

VIRGINIA is blessed with a spacious and, from any zoological viewpoint, an only partly surveyed area of land and fresh water.

Most of Virginia's native reptiles and amphibians are found in places where they are to be expected. Some are discovered in places where they are not expected at all. A number of quite puzzling range patterns for some of the Virginian varieties are being detected. However, much remains to be learned. Not all results are in. With the help of many field observers, some of the pieces are beginning to fit together, slowly. Much natural history and distributional survey-work remains to be done in VA., by those who are interested.

Over the past 200 years many people, from Mark Catesby (circa 1740's) to Emmett R. Dunn or Raymond L. Ditmars (1920's), have worked on one aspect or other of the herpetology of Virginia. Some efforts were on a very local basis. The more noteworthy of these seemed to be facing burial forever in widely scattered places in the herpetological literature.

In 1958, the VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY (VaHS) was organized to link all who are truly interested in the state's herpetiles: salamanders, toads, frogs, treefrogs, turtles, lizards, snakes.

The VaHS offers an opportunity and a challenge to learn more about amphibians and reptiles and to contribute to scientific knowledge.

The society has 12 goals:

- (1) Encourage study of Virginian reptiles and amphibians;
- (2) Improve and verify collecting records;
- (3) Make county surveys and exchange factual information;
- (4) Place any salvaged specimens in scientific public collections;
- (5) Maintain distribution maps (for the Virginia Herpetological Survey);
- (6) Compile lists of the preserved specimens, collected in VA or on its borders, that are now held in scientific institutions;

- (7) Broaden public understanding of reptiles and amphibians;
- (8) Increase accuracy in news items on reptiles and amphibians through co-operation with news media representatives;
- (9) Conserve rare or endangered species and their habitats * * discourage the unreasoned careless or needless handling of poisonous snakes, and risk-taking, * * * put potential dangers in perspective in order to dispel misplaced fears;
- (10) Publish field collecting notes and observations for permanent record purposes;
- (11) Build a color slide collection: amphibians and reptiles representing Virginian species or subspecies; and,
- (12) Support meetings in one or two sections of the state each spring and fall, if possible.

VaHS emphasis is on the herpetology of Virginia.

(Continued on next page.)

VaHS BULLETIN is a newsletter appearing at least four times a year. Its pages are open for articles or comment on topics related to Virginian herpetology. The principal activity is the state survey of reptiles and amphibians.

VaHS BULLETIN is sent free of cost to Virginia's university and college biology, zoology, and natural science departments. Science and biology teachers --high school or junior high-- may receive the VaHS BULLETIN with membership at \$1 yearly.

Virginia Herpetological Society (VaHS) provides interested people with general or specific facts on amphibians and reptiles that are native to this state. VaHS members also aid in the identification of those varieties that have been brought into VA from other areas and then released; an inhumane act.

VaHS emphasis is on the herpetology of Virginia, while recognizing the fact that animals pay little attention to political or other boundaries.

While individual members' interests are likely to be broader, the society must restrict its efforts. It has limited finances and can only reach its 12 objectives if its energies are kept strongly focused. Therefore, VaHS cannot devote publication space, or staff time, to the non-native or exotic species.

Those who seek facts on foreign herpetiles are referred to publications of the three national groups: American Society of Ichthyology & Herpetology (ASIH) COPEIA; Herpetologists' League, HERPETOLOGICA; and, the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, The Journal of Herpetology.

Others give space to the tropical herpetofauna. VaHS is the only society that covers VA statewide.

Support the VaHS program.

VaHS is a founding member of the Eastern Seaboard Herpetological League -- (ESHL). VaHS members are encouraged to attend all ESHL meetings. Members of ESHL see VaHS BULLETINS by exchange agreement.

Directorate: Since the early days of VaHS, the statewide scope and the scientific orientation of the society have been reinforced. VaHS has been provided with a board of directors comprising able herpetologists, vertebrate zoologists and ecologists on the faculties of most VA colleges and universities, or affiliated with scientific institutions.

The VaHS directorate provides needed and valuable scientific guidance.

