



ALASKA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Photos by Joshua Ream

Boreal Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) often referred to as the Western Toad but distinguished by it's northern range.

First Annual AHS Conference - Oct 27th

The First Annual AHS Conference is set to take place on Saturday October 27, 2012 from 9:00am to 1:00pm at the following locations via video teleconference (see tentative schedule on page 4):

UAA (Consortium Library, RM 307)

UAF (Oneil Building, RM 214)

UAS (Lena Point Fisheries Bldg, RM 103)

We have many exciting events and speakers planned for our first annual conference. Registration is \$20.00 and is available on our website (www.akherpsociety.org). Our officers will be available at each location to answer any questions you may have and to assist you in getting involved with Herps in Alaska!

MISSION STATEMENT

The Alaska Herpetological Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of Herpetology in the State of Alaska. Our mission is to promote sound research and management of amphibians and reptiles in the North, **to foster responsible pet ownership and*** to provide opportunities in outreach, education, and citizen science for individuals who are interested in these species.

** Proposed change to be voted on at the First Annual Meeting.*

From the Desks of the AHS Staff:

President's Corner:



It has been several months since our last newsletter and much has happened in the interim! I am excited to report that our organization has been growing slowly but surely in terms of membership, finances, influence and activity. Now that the busy summer months are over (Anchorage by the way was rated in the top 5 worst summers by the Weather Channel), our officers are ready to get back to work with the business of AHS. We hope to expand membership by leaps and bounds, especially among students and members of the public who share an interest in the amphibians and reptiles of the north.

I am personally excited for our first annual meeting on October 27th. Though it will be relatively small and informal, it will be an excellent opportunity for us to come together, to learn about some of the herp work being conducted in the state, to set an agenda for the organization moving forward and to make some really great friends with similar interests. Building a community of active herpers and hobbyists is really the first step to advancing the herpetological discipline and has been our intention all along.

AHS has been expanding its partnerships, programs and activities! I am eager for the launch of our educational campaign directed at pet stores, pet owners and teachers across the state. I truly believe that this initiative will have wide reaching,

positive implications for our amphibians and reptiles. In addition, our participation in the Alaska Bird Conference and the Alaska Museum of Natural History's Icky Squishy Goopy Halloween event are exciting opportunities to promote herpetology!

As we move forward I want to invite all of you to take an active role in AHS. This organization is only as strong and active as its members. Your needs and aspirations are important to us and we hope that you will help us to make this organization a success. As our amphibian friends slow down for the winter, lets continue to be active for their sake.

Joshua Ream
President - AHS

Vice President's Corner:



I am excited about the first annual AHS meeting and the opportunity to meet fellow herpetologists from around the state. As a member of AHS, I hope for more growth within our group with

members who share a common interest in amphibians. I also hope for AHS to reach out to all audiences from youth to retired biologists. I would love to pursue outreach in village communities as a number of native cultures identify closely with amphibians. I am currently tackling a degree in Environmental Education and Interpretation and search for any opportunity to help educate the Alaskan community on the

subject of herpetology, native amphibians found in the state, and other relevant topics. If you share a similar interest and have any ideas you would like to share or are aware of any upcoming events where AHS can make its presence, please feel free to contact me or any other member of this group.

Allyssa Gabriel
Vice President - AHS

Secretary's Corner:



This has been an exceptional year for AHS and herps in the state of Alaska! Our society has grown and already done so much for the herps that we love over the

months since our very first meeting. Looking forward, we need your help to recruit new members, reach out to your local pet stores, and get out there and have some fun!

Over the winter I will be fine tuning some of our species specific pamphlets and adding the non-native species pamphlets. If you have an idea for something

you'd like to see, please let me know.

If you need a new membership card, copies of pamphlets, or docs from our site, just drop me an e-mail, or contact any of us for help! Thanks for your support!

Greg Cazemier
Secretary - AHS

Treasurer's Corner:



It feels good to be back in the world of academia after spending the summer herping on the Kenai

Peninsula. This past summer I spent interning with the Fish & Wildlife Service on a Wood Frog project on the Kenai Peninsula,

looking at frog abnormalities within proximity to the road systems. I really enjoyed being a part of this project because it gave me a chance to network and connect with people who share similar interests in herpetology. Working closely with fellow herpers allowed me to spread the word about the AHS mission which will hopefully expand membership. I encourage all members to continue to spread

the word about AHS and its mission so AHS can grow and provide more services. Please visit <http://joewmorris.wordpress.com/> for more information and pictures about my adventures this summer working with Wood Frogs.

