

VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO EXHIBIT SPECIMENS IN RICHMOND, VA. MAY 22-23, '59.

A Reptile Study booth is planned for the forthcoming great SCOUT-O-RAMA at the fairgrounds in Richmond, Friday and Saturday, May 22d and 23rd. Society members and friends are invited to exhibit live specimens in cages and to help man the booth part-time. The Reptile Study booth is to be sponsored by a Bryan District, Robert E. Lee Council, Boy Scout troop. Credit will be given to exhibitors on labels properly identifying the contents of the cages. One of the state capital area's more active collectors, and VHS member, Robert J. Gagnon, a scouter, is to co-ordinate this Society's participation. If you wish to add to the display, or otherwise aid, even part-time, please phone Mr. Gagnon at Pioneer 6-5648 (Rt.#3, Box # 63) Ellerson, Va., (Greater Richmond area). VHS members will meet at the booth on Friday night May 22 in an informal meeting of Richmond area members. Any others who can attend are welcome - bring an exhibit at least for the duration of your stay!

SNAKES' EATING MANNERS IN PUBLIC

A Black Rat Snake (*Elaphe o. obsoleta*) is the hero of a color film. It feeds upon two large brown rats that have invaded a henhouse. The film, in color, is an educational epic produced a few years ago by the Missouri Game Commission. The remainder of the film identifies many of Missouri's poisonous and harmless species of snakes. The film, in good taste, has been shown successfully in the Washington, D.C. area as well as in its home state to appreciative audiences of all ages. All-in-all, the film has improved the reputation of the Black Rat or, (formerly) the Black Chicken Snake. While some viewers may shudder at "Nature in the raw" the contestants are well-matched. No one is moved to grieve for the recently departed rats.

The public may be repulsed, however, rather than educated, by such a demonstration when they happen upon it suddenly in an unexpected spot. When a particular effect is to be achieved, preparation is essential.

A recent example of what may be termed "reverse" public relations on behalf of our clients, was noted in a nearby Virginia community's pet-shop window. On-lookers were hurt by the spectacle of large snakes lazily sharing the same cage with several small, trembling white mice. Such unwarranted displays may have the unintended effect of turning a portion of the public against reptiles in an era when, perhaps for the first time, significant progress has been made in popularizing what was, heretofore, a fairly unpopular class of vertebrates.

Many small mammals have been personified in popular animated cartoons. Let's face it, not many of our clients have made "desirable" roles. Two notable exceptions are the bullfrog and the amiable turtle. If the desire is to illustrate the rodent-ridding inclination of the Rat Snakes (Colubridae) be certain to match your contestants more evenly! Remember, people have warmed up to mice and white rats as pets as well as some reptiles and amphibians. People, however, still do not welcome mice at home or on the farm. Avoid unnecessary feeding of live food to animals that will accept processed food. Most King or Milk Snakes will accept rolled hamburger meat, bits of liver, or humanely, though freshly, killed mice or rats. People know that Nature's ways are seldom mild and they also fear that public displays of unequally-matched combatants may whet the brutish appetites of a human element which is attracted by gory spectacles. If we must choose between SCIENCE and CIRCUSES, we have alternatives at our command which permit us to spare the feelings of the public.

The Editor. (your comment invited)

AWAKENING OF THE SWAMPLAND

The Dismal Swamp was awakening. There was a mixture of strange soft yellow and mottled light green which began to cover the trees and was reflected in the amber-colored water. April was painting the swampland, imparting to the scene the qualities of an abstract canvas.

The fine droplets of the spring rain fell gently and rhythmically upon the Great Swamp, splashing upon new leaves that had just sprung from their buds. The delicate Easter Troutlilies freshly displayed their ephemeral blooms.

The redwings no longer banded together. The shrill calls of the small chorus frogs and the sleigh-bell notes of the spring peepers gradually increased in number and intensity until they reached the peak of their voluminous and rhythmic tempo. The may-apple, whose tender green leaves had, for some weeks, dotted the forest floor, were now blooming. The swamp jack-in-the-pulpits which had already pierced the leaf-mold carpet were still reaching heavenward.

The world of the tiny beings of the black water was teeming with new energy. The turtles could already have been seen sunning on their favorite logs. At dusk, the tree frogs spoke mysteriously -- their cry low, yet penetrating -- and in the wide wastes, the echoes sounded stranger still.

During the warm hours, the water snakes and Cottonmouths come out to sun themselves along the banks of rivers and lakes within the vastness of the swamp. The water snakes generally on the low branches of trees overhanging the water. The Moccasins bask on the logs at shore level. On the rootlets of the fountain moss where they had been deposited in early March, were the eggs of the Many-lined Salamander. The small larvae were well advanced now and could be seen twisting around in the eggs' transparent envelopes.

White egrets and night herons were busy carrying sticks to their nesting sites. High above the great lake, two downy white eaglets had hatched on the large platform of branches and sticks at the top of the great pine where a pair of bald eagles raised their family each year.

As one glanced at the outline of the cypress along the water's edge silhouetted against the crimson sunset, and heard the breeze murmur softly in the tops of the trees, one was glad that spring had returned with its new cycle of life to the Great Dismal Swamp.

The Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences
Norfolk 10, Virginia

Roger H. Rageot
Curator of
Natural History

NEW MEMBERS SINCE BULLETIN No. 9 ('59-1) (does not include renewals).

- *BROWN, Clyde R. (G) P.O.Box 154, Fieldale, Va.
- *ROGOT, Mrs. Evelyn B. (G) 5516 GreenTree Road, Bethesda 14, Maryland
- *INGRAM, William, III, (Stu.) 6809 -28th Street No. Arlington 13, Va.
- *MILLARD, Howard (Stu.) 3518 No. Dinwiddie Street, Arlington 7, Va.

REQUESTS FOR EXCHANGE OF PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM:
The Metropolitan New York Herpetological Society, 4680 Independence Avenue, New York 71, N.Y., Mr. F.H. POUGH, Jr. publishers of REPHIBIA a mimeographed monthly publication of 30 pages, plus line drawings.
Friedrich Pöhlz, Radbruch, Germany wrote asking to see the VHS Bulletin