VaHS meetings: The VaHS is not meeting-oriented. The state is too big, and travel distances too vast to permit reliance upon a general annual meeting or monthly meetings. So the VaHS has resorted to an occasional multi-county meeting. Among the most successful were those at: Roanoke College, Salem, VA; Virginia Commonwealth U., Richmond, VA; Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA; and at Lynchburg College. Questions on VaHS meeting programs should be raised with:

Mr. Michael J. Clifford,
VaHS Meeting Coordinator,
P.O. Box #311, Amelia, VA,
23002

VaHS BULLETIN is the bond that links the membership. The bulletin's pages are open to any member for contributions on anything related to VA herpetology. Authors are given credit for articles or items appearing in the bulletins. It is a mimeographed newsletter on 8 1/2" X 14" sheets (legal size). These can be trimmed to 8 1/2" X 11" and hole-punched to fit a normal three-ring binder.

Special bulletins are two issues in one. These may contain black and white line drawings, range maps, and "keys" to varieties described in the text. At least 3 special issues have been produced to the present time. Information is being updated that was carried in: "Snakes of VA" (1964), "Turtles-" (1968), and "Lizards of VA" (1972). Your suggestions, notes, and collecting records, or other data can help to improve this effort. You assist VaHS when you make comments, or supply data. (See final paragraph, p.3.)

MEMBERSHIP: The society has a membership of 300+. Of these, 250+ reside in VA. About 90 are "out-of-state" members. Members live in most of the 96 VA counties and near its colleges and universities. A number of science teachers in the VA secondary school system are VaHS members as are many of their students.

Continued on the next page.

Qualifications: A serious (more than just casual) interest in Virginia's amphibians and reptiles is the only membership qualification. An effort is made to bring a copy of VaHS BULLETIN to the attention of occupational groups which may contain potential VaHS members.

VaHS is not seeking a big out-of-state membership. VaHS welcomes as members those scientists and any others who are working on reptilians and amphibians which range into Virginia.

Honorary membership is extended to a few people in recognition of their contributions to herpetology. High school biology and science teachers are sent sample copies of the VaHS BULLETIN, free of charge, to maintain awareness of VaHS among the science teachers. An occasional bulletin is sent to those among the medical, dental, veterinary, and related (paramedical) groups when we have any indication of their interest. Selected bulletins containing such items as may interest any special groups are mailed to VA addresses on file.

Full-time and part-time naturalists and leaders of outdoor groups have been canvassed to obtain new members among these people. A seasonal effort is made to reach all summer camp, National or

Copy of VaHS Constitution is available upon request.

State Park Naturalists. County or community nature centers are placed on the VaHS mailing list so that they may have copies for reference. This program has met with some success.

VaHS BULLETIN is mailed as the publication of a non-profit organization and must comply with U.S. Postal regulations. This is a privilege that is extended to organizations engaged in scientific and educational efforts. It is not extended to clubs or hobby groups. In order to keep this privilege, VaHS must remain a non-profit, science-oriented research-related effort.

SUPPORT: Contributions to the VaHS program are used to defray the expenses of reproducing the bulletin and for its mailing. The membership contributes to the society's program and supports distribution of the bulletin to a number of prospective members. VaHS will add addresses & names of people who should be on the mailing lists.

There are no dues. Annual support is encouraged at the following rates:

Scientists, faculty, (biology, natural science, or general science) teachers, and public libraries; \$1

VA residents: (other than the above) or away at college or in service; \$2

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Non-resident member: i.e. out-of-state (except any of the above); \$3

Overseas members: covers cost of mailing; \$5

Contributions in support are deposited in the bank by the VaHS Treasurer and all expenditures for VaHS purposes must have his approval. Contributions, or letters on matters relating to support, should be sent to:

Mr. Louis C. Baker, (BIOL)
VaHS Treasurer (Science)
Yorktown High School (ARL)
5201 North 28th Street
Arlington, VA 22207

Annual support credit can be given in recognition of the number of color slides (2" X 2") accepted for permanent VaHS record at the rate of 35 cents a slide. To qualify, the slides must be sent to PO Box #1376, Leesburg, VA., for notation on the VaHS distribution maps. Each contributor will be given credit by name on records maintained by the VaHS. The Herpetological Survey slide file is being held, for the present, at the Loudoun Heights, VA address. Such slides will become the state's permanent reference file located at a facility to be designated. All correspondence on any items for VaHS BULLETIN-- or herpetological survey, should be sent to:
Mr. Franklin J. Tobey, Jr.
Editor, VaHS BULLETIN
P.O. Box #1376
Leesburg, VA 22075



UNIV. of VA. OFFERS 1978 GRADUATE COURSES AT MTN. LAKE BIOLOGICAL STATION

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA... offers the following 1978 graduate courses in biology this summer at the Mountain Lake Biological Station, Pembroke, VA. There are four Mountain Lake fellowships of \$200 each, available. These

fellowships may not be held concurrently with any other stipend from the Mtn. Lake Biol. Sta.