Happy Herping!

Joseph W. Morris
Treasurer - AHS

Amphibian Service Learning Update

The Alaska Herpetological Society (AHS) has been involved in an amphibian-oriented service-learning project with five rural schools in southeast Alaska. This partnership with the SYSTEMS (Say Yes to STEM in Schools) program has allowed us to reach out to rural communities to promote herpetological education and the submission of citizen scientist observational data. We are hoping to gradually expand the breath and depth of this program over the upcoming years in order to make it a valuable tool for science classrooms across the state.

While AHS made it to the final round of competition for the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund grant to support this program, limited funds and competitive competition unfortunately beat us in this first attempt. We plan to continue to seek funding to

support this program from various sources over the upcoming years. Donations from individuals and private industry are always welcome and we can provide the necessary documentation to prove program validity.

Moving forward with the program we are going to be developing specific curriculum materials for teachers to use in the classroom



Photo by Joshua Ream

throughout the winter months. We are planning to promote student submissions of observational data through our website and through our EpiCollect software next spring when amphibians emerge from their winter hibernacula. If financial support permits, we will travel to our partner schools to give student lectures and to lead experiential field experiences.

AHS is hoping to include our partner schools in Craig, Hydaburg, Klawock, Metlakatla and Wrangell in our educational campaign too by having participating classrooms sign our teacher pledge and add their schools to our AHS Sponsored Classrooms list. We firmly believe that responsible and ethical ownership of amphibians and reptiles as pets and educational tools can help to promote respect for wildlife. Together we can instill a love for science and wildlife in today's youth and tomorrow's leaders.

If your students or school would like to get involved with our program, please visit our website and contact one of our officers. In addition, if you would like to lend your support either financially or as a volunteer, we would truly appreciate your assistance. Thank-you!



Photo by Joshua Ream

AHS FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: OCTOBER 27, 2012 9:00AM-1:00PM

9:00 AM	Welcome From the President, Officer and Member Introductions
9:15 AM	Overview of AHS and Alaskan Herpetofauna, <i>Joshua Ream, President of AHS</i>
9:30 AM	Keynote Lecture - Some new species are found, but they are endangered too: A selective 'show and tell' of Amphibians and Reptiles of the World, <i>Dr. Falk Huettmann, Assistant Professor in Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
10:15 AM	BREAK
10:30 AM	Lecture - Overwintering of Wood Frogs in Interior Alaska, <i>Dr. Brian Barnes, Director of Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
10:50 AM	Lecture - Wood Frog Parasite Freeze Tolerance, <i>Don Larson, M.S. Student in Biology and Wildlife at the University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
11:10 AM	Lecture - Amphibians in Stikine Kiks.adi culture and the ability of Indigenous Knowledge to inform the field of Herpetology, <i>Joshua Ream, Ph.D Student in Interdisciplinary Herpetology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
11:30 AM	Lecture - Herpetoculture in Alaska, <i>Melissa Walker, President and Founder of Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society</i>
11:50 AM	BREAK
12:00 PM	BUSINESS MEETING

AHS CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER Falk Huettmann

AHS is very excited and grateful to Dr. Falk Huettmann for taking the time out of his busy schedule to present: "Some new species are found, but they are endangered too: A selective 'show and tell' of Amphibians and Reptiles of the World" at our first annual conference.

Dr. Huettmann studied Forstwissenschaft at the Universities of Goettingen, Freiburg/NISK-Norway and Munich, where he graduated with a German Diploma in

Forestry. He received a Robert-Schuman Scholarship from the European Parliament and worked for a Conservation NGO in Brussels. After some time traveling and working in Africa, Russia, Europe and other locations on wildlife, conservation and computer topics, he did his PhD in Eastern Canada on GIS and Pelagic Seabird Distributions in the Atlantic and Arctic. He then worked for two years at the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver on Marbled Murrelets and Old-Growth Forests in British Columbia. In 2002 Falk became a Killam PostDoc Fellow with the Geography Department of University of Calgary where he

worked on deriving Future Landscape Model Scenarios for Grizzly Bears in the Rocky Mountains using Remote Sensing approaches. From 2003 onwards Falk now works as an Assistant Professor with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks where he runs various wildlife and habitat research projects in his EWHALE lab. Falk has received several international research awards and is currently part of the NCEAS Alternative Modeling Methods Working Group in St. Barbara, California. Besides modeling, some of his research interests deal with the Russian Far East and with Tropical Ecology.

