



# New Mexico Herpetological Society

January - May 2010 Newsletter

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## *Sandia Pueblo Herp Survey 2010*

Members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society headed out this month to set up pitfall traps for the 2010 herp survey for Sandia Pueblo. This time instead of heading into the bosque (nice for shade and mosquitoes) we headed up towards Rincon Ridge just west of the Sandia Mountains. The east mesa just below the mountains will be the survey site for the next few years. Instead of swatting at mosquitoes, NMHS members will have to watch where they step to avoid rattlers.

The NMHS members who showed up 8:30am on a Saturday morning faced the pleasant task of digging 32 pitfall traps. All but your intrepid editor headed up the road with what seemed like real enthusiasm. Somehow, digging 32 two-foot deep holes in what was sure to be some hard caliche seems to me to be on a par with changing flat tires for fun - it isn't. That was the task ahead, however, so we headed up to about 7,500 feet on the east mesa, just north of the Sandia Casino.

We split into two teams with each team responsible for the traps on one side of the dirt road. On the south side we had the "old" team (ages added up and divided by the number of team members equaled a sum decades older than the other team). The north side was taken by the young team. This is a scientific endeavor, so there was no silly competition to see which team was able to complete their pitfall setups first. If such a thing had been a factor, it would have to be recorded (as it is now being done), that the old folks finished first. By 11:00am the now rather dirty and sweaty NMHS members had the traps all set and were headed back to whatever activities lay ahead for their Saturday. For myself, I went home and ate Krispy Kreme doughnuts with Jack Daniels to wash them down.



Above is the survey site looking east towards Rincon Ridge and the Sandia Mountains. This area has quite a bit of grass cover, other areas were more barren and there was lots of cactus to keep everyone honest. A close look at the shadow on the bottom of the image will show a short-horned lizard watching the goings on. Photo by Joshua Emms.



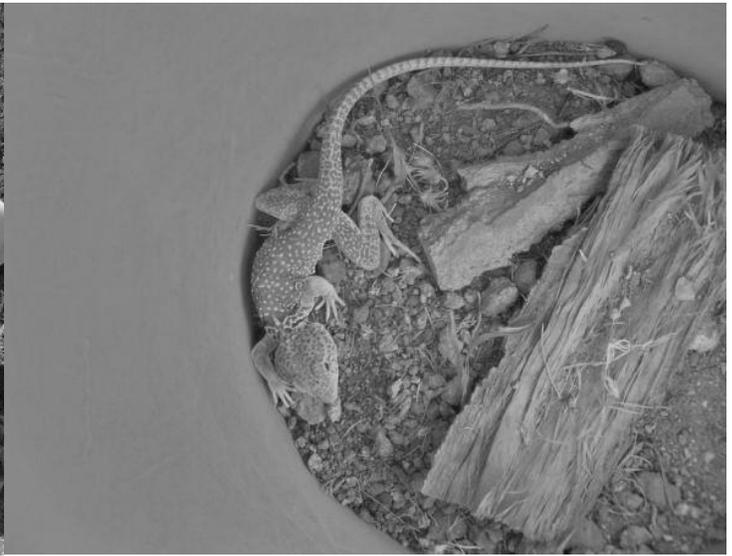
Garth Graves digging a pitfall trap in between a couple of cholla. Great spot for critters, not so much for people.



Heading back after digging and setting up 32 pitfall traps. Now they just have to be checked twice a week.



Josh and Niki Emms checking a trap. Josh seems to be hesitating a bit. Photo by Dave Karrmann.



And here is why... a collared lizard who will not appreciate being liberated from the trap.



Below left: the temporary lizard captive lets his captors know that the bucket experience was not appreciated. Photos by Joshua Emms.



