day field trip. Special guest program for family members may be arranged by travel agency CZEKAN.

TOPICS: Contributions on palaeontology, evolution, phylogeny, systematics, ecology, physiology, anatomy, morphology etc. of amphibians and reptiles are welcome.

LANGUAGE: To avoid communication difficulties, all contributions should be presented in English.

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: Few enrolleed discoverers will be available for oral presentations. Posters up to 1 x 1.5 m can easily be exposed.

PUBLICATION: All contributions in the Meeting will be published in the form of a book, including a list of the participants, addresses of the contributors, and an index of the major subjects. Posters and oral contributions will be treated equally in the book.

ACCOMMODATION: To avoid high prices of accommodation in hotels, accommodation in the college of Charles University will be organized instead. All usual facilities (shower, etc.) are available.

REGISTRATION FEE: Printing abstracts, mailing expenses etc. force the organizer to impose a fee of 25,- Krona on the participants.

The Faculty of Natural Sciences, Charles University, Prague, will be the host of the European Herpetological Meeting. A detailed program and call for papers will be delivered during September 1984 only to those who return the Preliminary Application Form or write Mr. Zdenek Polezal, Department of Paleontology, Charles University, Albertov 6, 120-43, Prague 2, Czechoslovakia, before the end of August 1984.

PRELIMINARY APPLICATION FORM

NAME: Mr., Miss, Mrs. ............................................. FIRST NAME .............................................

PROFESSION: .................................................................

ORGANIZATION: ...........................................................

ADDRESS: .................................................................

Postal Code .... City ...........................................................

Country .... Telephone ...................................................

PROBABLE NUMBER OF ACCOMPANYING MEMBERS:

MY ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING IS: ............................

SINGLE ROOM ..........................................................

DOUBLE ROOM ..........................................................

I WISH TO BE ACCOMMODATED IN ...................................

I WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE-DAY TRIP? YES NO

* Please circle the selected option.

Signature .................................................................
Sea snakes threatened by trade
Sea snake populations (Hydrophiidae) off Queensland could decrease if the State Government agrees to licence a sea snake fishery. It has already obtained approval for the export of sea snake skins taken incidentally by prawn trawlers. Sea snakes are now prohibited in Australia but Queensland’s internal trade in skins would have a significant effect. Conservationists are opposing the factory and urging that measures be devised to reduce the incidental catch of sea snakes by prawn trawlers.

Fund for Animals and Total Environment Centre, February 1983

Tortoise gets help
The Bobol tortoise Gopherus flavomargintus, the largest tortoise in North America, is now confined to the Bobol de Mapimi in the Chihuahuan Desert in north-west Mexico. Hunted for meat and eggs it is also having difficulty surviving in the badly overgrazed ecosystem—a few dry years would be disastrous for hatchlings. Ralston Purina, a pet food manufacturer, is creating a special food to help hatchlings survive, and a WWF-US project is attempting to reintroduce the tortoise to its former range on suitably protected land.

Focus WWF-US, 5, 1

Cane turtle in Kerala
A cane turtle Hemmysa silvatica collected in Kerala in October 1982 has laid two eggs, the first in captivity for this recently rediscovered species (see page 130 in this Oxyr). Hamadryad: Newsletter of the Madras Snake Park Trust, 8, 1

Captive-bred pythons released
Four, two-and-a-half-year-old captive-bred Indian pythons Python molurus were released into the wild last November in Madumalai Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, SW India. This is the first time in India, and possibly in the world, that an endangered species of snake has been captive-bred and released.

Hamadryad: Newsletter of the Madras Snake Park Trust, 8, 1

Lizard skins in Bangladesh
More than two million pieces of lizard skin, valued at approximately US$3-27 million, have been declared since the Bangladesh Government’s decree last September ordering that all lizard skins were to become government property and should be declared to the Chief Conservator of Forests. Any person contravening the order is liable to imprisonment of up to two years, a fine, or both. In 1978–79, before becoming a Party to CITES, Bangladesh exported 1,890,559 skins.

Traffic Bulletin, IV, 6

Land Iguanas Released on Isabela Island
Land iguanas Conolophus subcristatus have been returned to their ancestral home near Cartago Bay on Isabela Island in the Galapagos. In 1976, when extinction threatened them there and on Santa Cruz, adults were rescued from both islands for captive-breeding at the Darwin Station. The feral dogs responsible for the decline have now been eliminated from Cartago Bay and many of the 37 juvenile iguanas released there last year have taken up residence in old iguana burrows. If the dog eradication programme for Santa Cruz proves as successful as the Isabela effort, iguanas will be released there in 1983.

