Greetings

Summer 2016

I trust everyone has had a good summer and hope you were all able to get your fill of field herping. As usual, I continue to be overwhelmingly impressed by the efforts of the PARS volunteers. Among the high volume of data we have been receiving, impressive numbers of county records and rare species observations continue to roll in. Additionally, it is clear that volunteers increasingly continue to pursue quads and blocks where records are lacking. We have quite a way to go to reach our goal of 10 species per block and 25 species per quad for every quad and block in Pennsylvania by the year 2023; but from what I am witnessing, I have every confidence this will be accomplished.

A recent highlight of my summer was the opportunity to give a PARS status update at this year's meeting for the Northeastern Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC), which was held at Green Mountain University in Vermont. If you are not familiar with this organization, NEPARC is a wonderful assemblage of researchers and various types of other professional herpetologists from the northeastern U.S. who come together for the common cause of conserving herps. Over the course of two days I observed numerous interesting presentations about a diverse variety of herpetological research and projects. The agenda included a segment in which all states conducting herp atlases gave updates on their projects, which is when I had the opportunity to report on PARS. It was interesting to learn about the varied approaches taken by the other states, and about some other conservation projects which have stemmed from some of these atlases.

This experience offered pause for reflection about why PARS exist. Though a project unto itself, PARS is not an end-all; we are collecting this data for future use as an important tool for herpetological conservation. After my presentation I received many compliments about PARS, and was engaged in numerous conversations with many questions of interest about our project. We even picked up a new county coordinator! All in all, it was a very fulfilling experience. The PARS project is now on the radar of this organization, which is surely a good thing.

Speaking of fulfilling experiences; though the days are now shortening and we are getting our first crisp evenings, we still have a few good weeks to survey. With the advent of early autumn rains, some of the year's best opportunities are at hand, and I trust everyone will make the most of this bittersweet time of the field season. Good luck, and as always, stay safe out there.

Marlin Corn
PARS Statewide Coordinator
Project Updates

VOCAL VOUCHERS NEEDED FOR GRAY TREEFROGS

Recent PARS records with calling vouchers have confirmed a sizable expansion for the known range of Cope’s Gray Treefrog (*Hyla chryscocelis*) in Pennsylvania, and it is very possible there are numerous other sites waiting to be discovered. Since this species can be distinguished from the Gray Treefrog (*H. versicolor*) only by voice or cell analysis, we ask that volunteers enter photo-only vouchers of Gray Treefrogs under the ‘unknown complex/unknown Gray Treefrog’ heading. If you have previously entered photo-only records for either of these species, particularly in the southern region of the state, we would ask that you consider returning to these sites at some point in the future to obtain recordings of calling males during the breeding season. Moving forward, our verification committee members will be able to verify only the genus of these frogs from photographs.

JUDGES NEEDED FOR PHOTO CONTEST

The submission deadline has now passed for our first photo contest, and we are in need of additional judges. If you have a background in nature or creative photography, and would like to help choose our winners, please let us know; and if you have already expressed interest, please send a confirmation of your commitment to mcorn@machac.org. We would like to have the judging completed before the end of the year.

NEW COORDINATOR RECRUITS

Please welcome the following new County Coordinators: Mike McGraw for Delaware County, Brandon Hunsberger for Venango County, Eric Munsch for Allegheny County, and Jerod Skebo, who will serve as Co-coordinator for Centre County, working in tandem with Jason Beale. As always, the contact emails for our county coordinators can be found on the last page of each newsletter.

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR FIELD TIME WITH RECORDS

A website improvement last year streamlined time sheet submissions for volunteers. However, the hours tallied are based on the time field volunteers fill out when submitting records. We are finding that the total hours at the end of each month are still lower than they should be, as some volunteers are not filling out the ‘Search Time’ field when entering records. Please be sure to fill out this field; you need to do it only for the first record entered for a particular date. It is important that we capture as many volunteer hours as possible for grant-match. If you are contributing non-field-related volunteer hours, please fill in a standard volunteer time sheet and send it to Marlin Corn: mcorn@machac.org. If you do not have a template for one of these, please request one from Marlin.
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Save the date for next year’s Annual Meeting

The date for the 2017 Annual PARS meeting will be **Saturday, March 25**. The venue name and location will be announced at a later date.