Biography borrowed from users.iab.edu/~falk_huettmann/fac/scv.html



UPCOMING EVENTS

We have many exciting events in the near future with AHS, if you have ideas for an event that you would like to see, please let us know. Contact information and updated event information is available on our website: www.akherpsociety.org

Alaska Bird Conference

AHS will be operating an informational table at the Alaska Bird Conference banquet in Anchorage on Tuesday October 9th from 4:30PM to 8:00PM. Please consider helping us to man the table!

Icky Squishy Goey Halloween Event at Alaska Museum of Natural History

AHS will be operating a herp table at this event on Friday October 26th from 10AM to 5PM and on Saturday October 27th from 2PM to 5PM (after our meeting). Our table will have rubber snakes/lizards/frogs, plastic take home frog toys, frog ornaments, tapioca pudding simulating frog eggs and scary frog chorus music! Kermit will be making an appearance in costume too. Please consider helping with this event by manning the table, providing herp related table decorations or just attending the event with your child!

Proposed Bylaw Revisions: Bylaw Revision Article II Section 2

ADD: Clause F: To encourage responsible and informed herpetoculture.

ADD: Clause G: To foster a community of individuals interested in amphibians and reptiles, both in the wild and as pets.

This proposed bylaw revision is being posted in accordance with current bylaws which require three days due notice before a vote. The revisions will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on October 27, 2012.

GOT HERP PHOTOS!? WANT TO GET PUBLISHED?



Photo by Joshua Ream

Do you have pictures of herps!? Would you like to be in the next newsletter?

If you have pictures of amphibians and reptiles that you have taken, we would love to see them. Please consider submitting them to be used in our next newsletter with a small article with the what/when/where. We look forward to hearing from you. Photos can be submitted to: jtream@alaska.edu.

Pet Store Campaign

In coordination with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society (MSHS), the Alaska Herpetological Society (AHS) is launching a major educational campaign to promote the responsible and ethical ownership of herpetofauna as pets in Alaska. The need for this has arisen from several reports over the past few years of pet stores and others importing and selling non-native potentially invasive amphibians as pets (specifically the American Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeianus*) and the Pacific Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) in Alaska. Only ornamental species that do not pose a threat to Alaska's native wildlife may be legally imported and only after a Fish Resource Permit from ADF&G and supplier health certificate approved by the Alaska Fish Pathologist have been obtained. In each instance, the violations appear to have occurred due to ignorance rather than malicious intent. Our partners agree that education rather than penalization is the first step to confronting this situation!

The import of non-native species is not the only problem as there are other serious threats that we hope to confront. We hope to encourage pet owners themselves to keep their pets for their entire lives. If they must be gotten rid of, responsible adopting families should be identified or the animals should be turned over to pet stores / shelters / wildlife officials. As a last resort pets should be humanely euthanized but never released. It is illegal to collect wild amphibians or reptiles as pets or to move them from place to place on the landscape. Amphibians are struggling worldwide and removing individuals from breeding

populations is harmful. Moving them from place to place alters population genetics and often results in disease transmission. Yet another threat is the use of amphibians in the classroom. While tadpoles and frogs can be valuable educational tools, these should not be taken to/from the wild or released into the wild. One Alaska invasive, the Red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) has already established a viable population in the state for this very reason.

These are very real threats to Alaska's amphibians and are issues that AHS feels can be mitigated through education. We have launched a page on our site (<http://www.akherpsociety.org/herpsaspets.htm>) with additional details and explanations. We will soon be launching our pet store pledge campaign that helps us to identify "AHS Sponsored Pet Stores" which will also be published on our site. The pledge is as follows:

"Our pet store is committed to responsible and ethical ownership of amphibians and reptiles as pets. We comply with all state and federal laws as they pertain to the import and sale of these species. For amphibians, only oriental species that do not pose a threat to Alaska's native amphibians are sold. We maintain all necessary permits from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, including a Fish Resource Permit and an approved Certificate of Health from the state Fish Pathologist as required."

"In addition to regulatory compliance, this store is dedicated to educating our customers on proper in-home care of amphibians and reptiles. We support efforts to keep non-native species from being released and to keep native species from being brought into the home or moved from place to place on the landscape. We recognize that invasive species and disease transmission are real threats to the

natural ecosystem. Furthermore, we recognize too that pet ownership is an excellent educational tool that can promote knowledge and respect for wildlife."