# Memorial Weekend Fieldtrip - 28-30 May 2010

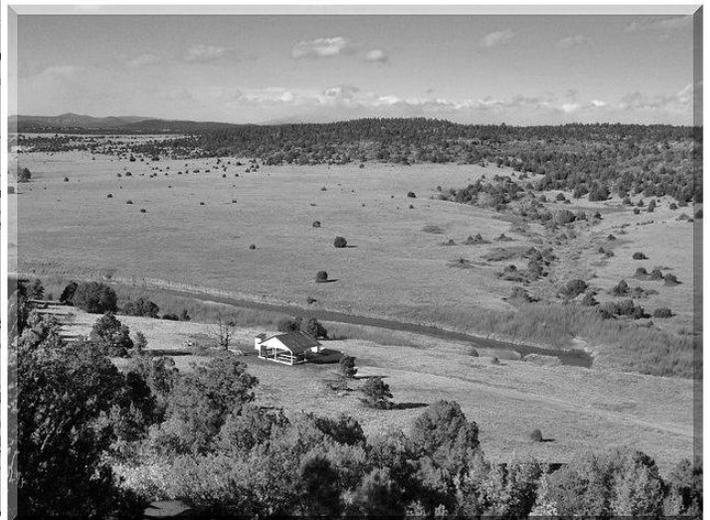
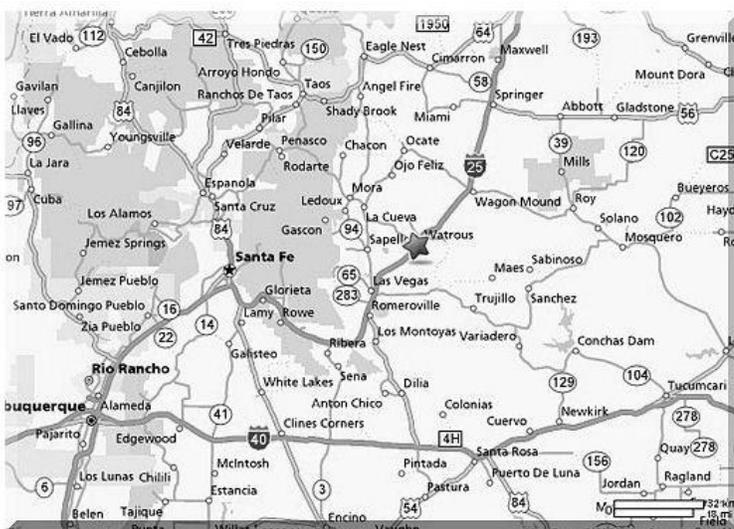


## Wind River Ranch, New Mexico

Our long Memorial Weekend fieldtrip is to a private facility called Wind River Ranch. As stated on the web site <http://www.windriverranch.org>, "The Wind River Ranch Foundation is a 501c3 organization dedicated to preserving the Southwestern ecological heritage. The ranch contains 4,500 acres in south-central Mora County, and it is at 6,700 to 7,000 feet of altitude. The canyon along the Mora River is up to 300 feet deep. Major habitat-types on the ranch are western Great Plains short-grass prairie, piñon-juniper (*Pinus edulis/Juniperus* spp.) and oak (*Quercus* spp.) woodland, ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), and a five-mile long riparian corridor of the Mora River. Six side canyons feeding the river contain permanent seeps, springs, and ponds, and some ephemeral water holes." Riparian sites are not all that common in this state, so this area should be quite exiting to explore. There are also pronghorn and bison grazing on the 4,500 acres.

### Directions:

- The Wind River Ranch is located north of Las Vegas, New Mexico.
- From Las Vegas, you travel on Interstate 25 North (towards Wagon Mound and Raton) about 15 miles.
- Exit at Watrous/Valmora Exit 364.
- Turn left at the stop sign (going under the interstate) away from Watrous on NM Highway 161.
- The mile markers are in descending order, and our gate is at mile marker 16.