Scheduled Herp-Blitz Field Trips:

**Herp Blitz—Montour Co.**  
**May 6, 2017**  
(exact date and location to be announced)  
For more info contact:  
Marlin Corn - mcorn@machac.org

**Herp Blitz—Beaver Co.**  
**May 27, 2017**  
(exact date and location to be announced)  
For more info contact:  
Marlin Corn - mcorn@machac.org

More to be scheduled – stay tuned for details!  
or on Facebook at [http://facebook.com/paherpsurvey](http://facebook.com/paherpsurvey)
Highlights of the 2016 Spring Season

Salamanders
Seventeen vouched records were received for Jefferson Salamanders during the spring quarter, most of which were of eggs or larvae. The Carbon and Union records appear to be potential county records. Twenty-nine observations came in for Marbled Salamanders, and the Bedford, Dauphin and Snyder vouchers are potential county records. Six records were received for Green Salamanders, one of the Commonwealth’s rarest species. A single record was submitted for a Common Mudpuppy; and a Fayette County Hellbender, one of three records received, appears to be a county record. Thirty-eight records were received for Seal Salamanders, two for the rare Ravine Salamander, and 39 for Valley and Ridge Salamanders, two of which may be the first for Jefferson County.

Frogs
Two observations of Eastern Cricket Frogs were made at a known site. Fourteen records were received for Fowler's Toads, with a Columbia County specimen appearing to be a county record. Fifteen records were submitted for Cope's Gray Treefrog, all but one of which were confirmed with audio vouchers. The first of these would almost certainly be a county record for Lancaster. A single Eastern Spadefoot observation was submitted.

Lizards
Seventeen observations of Eastern Fence Lizards were submitted, one of which added a new block to Washington County. Two records each were received for Northern Coal Skinks and Broad-headed Skinks. It can be difficult to obtain definitive photo vouchers of Broad-headed Skinks, but a large, hand-captured male specimen was easily verified.

Snakes
A number of Northern Copperhead records were submitted (29), and a Bedford County specimen represents the first to be observed in this county since 1938. Unsurprisingly, a large number (99) of Timber Rattlesnake records were received for this species, while two observations were made of our rarest pit viper, the Eastern Massasauga. A single observation of an Eastern Wormsnake was submitted from one of the few known locales for this secretive species. Nineteen observations of Eastern Hog-nosed Snakes were submitted. Twenty-seven records were received for Smooth Greensnakes; a Bedford County observation is the first in that county since 1935, and two Pike County specimens are the first since 1908. Three observations of Northern Rough Greensnakes were submitted from known locales. Twenty observations of Ribbonsnakes were submitted. A Centre County Mountain Earthsnake observation looks like a county record, and a Chester County Eastern Smooth Earthsnake was found in a new block for this county.

Turtles
A DOR Spotted Turtle record appears to be a first for Columbia County, and another submission for this species looks like a county record for Fulton. Three recaptures were made of Blanding’s Turtles as part of a study being conducted by the PFBC. Twenty-one observations of Bog Turtles were submitted, and five records for Northern Red-bellied Cooters were received.
Summary of vouched records received from April through June 2016:
Please note that these numbers represent the number of blocks, not actual numbers of specimens.
Records not submitted by the end of the month may not be included.
Records listed here might not have yet passed through the verification process.