An informational letter will be sent to all known Alaskan Pet Stores. This will include an informational brochure developed jointly by ADF&G and AHS. We want to reiterate that this campaign is educational only and does not aim to harm the pet industry in any way. In fact, we hope to partner with the pet industry to promote responsible pet ownership! The MSHS is looking at the possibility of providing herpetile pet care education workshops at local pet stores too!

The educational campaign will eventually be expanded to include a husbandry pledge and teacher pledge. With a lot of work, a bit of luck and some help, we can make education work for the conservation of the species we love as herpers. AHS recognizes captive rearing as an important educational tool that helps to foster respect for science and wildlife. Lets work together to do this the right way!

Please visit our website for more information and to offer your insight and assistance in this critical venture!

Happy Herping!



Photo by Joshua Ream



Photos by Joshua Ream

STIKINE RESEARCH UPDATE

By Joshua Ream

I am excited to report that my research within the Stikine Le-Conte Wilderness of Southeast Alaska has progressed substantially over the past several months. In May of this year I had the opportunity to conduct a systematic inventory of the amphibians along the U.S. portion of the Stikine River including several sites that have not been sampled in more than twenty years. I was also able to visit sites that have been touted by local knowledge as amphibian hotspots and to validate reports of several species in these areas.

During this adventure I documented, with the assistance of my field assistant Seth Perry, all of Alaska's known native amphibian species except for the Northwestern Salamander, which may or may not be present in this region. Spring was rather late on the Stikine and the river levels were low for the time of year, making travel and sampling quite difficult. Still, I was able to substantiate many local knowledge reports while adding novel vouchered information to science. Several key findings include:

- The persistence of Long-toed Salamanders at Twin Lakes where the species was suspected to be extirpated.
- New island occurrences for Long-toed Salamanders.

- Rough-skinned Newt breeding associations with geothermal pools.
- Early and increased amphibian productivity at Shake's Hot Springs.
- Boreal Toad breeding pools on tidal flood plains.
- Depressed amphibian populations at several localities on Mitkof Island where local knowledge has suggested past productivity.
- Columbia Spotted Frog validation on Wrangell Island.

Photographic vouchers and breeding chorus recordings were collected at a multitude of locations



Photo by Joshua Ream

to support this work. Data compilation, analysis and publication are currently in progress. Thanks to everyone who has supported this work along the way!



INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

Unknown Indian school children dressed in grandfather's blanket, Wrangell, AK in February of 1911. Part of the Walter and Lillian Phillips Photograph Collection. Notice the large frog on the blanket in the background. This Tlingit crest is almost certainly a Boreal Toad. Notice the broad shape, distinctive dorsal stripe, and spots representing warts. Borrowed with permission from the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Accessed through the Alaska Digital Archives.

"Walter and Lillian Phillips Photograph Collection, 1985-72-7, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks"

A FEW ALASKAN SPECIES

Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*)



Photo by Joshua Ream

Long-toed Salamanders are found in a variety of habitats but are usually not very far from a water source. Adults spend most of their lives underground except when migrating to and from breeding sites. They are thought to be poor burrowers and may generally depend on underground spaces between rocks, roots, rotting wood and tunnels built by other animals. While active on the surface in the spring they seek refuge under decaying logs, bark, rocks and other structures to maintain moisture. Adults are terrestrial and almost exclusively nocturnal. A long fourth toe on the rear feet gives this salamander species its name.

Rough-skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*)



Photo by Joshua Ream

The most aquatic newt! This animal is found in spruce and hemlock forests around ponds or lakes, muskegs, and slow moving streams that have large amounts of vegetation. In Alaska they often inhabit coastal forests. These animals are diurnal - they are most active during the day. The metamorphosis from larvae to adult is thought to take two years in Alaska. They will often lift their head and tail when they feel threatened. Among the most notable characteristics in adults is the red/orange belly (pictured left). Though they are safe to handle, be sure to wash your hands afterward and NEVER eat them! They are extremely toxic and in fact, among the most toxic animals alive!

Columbia Spotted Frog (*Rana luteiventris*)



Photo by Joshua Ream

Seldom found away from permanent rivers, lakes, ponds, muskegs, or streams; often in vegetation surrounding bodies of water and coastal forests. Males call on warm, clear days from above and rarely under water. Their voice is a short series of low pitched, quiet grunts and drones. Distinguished from the introduced Red-legged Frog by its shorter legs, greater toe webbing, rougher skin, upturned rather than out-turned eyes, shorter jaw stripe, and lack of mottling on the groin. They have been found 100 meters above the valley floor of the Stikine River in a muskeg pond. They commonly overwinter underwater in mud and under stream banks.