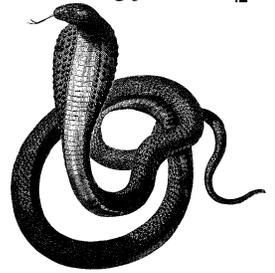
The map shows a star at the turn off for the Wind River Ranch, about 15 miles north of Las Vegas on Interstate 25. The image on the right shows the main camping area. There are several large facilities on the ranch for housing and such, but the group decided camping out would be the better option. This is a special place and not usually available for herping, so even if you can only come up for a day it would be worthwhile.

## Meeting & Activity Notes



**November - The Festival of the Cranes** at Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge was a great success with lots of folks wandering through the facility both days to look at and talk herps. This annual activity in November is always a lot of fun and it seems like the tall tales we hear get better every year. We had one about giant hairy rattlesnakes in the drainage from Ladrón Peak near Magdalena. I think this is the current first place story.

**December - NMHS Annual Christmas Banquet and Meeting.** This last meeting of the year was a great success. The banquet was held at Nick's Crossroads on Central and 4th street and for once there did not seem to be complaints about the meal or the facility. We had lots of food, lots of variety, ease of service, and enough room to eat without banging elbows. We started the evening at the American International Rattlesnake Museum for drinks and chips. Once more Bob sponsored this gathering before the banquet, as if having us descend upon him once a month wasn't enough. Our program this year was a follow up to last year's report on wrangling king cobras in India by Charlie Painter. This year's report was provided by Lori King, who accompanied Charlie on his follow up visit. Once more we learned fascinating secrets about this massive cobra. Seeing a slide of some of the local folks handling juvenile king cobras as if they were king snakes was interesting. The young cobras have a color and pattern similar to a black and white California king snake - the difference being they can drop you with one bite. The worst the California king snake can do is leave a bit of stinky mess behind when handled. It was quite an evening. The only problem voiced was that one of that attendees received a parking ticket. Not to mention any names, but at least Ted got it cancelled when he asked about it. See what asking nicely can do?



## Herps in the News



**New Frog in India - (as reported by BBC News, online, 13 May 2010)** Scientists have discovered a new species of frog on a remote mountain peak in India. The team found the frog living in Eravaikulam National Park at 8,850 feet (2698m) on Anaimudi Peak in the Western Ghat Mountains. They estimate that it inhabits an area of only three square kilometers (a little more than one square mile)! So now we know why it had not been previously discovered and just how precarious it's continued existence is. The

frog has been named, *Raorchestes resplendens* and in appearance is somewhat like a poison dart frog. It has a pattern of black and bright orange and unlike other frogs it has several swollen glands on its back - very much like found on a toad. It was first discovered in 2001, but only recently proven to be a unique species and given a name.

**Common musk turtle breathes with its tongue - (as reported by BBC News, online, 20 May 2010)** Apparently the common musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*), has a specialized tongue surrounded by small papillae that actually exchange oxygen out of water taken into the turtle's mouth. This discovery was made by zoologist Egon Heiss, a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna in Austria. The common musk turtle ranges along the east coast of North America from Florida to Canada and west to the Great Lakes and Texas.



**\*\*\*New Mexico Department of Game and Fish calls for comment on a draft amendment to the Importation Regulation 19.35.7 NMAC of 2001.** This is the law (**Part 7 - IMPORTATION OF LIVE NON-DOMESTIC ANIMALS, BIRDS AND FISH**) that addresses importation of animals into the state. The NM Department of Game and Fish has interpreted the law to require a list of species allowed in and those that are not allowed in or only allowed in only with a special permit. Such a draft list has been published, titled "Director's Species Importation List," and it categorizes animals into four groups.

**Group I** ("domesticated animals," **no permit needed**, e.g. dogs, cats, gerbils, hamsters, horses, mice, and many aquarium fish). The large farm type animals (horses, emu, bison, etc. still require NM Livestock Board action).

**Group II** are "non-domesticated animals," that are not known to be invasive or dangerous. This leads you to believe that a permit

would not be required, but no, for some reason a **permit is required** for this group. Animals included here are many species of saltwater aquarium fish (!), decorative finches, many species of herps.

