

title of the meeting is “From Incubation to Infancy: the (Re) Birth of a Region,” and topics range from the effects of off-highway vehicles, mining, and water development on herpetofauna to management related areas such as habitat management guidelines. In addition, there are field trips to variety of interesting places, such as the Armendaris Ranch, owned by Ted Turner.

Southwest and Arizona PARC are not officially connected to the Tucson Herpetological Society, but we share both interests and people. THS President Roger Repp will be one of the keynote speakers at the upcoming meeting, and a number of THS members have been involved in organizing it. The current co-chairs of Southwest PARC, Matt Goode and Craig Ivanyi, are both long-time THS members.

PARC has not achieved a high profile since it was founded because it is a mostly volunteer organization focused on partnerships. But the organization matters mainly because it is the only national organization dedicated solely to herpetological conservation, and because its members know and care so much about reptiles and amphibians. Conserving charismatic wildlife such as pandas and bighorn sheep in the face of our rapidly expanding population and technological advances is hard enough; reptiles and amphibians need an extra effort. Whether PARC can mobilize public interest to truly become effective on the national and local scenes remains to be seen – but it’s an important start, and one that we should all hope will grow in future years.



NATURAL HISTORY NOTE

Arboreal Behavior in the Tiger Rattlesnake (*Crotalus tigris*)

Steve Pavlik

Tucson, Arizona, USA. spavlik@gainusa.com

On 11 June, 2000 at 0800 I was hiking in Sabino Canyon, near Tucson, when suddenly I was startled by the sight and sound of a lizard falling seemingly out of the sky. The lizard landed at my feet. After both the lizard and I regained our composure, I identified it as either a Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*) or a Clark’s Spiny Lizard (*S. clarkii*). The lizard ran uphill into rocks, while I looked up into the tree branches from where it had fallen or jumped. As I scanned the tree, a mesquite, I was amazed to see a Tiger Rattlesnake

(*Crotalus tigris*) coiled on a branch. I took a number of photos, and left after about 30 minutes.

I returned the next day with a measuring tape. Although it is purely speculative, I surmised that the snake must have either climbed the tree straight up from the ground or crawled into the tree along branches that extended out to a nearby boulder. Either way required a seven-foot climb. I also measured the height of the branches from where the lizard came, and the lowest branch was 11 feet (3.4 m) from the ground, but it could have fallen or jumped as much as 15 feet (4.6 m).

The tree was located on an east-facing hillside covered with rocks and thick vegetation. The temperature was 75°F (23.9°C). Interestingly, later that same evening, the Tucson area, including Sabino Canyon, experienced its first monsoon storm of the season, a very heavy downpour. Might the snake’s unusual behavior have been triggered by the pending change in weather? Or, perhaps the entire observation was purely coincidence - a quirk of nature. It seems like the most likely explanation is that the snake pursued the lizard into the tree, and the lizard, in order to escape, continued out until it reached a branch that could no longer support its weight.

Although many snakes that are not normally arboreal, have been recorded climbing trees, this is the first such observation for *C. tigris* of which I am aware. In a long-term study of Tiger Rattlesnakes near Tucson, comprised of over 9,000 locations of over 90 snakes outfitted with transmitters, researchers have only observed a few individuals more than a foot or so off the ground (M. Goode, personal communication). Arboreal behavior has been recorded for several other rattlesnake species, including Timber Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*), which have been found basking over 40 feet high in the canopy of large broadleaf trees in Arkansas.



Sonoran Herpetologist Natural History Observations

The Tucson Herpetological Society invites your contributions to our regular Natural History Notes Section. We are particularly interested in photographs and descriptions of amphibians and reptiles involved in noteworthy or unusual behaviors in the field. Notes can feature information such as diet, predation, community structure, interspecific behavior, or unusual locations or habitat use. Please submit your observations to Dale Turner (dturner@theriver.com), who is editor for this section. Submissions should be brief, double-spaced, and in electronic form.