WORDS FROM OUR PARTNERS



Photo by Melissa J. Walker

The Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society (MSHS) is continuing to organize, and grow! We have chapters in Fairbanks, and Anchorage, and will hopefully be adding new chapters in other areas quickly. Our main goal will be to establish

a state-wide support, education, advocacy, and rescue network for all amphibians, and reptiles within the state of Alaska.

As an organization we are active with:

- The National Herpetological Congress (NHC),
- Partnered with the Alaska Herpetological Society (AHS),
- Building relationships with the Alaska Zoo, professionals across the state from city to state levels, and private Alaskan breeders of reptiles, and amphibians,
- Continuing to build connections with other branches of the regional reptile community including the Pacific Northwest Herpetological Society, the Canadian reptile community, and many others.

Our founders are members of AHS, the United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK), and active contributors to not only the local herpetoculture community, but the national, and international communities as well, including being advocates of, and donors to reptile, and amphibian conservation efforts.

We are working to obtain our non-profit status, any/all licenses that will apply to our organization, establish officers, and continue to increase our membership. We are currently seeking people who are:

- Ready to have fun!
- Interested in being a part of an Alaskan herpetological/herpetoculture society.
- Currently keeping, or have previously kept reptiles and amphibians.
- Those in professional fields related to herpetology/herpetoculture (biologists, breeders, authors, suppliers, etc.).

We do not charge a membership fee to join. We encourage our members to join AHS, and USARK as well. Our meetings will begin shortly after we are able to establish our officers, and will include a children's chapter for ages 0-15 (16 & older will be included in our general membership). We are

also seeking volunteers, and sponsors who can assist us on various levels as we grow into a statewide organization.

Many of our future activities will include:

- Joint participation in AHS events,
- Citizen Science efforts such as the Alaska Wood Frog Monitoring Project,
- Field herping outings (observational/photographic only in accordance with Alaskan laws regarding our native amphibians),
- Educational presentations at various venues for all ages on a wide range of issues (showing animals, addressing fears of/negative stereotypes surrounding reptiles/amphibians, individual species information/discoveries, current topics of interest within herpetology/herpetoculture, leaders of herpetology/herpetoculture, husbandry practices including troubleshooting common problems, introduction to reptiles/amphibians as pets, conservation topics, disaster planning, protecting our native amphibian species, understanding laws regarding captive keeping, etc.),
- Advocacy campaigns,
- Establishing a Reptile Rescue Fund & Food Bank (for rescues, and reptiles that are endanger of being displaced due to sudden income loss/changes faced by their keepers),
- Volunteer crafting/art creation groups to raise funds for local, national, and international initiatives, and
- Hosting regular meetings to encourage fellowship, community participation, awareness, education, activism, and fun.
- As we grow, and gain sponsors to assist our efforts, we look forward to holding annual trips for our members, special fundraiser events, and being a part of conferences/expos/other events as possible.

If you would like more information, or wish to join the Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society, please respond to this with your contact information: name, mailing address, email address, and phone number (This information is being collected for the sole purpose of establishing The Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society. All information submitted accordingly will be kept strictly confidential, will never be resold, redistributed outside of The Midnight Sun Herpetoculture Society, etc.).

Mrs. Melissa J. Walker, Founder
MSHS, Fairbanks Chapter
chickadeecabin@yahoo.com

AHS Logo



The official logo of the Alaska Herpetological Society (AHS) was designed by Katie Bode and features the Rough-skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*), the Wood Frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) and the Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*). The Wood Frog was chosen as this species occurs throughout most of Alaska, exhibits incredible freeze tolerance and is widely known to our citizens. The Rough-skinned Newt is our salamander representative on the logo and is found commonly in southern Southeast Alaska. This species exhibits a brilliant orange / red stomach that warns predators of their toxicity. The Garter Snake is our lone reptilian representative on the logo and is considered enigmatic in Alaska. While there are no vouchers of natural occurrence yet for this species, this snake also represents our commitment to the needs and concerns of those who enjoy herpetofauna as pets in their homes. The green background of the logo represents our commitment to responsible stewardship and conservation while the white AHS letters represent institutional research. The silhouette of Alaska represents our dedication to the state and its citizens as well as the promotion of citizen science and education. Lastly, the logo is set within a crest which signifies our sense of community and shared interests.

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