Noticias de Galapagos, No. 36, 1982

Eleven endangered turtles
A review of South American freshwater turtles and terrapins by Aniers Rhodin and Russell Mittermeier indicates that there are at least 28 species of which 11 are endangered or extremely rare. Some species are known from only a few specimens and, like the extremely rare Dahl’s toad-headed turtle Physignathus dahlii from the Sincolego region of Colombia, may be on the verge of extinction due to severe habitat destruction.

Hamadryad: Newsletter of the Madras Snake Park Trust, 8, 1

Alligator-hunt in Florida
Commercial hunting may seriously jeopardize the survival of Florida’s alligators, according to Dr Archie Carr of the University of Florida. Since 1978, 1,800 alligators have been killed yearly under the Nuisance Alligator Control Program directed by Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. The Commission eranged hunts in 1981 and 1982, when 350 and 379 alligators were killed for commercial gain. Dr Carr believes the hunt will increase the demand for alligator products and thus cause an increase in illegal poaching.

The Florida Naturalist, 56, 1

Live Reptile Trade in Japan
Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC (Japan) reports that the trade in live reptiles is increasing there. Four large pet shops deal solely in reptiles. Although the pet turtle trade has been declining in most developed countries, its expansion in Japan may reverse the trend. Japan also imports, mostly from Thailand, terrapins Cuora amboinensis and Cynemys dentata along with the tortoise Geochelone elongata for use in a variety of medicines as a source of calcium.

Freshwater Chelonian Group Newsle, September 1982

Snake eats boy
MANILA. — A boy, 15, was swallowed by a python he disturbed while searching a mountain cave for bats. Members of the Mangayan tribal settlement killed and sliced open the snake but the boy was dead.
She sues over snake

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A woman has sued the owners of a 6-foot boa constrictor, claiming she fainted when she saw the snake being carried outside a state fair exhibit and then needed medical treatment costing $3,500.

Katy Potter, 60, of Franklin, recently filed suit against The Pet Ark, a pet store in Lincoln. According to the action in Lancaster County Court, Mrs. Potter fainted when she saw the snake in the crowd at the fair in September and as a result suffered acute pulmonary edema, emotional stress and congestive heart failure.

The suit, alleges the owners of The Pet Ark, Gary and Pam Foster, were negligent because they did not tell their employees to keep the snake in a confined area.

Rats! No more snakes on menu

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Restaurants soon will be banned from serving snake, dog meat or earthworm soups in downtown Seoul or near tourist hotels, the city government said Tuesday.

City officials said the measure will take effect Sept. 20 following hearings. It is aimed at sparing tourists from sights such as curdled-up, hissing snakes in shop windows along downtown streets. Shop owners not complying with the ban might have water and electricity cut off.

Garter snakes studied in kidney stone research

Washington, D.C. —UPI—A University of Arizona scientist is studying kidney stones from garter snakes in an effort to find a way to help human beings reduce their chances of developing painful kidney stones, the National Science Foundation said Monday.

The government agency said a snake's kidney could excrete large amounts of uric acid without forming those hard mineral deposits that could block the urinary tract. Kidney stones are formed from uric acid and other substances.

William H. Dantzler is examining nephrons from snake kidneys. The nephron is the filtering unit of a kidney.

Pythons at $50 per

INFLATION is no prophet. Endangered species in Malaysia, survey by Friends of the Earth, shows although black market prices for. animals are rising, sales are still booming.

Many pet shops, according to SAA, not only openly sell protected birds and animals, but also provide restaurants with prestige exotic food. "Monkeys brains and meat, snake soup, tartar and turtle soup, monitor lizard meat or the meats of flying foxes, flying squirrels, bats and deer can be obtained on request," says SAA.

All species have been hit by inflation. In 1975 python cost $1 per metre; today a metre of python will set you back at least $50. Owls have held steady at about $15 apiece, but herons, although still a bargain at $7 each, have gone up from $4 in 1975. Nonetheless, says SAA, "trade in wildlife is as active as ever."

The destruction of rain forests is the biggest threat to Malaysian wildlife. Malaysia's forest reserves, but between 1971 and 1978 these so-called protected areas accounted for more than a quarter of all deforestation. More than 20 Malaysian animals, as well as a number of birds, are, says the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in danger of extinction. Top of the list is the Sumatran rhinoceros. Only 40 are left. There are also fewer than 500 tigers left in peninsular Malaysia.

