

VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING AT THE NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK'S REPTILE HOUSE --
WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1960 AT 4:30 P.M.

The Society members will be the guests of the National Zoological Park's Director, Dr. Theodore H. Reed, and Associate Director J. Lear Grimmer, herpetologist and VHS member. The program will be under the guidance of Mr. M. (Jack) DePrato, senior keeper of the Reptile House. Our guides to the exhibits in front of, as well as "behind the scenes" will be Mr. DePrato's staff associates. We hope to renew acquaintance with VHS members Keepers Lee D. Schmeltz and William A. Xanten, Jr. as well as make new friends this year. Officers of VHS will give Mr. DePrato every co-operation in arranging the program for the meeting.

We hope we may be honored this year, as last, (schedules permitting) by having Dr. Reed and J. Lear Grimmer address the assembled members. Added attractions this year may be short films or slide sequences. Have a late lunch before you arrive at the Zoo, the program is likely to extend slightly beyond the normal closing time at the National zoo.

The timing of the annual trek to the National Zoo was moved up from November (as in 1959) to September, to accommodate college and grad students who may still be in the area and can find it convenient to attend. We welcome their participation in this, as in other VHS affairs and hope it will provide a chance to talk with them and give them a fitting "send off". Also, we hope to welcome home from the US Air Force and Okinawa, William L. Witt, one of the Society's six co-founders. We look forward to conversing with all members of VHS.

The meeting place will be on the walk in front of the Reptile House. (If the weather is bad we will gather inside, in front of the large cage which houses the Regal Pythons (Python reticulatus).)

HONORARY MEMBERS, OFFICERS, FACULTY and STAFF MEMBERS finding it convenient to attend are asked to arrive at the Reptile House walk about 4:00 P.M. for a brief conference on the Society's program. (Our request to meet at Big Meadows on the Skyline Drive had to be declined as conflicting with too many points of National Park policy. As a result, this meeting, planned for August, 1960, was not scheduled or held. It now appears that the "Third Annual Statewide Meeting" will have to be held in the Fall, 1960 or early Spring, 1961, suitable site being available.) This, and other pending matters, will be discussed.

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COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN O.K. GOODWIN ON AN ALLIGATOR RECORD -

On August 3, 1960, the VHS Chairman, O. King Goodwin wrote from the Newport News area sending a newsclipping which is of interest because it fixes a recent record in the northern limit of the range of the American Alligator (Alligator mississippiensis). The item, clipped from the VIRGINIAN-PILOT, Saturday, July 16, 1960, published in the Norfolk-Portsmouth, Va. area, was datelined Edenton, N.C. It was, in effect, an obituary notice for a 7-foot-8 alligator which had been sighted in

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sighted in local waters several times in the last three years. The specimen weighed between 150 and 200 pounds. The alligator had been shot in Pembroke Creek beyond the new fish hatchery by an employee of the Edenton (N.C.) Marina. Scott Harrell, marina manager, sent the alligator to a taxidermist in Suffolk, Va. and it will be displayed at the Edenton Marina. OKG says a later "hearsay" item places another 'gator just south of Portsmouth, Va. in the Inland Waterway. OKG is trying to obtain verification of the report at this writing. (Small gators found in the Dismal Swamp canal in past years have been termed possible releases of pets brought up from further south. The species has not been considered indigenous to Virginia.) FT

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A SURVEY OF THE REPTILE LIFE IN THE LOWER VIRGINIA PENINSULA, and the publication of its results, was one of the items which led to the founding of the VHS. It brought together amateur herpetologists from southeastern and northern Virginia counties, through the chance reading of the "Explorer Quarterly" a publication read by Scouters with an interest in the Explorer Scout program. The editor asked O. King Goodwin to review a bit of history on the project which led to this item, this acquaintance and the eventual founding of the VHS. (Ed.)

"As you know, Explorer Advisers are continually seeking subjects which will make an interesting, instructive program for their units. It was this search which led my (Explorer) Post into the study of Reptile Life.

I had tried to keep file data on potential aides (individuals or organizations) who, expert in their fields, could develop a program of this nature for our unit. The VIRGINIA FISHERIES LABORATORY (then at Yorktown, Va. and now located at Gloucester Point, Va.) was one such organization. Sidney Mitchell, Scoutmaster of Troop 41, informed me that an assistant biologist, John Thornton Wood, presented a very good slide-display lecture to his Troop and also mentioned that he (JTW) was an amateur herpetologist.

On September 14, 1949, five Explorers and I drove the 21 miles to Yorktown, Va. to hear this lecture. We carried along with us five or six turtles which we had gathered on recent hikes over the Peninsula. This had a rather obvious ulterior motive. We hoped to have (then) Mr. Wood assist us in learning something more about reptile life.

As expected, the lecture was very informative. The results exceeded our expectations. Mr. Wood agreed to assist me and we set up a schedule of meetings at the Explorer Post, the Wood home and on field trips where he instructed in identification, collecting and preservation of specimens. To make a long story short -- from that time on, every one of our outdoor activities became a field collecting trip.

We assisted John T. Wood in several projects, added to his own collection of specimens and started one of our own. He encouraged the taking of field notes and urged that we complete a "checklist" of the specimens we had recorded in the counties of the peninsula: York, James City, Elizabeth City (now Hampton), and Warwick (now a part of Newport News). In 1950 we displayed our material at the Scout Exposition. The second display, in 1951, used a published "checklist" as a "display" attraction to the booth." O. King Goodwin, VHS Chairman