

EDITORIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NON-PEER REVIEW SECTION

JOSEPH T. COLLINS (1939-2012): A GOOD FRIEND TO HERPETOLOGISTS

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On 14 January 2012, North American herpetology lost a lifelong advocate and for many of us a wise and generous colleague and, not least of all, a good friend. Joe's contribution to the understanding of North American herpetofauna, be it in the fields of conservation, geographic distribution, or identity, was evident to the end in a wide range of venues that reached a broad audience. Evident in his talks, publications, and books was a deep perception of the many issues faced by this segment of the world's biota and an organized ability to enhance awareness and bring about progress to these issues. It has been within the intersection friendship and professional interests that we got to know, work with, and now miss our friend Joe Collins (Fig. 1).

Stan first met Joe at a Kansas meeting in 1977. To Stan's amazement to this day was Joe's familiarity with the work of a then young and upcoming herpetologist. This encounter spoke to the breadth and up-to-date knowledge Joe had of researchers in this field. This was true then and up until his passing. Walter first met Joe when he was an undergraduate helping in the live animal room during the 1982 meetings in Tampa, but really got to know him with Stan in Arkansas in the mid 1980s. Since then Joe was an active source of formal and informal guidance as well as being a patient and well-worn sounding board of ideas.

With Joe, we contributed to an endeavor larger than ourselves and this is something for which we are fortunate and grateful to share. What are some examples of Joe's involvement? Collegially and with great organizational skill Joe created the Center for North American Herpetology (CNAH, <http://www.cnah.org>, last accessed: 29 April 2012), the go-to place for all (or nearly all) things related to North American herpetology. To that end, what a phenomenal benefit he was to a

project of Walter's. When talking to Joe about the need for data on Green Frog calling, Joe suggested contacting researchers using data requests, which became the first of now more than 200 such requests.

Again, with a keen sense of what was needed and an extremely organized mind, Joe collaborated with many colleagues to produce herpetology guides. These guides have been a successful product by having taken something wanted by a wide range of audiences and made it easily and widely accessible. Snake guides alone exist for four states, and herpetofaunal guides have been provided for wide-ranging places such as St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge in Florida and Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas.

The Kansas Herpetological Society (KHS) is a wonderful example of Joe's successful efforts to enhance awareness of North American herpetofauna, nurture an interest in this field, and build and sustain productivity in the society's endeavors. We saw there, as in the case of



FIGURE 1. Joe Collins teaches youths about herpetofauna. Photograph courtesy of Larry L. and Suzanne L. Miller.