**Salamanders**
- Eastern Hellbender: 3
- Common Mudpuppy: 1
- Jefferson Salamander: 17
- Spotted Salamander: 210
- Marbled Salamander: 29
- Green Salamander: 6
- Northern Dusky Salamander: 216
- Seal Salamander: 38
- Allegheny Mountain Dusky Salamander: 216
- Northern Two-lined Salamander: 162
- Long-tailed Salamander: 80
- Northern Spring Salamander: 125
- Four-toed Salamander: 37
- Red-spotted Newt: 279
- Eastern Red-backed Salamander: 419
- Northern Ravine Salamander: 2
- Northern Slimy Salamander: 188
- Valley & Ridge Salamander: 39
- Wehrle's Salamander: 54
- Northern Red Salamander: 128

**Snakes**
- Northern Copperhead: 29
- Eastern Wormsnake: 1
- Northern Black Racer: 48
- Timber Rattlesnake: 99
- Northern Ring-necked Snake: 217
- Eastern Hog-nosed Snake: 19
- Eastern Milksnake: 107
- Northern Watersnake: 146
- Northern Rough Greensnake: 3
- Smooth Greensnake: 27
- Eastern Ratsnake: 145
- Queensnake: 18
- Eastern Massasauga: 2
- Northern Brownsnake: 84
- Northern Red-bellied Snake: 42
- Shorthead Gartersnake: 28
- Eastern Gartersnake: 352
- Ribbonsnake: 20
- Mountain Earthsnake: 1
- Eastern Smooth Earthsnake: 1

**Frogs**
- Eastern Cricket Frog: 2
- Eastern American Toad: 527
- Fowler's Toad: 14
- Cope's Gray Treefrog: 14
- Gray Treefrog: 77
- Gray Treefrog/unknown complex: 31
- American Bullfrog: 138
- Green Frog: 374
- Pickerel Frog: 141
- Northern Leopard Frog: 20
- Wood Frog: 172
- Spring Peeper: 298
- Eastern Spadefoot: 1

**Lizards**
- Northern Coal Skink: 2
- Common Five-lined Skink: 32
- Broad-headed Skink: 2
- Northern Fence Lizard: 17

**Turtles**
- Eastern Spiny Softshell: 12
- Common Snapping Turtle: 159
- Painted Turtle: 186
- Spotted Turtle: 23
- Blanding's Turtle: 3
- Wood Turtle: 199
- Bog Turtle: 21
- Northern Map Turtle: 30
- Northern Red-bellied Cooter: 5
- Red-eared Slider*: 27
- Yellow-bellied Slider*: 2
- Eastern Musk Turtle: 18
- Eastern Box Turtle: 198

*introduced
While some highly knowledgeable herpetologists serve on our voucher verification committee, we often receive photographs of specimens which are a challenge, even for these experts. As many of you know, identification of certain species in the field can be very difficult, and you must closely examine different parts of a specimen to make a determination. Without key traits being captured in photographs, records for some species are simply impossible to verify. To obtain a clear image of key features in smaller species, a camera with a lens capable of close-focusing is critical. In general, one should strive to take photos of a specimen from as many different angles as possible. Fortunately, with digital cameras this is not as big a cost issue as it was in the days of print and slide film cameras.

The genus Anaxyrus, the true toads, is often a source of confusion. Fortunately (from the standpoint of identification effort) there are only two species native to Pennsylvania; the Eastern American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*) and the Fowler’s Toad (*A. fowleri*). However, since *A. americanus* is found essentially everywhere in the Commonwealth, the ranges of these two species overlap. Both can be quite variable in appearance, so good voucher photos are essential. When photographing a specimen of *Anaxyrus*, you want to try and get clear images of three different body areas; the top of the head, the dorsum and dorsal surface of the hind legs, and the ventral side of the animal.

**Head:**
There are two features on the top of the head which you want clearly defined in a photograph; the parotoid glands and the cranial crests. The parotoid glands are two large swellings, one behind each eye. These glands hold a concentration of toxins which are otherwise present throughout the skin of toads (for this reason it is advisable to keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth until you have a chance to wash them after handling toads). The cranial crests are two raised ridges of skin on top of the head, between the eyes. Each ridge is ‘L’-shaped, starting behind each nostril and runs along the top of the head at the base of the skin which covers the eye. Then the cranial crest branches outward at 90 degrees and runs along the base of the posterior portion of the eye. These branches are referred to as post-orbital ridges. They may have short ‘spurs’, depending on the species. In general, the configuration of the cranial crest and parotoid is distinctively different enough for each North American species of toad to be useful for species identification. In *A. americanus*, there is a distinct space between the post-orbital ridge and the parotoid gland, although there may be a spur which turns in a posterior direction and touches the parotoid gland. In *A. fowleri*, the parotoid glands are directly in contact with the post-orbital ridges.

