



New Mexico Herpetological Society

Jan-May 2008 Newsletter

Volume 42 (1)

NMHS Annual Memorial Weekend Field Trip Head of the Ditch Campground Catron Co., N.M. 23 – 26 May 2008



Head of the Ditch Campground is located in a scenic valley approximately 1.5 miles west of historic Luna, New Mexico, on US Highway 180. The campground is marked with a blue campground sign, **not** with a Forest Service campground sign. Water from the San Francisco River that runs through the campground is used for irrigation in Luna Valley. The campground is located at the head of the irrigation ditch, which gives Head of the Ditch Campground its name. The campground has a large open area and shady campsites with pine, oak, cottonwood, and willow trees.

Ted Brown or Scott Bulgrin will set up camp on Friday afternoon, the 23rd. They will display the NMHS banners, so arriving members can easily spot our area. Despite some recent scattered thunderstorms it has been quite dry in southern New Mexico, so we should plan on a no open fire campground. Coleman stoves may be the way to go.



DIRECTIONS TO HEAD OF THE DITCH CAMPGROUND:

From the Big-I in Albuquerque, drive SOUTH on I-25 about 75 miles to Socorro, exiting at either the north or south end of town. You may wish to fill your gas tank here as prices will be 30-35¢ cheaper here than in Reserve or Luna.

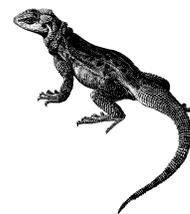
From Socorro, drive WEST on US 60 through Magdalena to Datil, passing the Very Large Array of radio-telescopes along the northern edge of the San Agustin Plains. There is an interesting visitors center at the array that would be worth a quick stop. The Socorro to Datil distance is 62 miles.

At Datil, turn left or SOUTH onto St Rd 12 and drive along the San Agustin Plains into the Apache and Gila National Forests, through the towns of Horse Springs (don't blink), Aragon, Apache Creek, and Cruzville to Reserve. The Datil to Reserve distance is 67 miles.

About seven miles west of Reserve is the junction of St Rd 12 with US 180. At this junction, turn right or NORTH towards Springerville and drive over the San Francisco Mountains to Luna, a scenic 13 mile jaunt with great views.

From Luna, drive 1.9 to 2.0 miles WEST from the post office along US 180 to the Head of the Ditch Campground. Remember, it is not marked with this name, just a little white and blue campground symbol (a tent) on a sign at the turnoff to the campground (just before you head up a hill and cross into Arizona). Turn left at the sign to the campground. There are several nice shaded areas. We hope to get one of the spots on the right or past the latrines.

2008 EVENTS



3 May - Earth Festival 2008 in Rio Rancho was an interesting affair this year as they opened up a great number of slots to folks having yard sales! Scot happened to spot a deal on a 35mm camera and complete setup (cases, lens, etc.). He let Ted know and the camera case and equipment was soon sitting under our table. We had about a dozen herps on display and talked to a lot of interesting folks. NMHS members in attendance were: Ted Brown; Scott, Rebecca, & Login Bulgrin; Garth Graves; Lynn Schuler; and Tom Eichhorst.

23 – 26 May – NMHS Memorial Weekend field trip to the Head of the Ditch Campground. See article on pages 1-2.

May to September - Sandia Pueblo Herp Survey in the bosque on the Sandia Reservation. Like the last three years, NMHS is once again conducting this survey of the herps on specified lands on the Sandia Reservation. Contact is Scott Bulgrin.

5-8 June - Partners in Reptile and Amphibian Conservation (PARC) meeting in Austin, Texas.

July – Remember, there is no meeting scheduled for June.

12 July Osprey Festival at Heron Lake.



28 July - Annual Potluck at Jaci Fischer's home (217 Tornasol NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113). Expect a great evening with wonderful food and company. Ted will present a slide program on the Memorial Weekend field trip to the Head of the Ditch Campground. Scheduled time is 6:00pm and you can either surprise everyone (no shocks please) with what you bring, or you can check in with Jaci ahead of time for ideas.



22 – 23 November – Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge. The New Mexico Herpetological Society does well at this event and we always need member participation. The refuge center had been nicely remodeled and is worth the visit even if you do not bring herps to display. Last year our display filled six tables and included numerous species of snakes and lizards, as well as a couple of toads and a musk turtle. Young and old alike enjoy seeing and talking about herps. We had several thousand visitors over the two days and listened to many herp tales. Times are 10:00am to 4:00pm on Saturday and 10:00am to 3:00pm on Sunday.

December - Annual Banquet. To be determined.

HERPS IN THE NEWS

Fossil Snake With Two Legs -- What was lost tens of millions of years ago is now found. As reported by Jonathan Amos Science reporter, BBC News, 10 April 2008. A fossil snake embedded in Lebanese limestone has been added to the handful of such rare specimens – fossil snakes with two hind legs. As herpers we are familiar with the spurs on pythons and the small internal leg bones, all remnants of an earlier history as a legged animal that evolved away from the use of legs.

Researchers at the European Light Source (ESRF) in Grenoble, France, used X-rays to confirm that the snake imprinted on a rock with one visible leg, had another appendage buried just under the surface of the slab. The 85cm-long (33in) creature, known as *Eupodophis descouensi*, comes from the Late Cretaceous, about 92 million years ago (snakes first appear in the fossil record less than 150 million years ago).

The unmistakable leg bones - fibula, tibia and femur – stand out, even though these small hind-limbs were only 2cm (0.8in) long and presumably useless to the animal in life.