**Group III** are non-domesticated animals that **require a permit** because they present "minimal or manageable concerns that will require specific provisions that must be met prior to issuing an importation permit..." Group III includes most parrots (macaws, Amazons, conures, etc.) and states they are C.I.T.E.S. II listed. C.I.T.E.S. Appendix II listings are for animals and plants that might or might not be threatened, but for which it has been determined that trade must be controlled and monitored. This means an export permit from the country of origin is required. It would seem this is an international and federal matter, not Department of Game and Fish. Some are also C.I.T.E.S. appendix III listed which is even less restrictive (internationally). So it is maybe of interest, but as the vast majority of parrots are now captive bred and raised, they would actually not be C.I.T.E.S. (according to C.I.T.E.S. regulations). Also in this group are many bovines and other animals one would consider zoo animals (kangaroo, bear, panda, fruit bat, etc.). Good luck on that panda! In this group are also many pythons, boas, chameleons, geckos, "North American box turtle, Russian tortoise, squirrels, alligators, sloths, etc.

Then we have **group IV**, "...non-domesticated animals that are considered dangerous, invasive, undesirable, state or federal listed threatened, endangered, C.I.T.E.S. appendix I or a furbearer. The importation of these species are prohibited for the general public but may be allowed for, scientific study, department approved restoration and recovery plans, zoological display..." you get the idea. This list includes cockatoos, raptors, different antelope and sheep, bears and pandas (again), fruit bats (again), gorillas, monkeys, and humpback whales!!! Okay, so there go your plans to bring in a humpback. But wait, this list is not done. Also listed as group IV are venomous reptiles, the American bullfrog (that invasive train left the station in the 1930s!), cornsnakes, I REPEAT cornsnakes, kingsnakes, gopher snakes, tiger salamanders, and the list goes on. These last are all listed as invasive.

Texas, a state that I seldom hold up as a shining example, was faced with the same kind of legal morass. For snakes they allow all but the big pythons and venomous snakes **without** a permit. They realized they really couldn't control much of this and rather than turn their citizens into criminals, they decided to permit the really dangerous animals so they could maybe track them and maybe control how they are kept. If our state list goes through as written, it will mean the "dangerous herps" will be only allowed in zoos (remember this list also includes cornsnakes, kingsnakes, etc.). Of course they will still come into the state and of course they will still be kept by many folks - they will just be criminals now. Oh, by the way, any species of any animal not listed is prohibited until the state determines it is okay. So the 250 tropical fish they didn't list (as well as numerous other herp species and other animals) are now prohibited. And this doesn't even address invertebrates. Tarantulas are listed a couple of times (rose hair, pink toed, and a couple others allowed with permit as a group II), but most species are not listed, thus illegal to bring in. There is also nothing that addresses that cornsnake (or any of the listed or unlisted animals) that was captive bred by a friend in the state. Not imported, but you don't have a permit. So where do you stand? And rest assured, each permit will require a fee.

Our friends at Game and Fish are headed down the wrong track with this one. If you want to comment about the proposed list, you can contact:

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NMDGF-Law Enforcement Division  
P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504  
Office: (505) 476-8064  
Fax: (505) 476-8133  
Letitia.Mee@state.nm.us

Letitia Mee asked for comments and was quick to respond to an earlier email of mine, so maybe they are listening and willing to adjust. I certainly hope so as they are not manned to do what the proposal outlines. If you do contact her, please provide helpful and positive feedback. She is not personally looking to shut down our hobbies and is not the designated "whipping boy" for anyone angry at yet more government interference. But she does have to come up with a program and could use some help. Maybe we can make it a bit more workable - like the Texas program. For anyone interested, I can provide electronic copies of the New Mexico law and the proposed list.

Tom Eichhorst

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This newsletter is published for the edification and enjoyment of the members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society. Any opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not express or represent official NMHS policy. Questions, suggestions, and articles for publication may be submitted to the editor,

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