

CONSERVATION RESEARCH REPORTS

Snapping Turtle Conservation

On the assumption that drivers were harvesting Common Snapping Turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) crossing the roads, almost invariably females searching for nesting sites, TUCKER AND LAMER (2004. *Turtle and Tortoise Newsletter* (8):10–11) examined sex ratios of turtles collected in three bodies of water in rural Illinois, two near a heavily traveled road and one on a National Wildlife Refuge, isolated from heavy vehicular traffic. Preliminary results indicated that the sex ratios in populations near the road where turtles are easily removed were heavily male-biased, whereas that of the population not subject to adventitious collecting was essentially 1:1. Also, sex ratios of Red-eared Sliders (*Trachemys scripta*), which presumably are not subject to collection for the cooking pot, were approximately 1:1 in all three lakes. The potential impact on the effective breeding size of the affected populations is severe. The authors recommended that the harvest of Common Snapping Turtles during the nesting season (May and June in Illinois) be prohibited and that similar surveys be conducted in other parts of the species' range to determine the range of this problem.



Reptiles are particularly vulnerable to road mortality due to thermoregulatory needs that favor the use of heat-retaining paved roads as heating surfaces, relatively slow locomotion, and migratory patterns exhibited by some species. This Prairie Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis calligaster*) was killed in Christian County, Missouri. Photograph by Brian S. Edmond.

Road Mortality in European Vipers

In a study of road mortality of Lataste's Viper (*Vipera latastei*) and Iberian Adder (*V. seoanei*) in a Portuguese national park, BRITO AND ÁLVARES (2004. *Amphibia-Reptilia* 25:459–465) reviewed a problem that affects many animals and proposed some ameliorating actions. They

noted that road construction and accompanying vehicular traffic not only kill animals, but also change behavior, fragment habitats, create barriers, introduce pollutants, enhance the spread of exotic species, and increase human activity in fragile landscapes. Affecting animals ranging from invertebrates to large mammals and aquatic, terrestrial, and aerial species, road mortality modifies the demography and population structure of species and affects the recovery of endangered species or contributes to the endangerment of others. Local management strategies that could reduce the intensity of road mortality, at least in national parks or similar areas, include: (1) educational programs aimed primarily at children (see, however, the summary of Gomez et al. 2004 on this page), (2) active removal of live animals from the roads, (3) studies identifying the areas where mortality is highest and erection of warning signs, barriers to block animals from entering those sections of road, and under-road passages to allow safe transit.



Snapping Turtles are usually aquatic, rarely venturing out of the water. However, during the nesting season, females often range widely in search of suitable nesting sites. This adult female had recently emerged from a small lake when photographed. Photograph by Robert Powell.

Classroom Snake Talks and Attitudes toward Conservation

In a Canadian study, GOMEZ ET AL. (2004. *Herpetological Review* 35:338–341) tested the assumption that class-

room “snake talks” (interpretive programs) effectively alter grade-2 children’s attitudes toward snakes and conservation. Results of the carefully designed study, implemented with full cooperation of the local public schools, showed that a “surprisingly high positive mean-attitude score” immediately and shortly after the presentations had returned to much lower pre-program levels within a week, and remained there until the end of the study two months later. The only exception to this general trend was an improved perception about touching snakes. “Although this positive attitude change did not influence the students’ overall attitudes towards snakes, it still may have helped shape their ‘mental picture’ of them.” The authors suggested that interpretive programs should not be discontinued and that periodic revisiting of the topic might improve results, but that caution should prevail until additional, possibly longer-term studies address unanswered questions regarding the effectiveness of snake talks.



Ameiva polops from Green Cay. Photograph by Amy Mackay. (Ms. Mackay is a Ph.D. candidate at the Maryland Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and her dissertation deals with the Green Cay population of *A. polops*).

ommended additional population surveys using a variety of methods to monitor the population and assess ongoing effects of hurricanes. (Note that a PDF file of the entire article is available at www.caribjsci.org).

Communiqué 2(1):1–2) described studies by Dr. Gerald Kuchling, University of Western Australia, who used non-lethal endoscopy to examine animals from three headstart facilities on opposite coasts of Malaysia. He concluded that animals from eggs incubated indoors in styrofoam boxes tended to be all male, whereas those produced by outdoor in-ground incubation were sometimes all female and sometimes a combination of both sexes, possibly reflecting the ambient temperatures in different years. Incubation trials are being conducted to further investigate temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD) in this species.

TSD in River Terrapins

A long-standing conservation program in Malaysia for the critically endangered River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*) may be hampered by the fact that clutches of headstarted animals raised from artificially incubated eggs and later released to the wild may be all male or all female. HENG (2005). *Turtle Survival Alliance*

Endangered St. Croix Ground Lizards on Green Cay

The St. Croix Ground Lizard (*Ameiva polops*) was listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in 1977, and the population on Green Cay had not been surveyed since the mid-1990s. MCNAIR AND LOMBARD (2004. *Caribbean Journal of Science* 40: 353–361) conducted surveys and conservatively estimated the population at 183 lizards, which suggested a decline in the long-term population size. The presence of lizards was positively associated with greater numbers of shrubs. Ground Lizards were more abundant than expected in forested areas in the southern half of the cay, but less numerous than anticipated on beaches. The authors rec-

Attitude assessment instrument used to quantify children’s reactions.



Critically endangered River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*). Photograph by Chris Tabaka, DVM.