Virginia, Charlottesville. Applications for these awards should be sent to:

1978 SUMMER COURSES SUBJECT

The recipients are chosen by the research and award committee of the Department of Biology, Univ. of

The Director, Mountain Lake Biological Station, University of Virginia, Gilmer Hall, Charlottesville, VA 22903 -Dr. J. J. Murray, -Jr. **

FIRST TERM:

- Principles of Ecology
Introduction to Evolution
Pteridology
HERPETOLOGY

AT MLBS LISTED BELOW: INSTRUCTORS

JUNE 11 through JULY 15:

- Dr. William Odum
Dr. Elizabeth B. Conant
Dr. Donald R. Farrar **
Dr. Harry G.M. Jopson

INSTRUCTORS' AFFILIATIONS

- University of Virginia
University of Virginia
Iowa State University
Bridgewater College, VA

SECOND TERM:

- Ecological Genetics
Taxonomy of Seed Plants
Invertebrate Zoology
Mammalogy

JULY 16 through AUGUST 19:

- Dr. Janis Antonovics
Dr. Carl S. Keener
Dr. Clifford Johnson *
Dr. Charles O. Handley

- Duke University, N.C.
Pennsylvania State Univ.
University of Florida
U.S. National Museum of Natural History, D.C.

"SKILPOT"

A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

When I was a child living in Clifton Forge, VA, the name by which I learned Chrysemys picta, painted turtle, was "skilpot". This fact surfaced in my consciousness, recently, for no apparent reason. But, on reflection, I was amazed to realize that I had never heard it used subsequently. Standard turtle books are mostly silent on the point of folk names, even Webster's Unabridged Dictionary

omits the word. Turning to other sources available at Radford College, I found the word listed in The Century Dictionary, 1889, vol. 5, p. 5671: "Skilpot. The slider, or red-bellied terrapin." In a modified form it occurs also in the Oxford English Dictionary, 1933, vol. IX, p. 141: "Skillypot, Skilpot. U.S. /ad Du. schildpad, turtle / . The slider, or red-bellied terrapin."

originated among the Dutch settlers around New York City. Anglo-Saxon tongues would unquestionably convert schilpad to skilpot. Perhaps the dictionaries cited may have erred in attributing it to a single species.

The suggested derivation seems plausible enough, and, presumably, must have

What information can VaHS members provide on local use of this quaint word ?

(Dr.) Richard L. Hoffman **
Radford College
Dep't of Biology
Radford, VA 24141
Comments welcomed.

THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY HERPETOLOGICAL COLLECTION

The herpetological collection housed in the Vertebrate Museum of the Department of Biology, VA Commonwealth University, currently contains over 1,400 lots which include more than 3,000 specimens. This collection may be the fastest growing assemblage of modern records in the state. It was founded in 1972, and has grown to its present size in only five years. (See VaHS BULLETIN No. 72.)

The collection, created by Dr. Charles R. Blem with the help of many VCU undergraduate and graduate students, contains several hundred county records for Virginia and specimens from twelve other states. Some of the Virginia records represent the known northern edge of the ranges for species such as the cottonmouth, barking treefrog, amphiuma, southern cricket frog, and others. Specimens of central Virginia snakes are fairly well represented. The collection contains the largest assemblage of E. cottonmouths anywhere.

Current projects involving this collection cover a survey of distributional records of Coastal Plain fauna, an investigation of the ecology and morphometrics (measurement of the form and structure) of the cottonmouths in VA

and studies of the northern and southern cricket frogs (Acris gryllus and A. crepitans) in their zone of sympatry (the overlapping portion of their ranges).

Six publications dealing with these and other herpetological projects are now in press or in final stages of preparation.