Records for snakebite

The use of powdered 78 rpm gramophone records against snakebite as described by W. Wilson Mayne (23 June, p 867) seems to be perfectly logical.

The old records are of B. K. E. of Okeetee, a phenol/formaldehyde resin which releases small amounts of formaldehyde, especially when powdered and thus having a large active surface.

Formaldehyde is known to deactivate proteins and peptides, and the snake venoms contain active components of peptide character (both toxins and enzymes).

It would probably be quite easy to develop an efficient antidote against snakebite using a substance that releases formaldehyde in a controlled way. Such an antidote would probably be generally as effective as snakebite antiserum, though not specific.

A piece of cloth soaked with a diluted formaldehyde solution and applied to the (non-inflamed) snakebite wound might probably help as well, as a first measure.

Swante Z. M. Trävénus Persborg, Sweden

NEW SCIENTIST, August 4, 1983
A FIELD GUIDE TO THE SNAKES OF SOUTH VIETNAM. By Simon M. Campden-Main. "1969" [1970], Publ. by Div. Reptiles and Amphibians, U. S. Nat. Mus., Smithsonian Inst., Wash., D. C., v + 114 pp., 1 pl., many text ffigs. Until the publication of this work, a layman desiring to identify a snake encountered in Southeast Asia would have been hard put to do so except with some of the more conspicuous, well-known species. Indeed, even herpetologists had only one up-to-date list of the snake fauna of the region, Taylor's work on Thailand. No generally available, recent field guides to snakes of this region have existed until now.

Following a brief introduction and the acknowledgments is a list of cited South Vietnamese localities with their latitudes and longitudes. Species accounts are arranged alphabetically below the family level, one or two pages per species; the opisthoglyphs are considered together after the other colubrids. Scientific name, author, date, family, and (if applicable) English vernacular name are included as a heading for each account; subspecies are not considered. Below this is an outline sketch of the head and a small outline map of South Vietnam with dots showing general localities of occurrence. The remainder of each account is divided into six headings: Recognition, Description, Color, Habits and Habitat, Locality Records, and Venom and Toxicity. For venomous species, surprisingly little information is presented under Venom and Toxicity, the only mention of treatment being the statement for Trimeresurus albolabris that "several antivenins are available" (p. 99).

The head diagrams are from various sources (some original) and their quality varies greatly. One wonders how useful some of these might be to the non-herpetologist, who may find occasional disagreement between text and figures. For example, the figure of Bungarus flaviceps (p. 89) appears to show a loreal scale present, yet the recognition statement below it states (in capitals) "loreal scale absent." Under Naja naja (p. 110), the term "infralabial" is defined as "the space between the infralabials and the angle of the mouth", while the term "caudal" is defined as "the tail." Nor is the term "cuneate" defined elsewhere.

Scale row formulae given in the standard "23.21-19" fashion, unexplained, may confuse a layman. Typhlops spp., Lycodon fasciatus, Ophogon macrus, and Enhydris inominata are not illustrated, nor is there a map for Typhlops.

In the field, a key is the first aid to identification, yet the key begins on p. 105, following the species accounts; while a plate with six figures illustrating many of the terms encountered in the key is placed before the species accounts. The first couplet of the key asks the user to determine the presence or absence of loreal pits on his snake, but the explanation plate shows only a loreal scale and no pit. The pit, however, is illustrated for the viperids, and in several cases is indicated by an arrow; one of these figures faces the first page of the key. Anal plates are labeled as divided and undivided on the plate, but elsewhere "anal plate entire" is used for the latter. Anal spurs are not illustrated.

This booklet is nicely executed within its limits, with but few typographical errors (Dendrelaphis, p. 26). The sections on "Recognition" are valuable inclusions. Drawings showing midbody pattern would have been a valuable addition, as would some indication of the geographic distribution of each snake throughout (and perhaps beyond) South Vietnam. Some mention of approximate maximum length would have been helpful. Vietnamese vernacular names, if known, likewise would have been useful, especially in a field guide. In spite of these shortcomings, the booklet is a worthwhile endeavor, and will generally fulfill its stated purposes: to "prove useful to those in the field and particularly to members of the medical corps who might be faced with the task of judging the seriousness of a case of snake bite," to "... stimulate an interest in the ophidian fauna of Vietnam,..." and encourage those in the field to collect specimens for American museums" (p. ii). It is gratifying to see something of value result
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