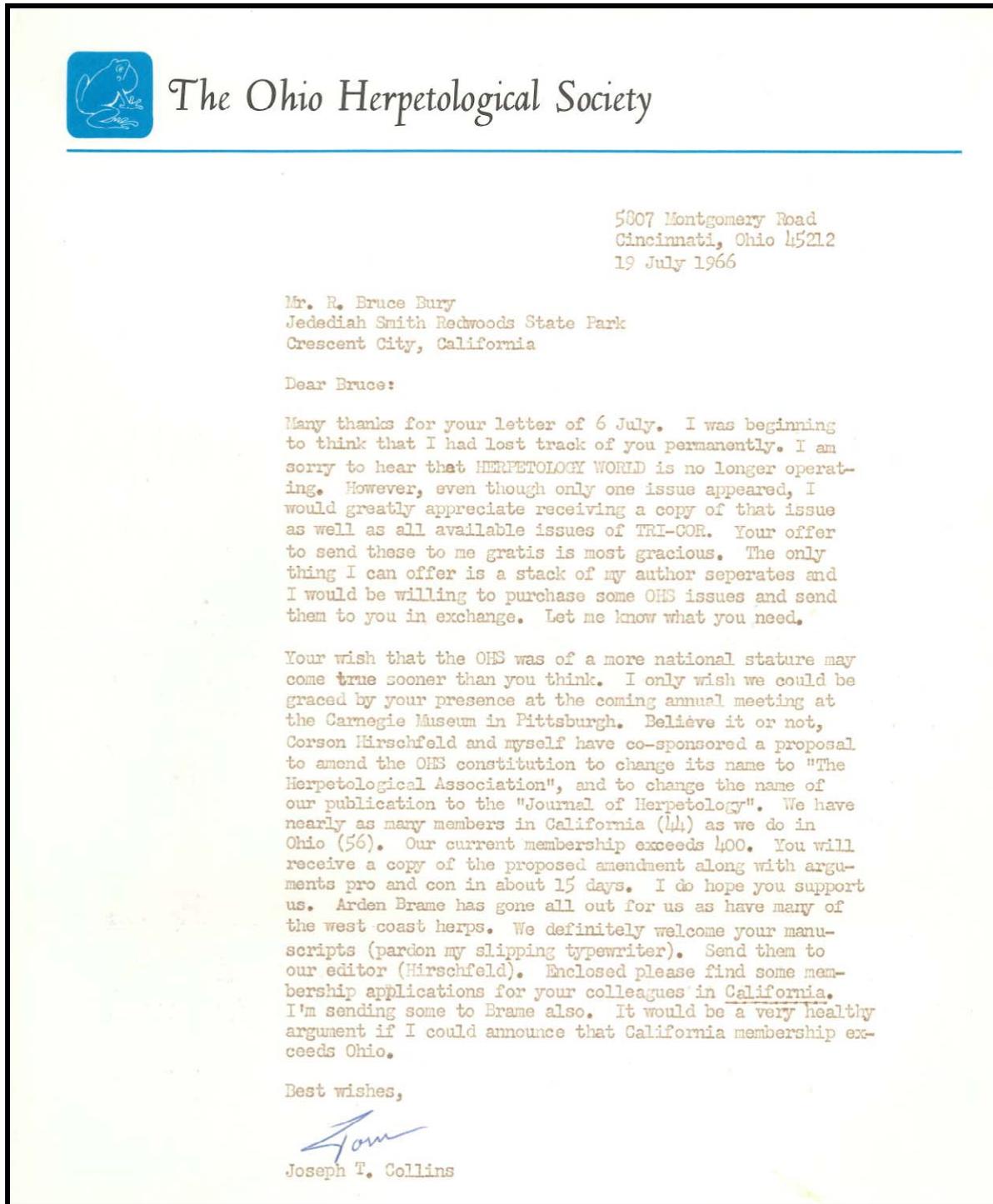


FIGURE 2. A letter from Joe Collins to a young Bruce Bury who had corresponded with Joe for some 50 years. (Compliments of Bruce Bury).

CNAH, big things happen out of the good, mediocre, or nonexistent, for North American Herpetology; and particularly in this case, Kansas herpetology. Joe, in concert with many talented people, really sharpened the organization, profile, and outreach of the KHS. What a

great annual meeting! Hitting the optimality curve (think Goldilocks) on cost, meeting duration, locality, and herd size, the annual meetings were and are superb venues for students in herpetology to get better and to be nurtured as the *obsession* kicked in, as Joe would put it (Fig. 2).

Herpetological Conservation and Biology



FIGURE 2. Joe (center) and Suzanne Collins (right) in a casual conversation at the 2nd Hellbender Symposium. (Photographed by Stan Trauth)

All these would cheerfully come together in a positive atmosphere built on the interactions of amateurs, up and coming students, professionals, and big names. One would typically see Henry Fitch, his former student Dwight Platt, and George Pisani, all presenting each year. That's right, regulars at the meeting. Stan remembers Joe's hospitality during the 32nd annual meeting in November, 2005, when he presented the keynote address on Arkansas herpetofauna. Earlier in the summer that year, Joe and Suzanne attended the 2nd Hellbender Symposium, where Stan was able to capture the two of them during a casual moment of conversation with attendees (Fig. 3). Walter fondly remembers at the end of each annual KHS meeting, Joe shouting "Henry, I need a title (for next year)!" By God, he meant it, and Henry presented there right up to the meeting before he passed away. The topics by Keynote speakers were eclectic and wonderful and included speakers, such as Richard Seigel, Victor Hutchison, Frank Burbrink, and each of us to celebrate the publication of our respective books on Arkansas amphibians and reptiles and the Cuban Treefrog in Florida. Auctions were a blast thanks to Joe as members were at the same time aghast and in awe as expensive things would go inexpensively, Dan Fogel's copy of the Collins et al. (2010) Kansas book would be sold four times that evening, or Walter's underwear would go for more than anyone would or should otherwise sanely pay. Two to three hours later, lots of money was magically made for a good cause.

Joe strongly believed in the effective use of the web in ways that transcended the membership-based constraints of societies. Examples are the directory of herpetologists and a pdf library. Joe thought highly of the mission and approach of this very journal, *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*. He communicated extensively with the founding editorial staff about running and establishing a journal, the pitfalls to avoid, and the specific things that **MUST** be done. To that end,

he was equally prescient about things that would fail. Joe also had a strong belief in endowments for awards and grants, such as the Joseph B. Slowinski Award for Excellence in Snake Systematics, the George Toland Award for Ecological Research on North American Herpetofauna, and the Suzanne L. and Joseph T. Collins Award for Excellence in Kansas Herpetology.

A pretty fine legacy for a man involved in the personal and professional contributions and in the accomplishments and relationships with colleagues. We should all be fortunate to be the better for and to contribute and share all the better in the things we care about with someone like our friend Joe.