The VCU museum has a modest study area, and if no conflicts arise with current projects, specimens are available for study or loan to qualified persons upon application to:

(Dr.) Charles R. Blem Virginia Commonwealth University, Academic Div., Department of Biology, Richmond, VA 23284

AREA OF FROG'S BRAIN THAT DISTINGUISHES OWN SPECIES' MATING CALLS PINPOINTED

For 20 years, Cornell University researchers have been looking for a region of the frog brain that recognizes the mating call of its own species, distinguishing it from other species' mating calls in a mixed chorus in a pond, pool, or swamp.

The annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, at Anaheim, CA, was told that scientists have now

found the region in the frog brain that distinguishes the specific call. A report was carried in SCIENCE NEWS 19 Nov. 1977 Vol. 112, No.22, p.344.

The bullfrog's inner ear has two structures sensitive to different ranges of sound frequencies. Of the frog's repertoire, only the mating call will simultaneously stimulate the two inner ear structures. Therefore, any mating call detector in the brain must receive input from both structures.

Robert R. Capranica and co-workers used a sound synthesizer that could mimic natural frog calls. They probed the brain, level by level, looking for mating call detectors. In anesthetized frogs they found four orders of sound processing, but no center for the mating call. However, Ms. Karen Mudry recorded electrical activity in the thalamus of the conscious bullfrog and found an area that responds to the simultaneous high and low frequencies of the mating call. That fifth order response was not previously detected because it does not work when the bullfrog has been anesthetized.

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APPLICATION FOR VaHS MEMBERSHIP -- INTRODUCTORY (1978) VaHS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL (19__)

(name) (address) (p.o.) (county) VIRGINIA

If free city give nearest county.

ZIP CODE

(title) Dr.Mr.Mrs. Ms. (other) (occupation)

VaHS Treasurer notes:

Rec'd \$ Card sent with #

tel: (703) (804) (circle one)

age: under 18 over (circle one)

Mail to: Mr. Louis C. Baker YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL 5201 N. 28th Street ARLINGTON, VA 22207

Enclose with your check for VaHS support; 3" X 5" card for VaHS file

- (cut for your records)
Place stub in your tax files for future use.
Contributed to VaHS Program \$
check no.
date: mo/day/19
Use check, money order, PLEASE DON'T MAIL CASH
Keep with your personal records: donations, non-profit organization, science research.
THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT FOR VaHS PROGRAM

VA. YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM FOR 1978

The Virginia Youth Conservation Corps program is a work-study conservation education and recreation opportunity for those between ages 15 and 18.

Enrollees are paid a wage (minimum) for 30 hours of work per week. Each participant receives 10 hrs. of environmental education a week.

The camps are sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the VA Division of State Parks, and are held for 7 to 8 weeks, June to August. Projects include construction of nature trails, building

foot bridges, recreation and picnic area development, tree and shrubbery planting, land and water animal habitat improvement, stone wall and step construction, split rail and fence repairs, and litter retrieval.

In 1977, there were 15 non-resident camps (where students live at home and commute to camp weekdays); there were 18 residential camps where students live in tents, trailers, local college dormitories, and cabins for the 7-8 weeks.

Applications for the 1978 program may be obtained by writing or calling Mr.

Franklin D. Kizer, Science Supervisor, Dep't of Education, P.O. Box 6Q, Richmond, VA 23216. (Phone): 804/786-2672; or Rt.#2, Box 637, Lancaster, VA 22503 (tel.)804/462-7371.

VaHS cooperates with the biologists, naturalists, or science teacher staff at the YCC Camps through the camp directors under a plan working with some success during the past 2 camping seasons.

Reports on reptile and amphibian life observed appear in VaHS BULLETIN when made available by the student participant, directly, or through the camp director.

PLEASE check the bulletin ADDRESS LABEL (below) IS IT CORRECT IN ALL DETAIL?

Let the editor know if... there are corrections now rather than later. It'll save money (postage), and

will improve the forthcoming VaHS membership roster.

VaHS

VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN Coordinator, P.O. Box #1376 LEESBURG, VA 22075

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RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED CORRECTED ADDRESS REQUESTED

VaHS TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY (1958 - 1978)

#85

*CLIFFORD, Mr. Michael J. Extension Agent, Box 311 AMELIA, VA 23002 (AMIA)