A distinct space is visible between the parotoid gland and the post-orbital ridge on Eastern American Toads (left), while the parotoid gland is clearly pushed against the post-orbital ridge on Flower’s Toads (right).
Dorsum and Hind Legs:
Looking closely at the dorsal skin, you will find your specimen has several dark spots on its back. Within these dark spots will be a number of warts; only one or two on *A. americanus*, but three or more on *A. fowleri*. Additionally, the warts on *A. americanus* are highly cornified and decidedly conical and pointed, becoming more so on the legs and posterior region of the dorsum. On *A. fowleri* the warts are smooth, rounded bumps. Attempt to get a close-up photograph in which the rear portion of the animal is in focus. A side view shot works well, as the shape of the tubercles is most apparent in profile.

Venter:
Also be sure to include a photograph of the venter on each toad you document. The chest and forward portion of the abdomen is usually spotted with dark pigmentation on *A. americanus*, but on *A. fowleri* this area is relatively free of markings, save for one dark spot in the center of the upper chest. It should be noted that in both species, the throat will be darker in males, due to the presence of a vocal sac.

You may find that the above-described traits of your specimen might not be as clearly defined as in these descriptions. This may be due to the possibility that you have found a hybrid; apparently our two Anaxyrus species are capable of cross-breeding where their ranges overlap. For this reason it is a good idea to try to obtain a recording of male vocalizations whenever possible. The call of each of these species is unmistakable, and hybridization can also be reflected in vocalizations. If you have found your specimen outside of the breeding season, please consider returning at the time of year males are calling to try to get a calling voucher.
Good Field Protocol

Each issue of the PARS newsletter will highlight a different form of proper field protocol that PARS volunteers are urged to adhere to while surveying in the field. Following these protocols will help insure minimum impact to the environment and the animals we are seeking to document.

Be Careful About Sharing Locality Info

It is tempting to take friends and acquaintances to locations where you have previously found rare herp species, However one should be very careful with whom one shares locality information; particularly areas which are easily accessed. This sort of information can quickly spread to more people than you might have intended, and as a result a site may soon be negatively impacted from too much visitation, or from visits by unscrupulous people who are not conscientious about their field methods. Sensitive locality information may also eventually be learned of by poachers. Repeated visits to known rare species sites also require permits.

…and Etiquette

A recent visit to a rattlesnake gestating site, well-known in the northeastern PA herping community, revealed that most of the rocks had been carelessly flipped around and not properly replaced. Photo: M. Corn
PARS LEAGUE OF EXCEPTIONAL HERPERS

The column dedicated to recognition of noteworthy herping achievements and our wonderful volunteers. Recognitions based on highest number of observations, most significant observations, and other distinguished efforts.

Potential County Records

The following records appear to be the first observations of species of species in the associated counties during April, May and June of 2016:

Katharine Gipe: Fulton County - Spotted Turtle
Rob Robosky: Fayette County - Eastern Hellbender
Patrick Walker: Bedford County - Marbled Salamander
Gary Pluto: Centre County - Mountain Earthsnake
David Hand: Dauphin County - Marbled Salamander
Ed Patterson: Jefferson County - Seal Salamander
Joseph Brown: Potter County - Eastern Hellbender
Jaime Thomas: Berks County - Eastern Spiny Softshell
Brandon Hunsberger: Butler County - Gray Treefrog
Tom Pluto: York County - Northern Red-bellied Cooter
Tom Pluto: York County - Eastern Spiny Softshell
Marlin Corn: Bedford County - Gray Treefrog
Jordan Allen: Tioga County - Gray Treefrog
Johanna Hanlon: Carbon County - Jefferson Salamander
Mark Lethaby: Warren County - Gray Treefrog
Nate Nazdrowicz: Lancaster County - Cope's Gray Treefrog
Nate Nazdrowicz: Franklin County - Gray Treefrog
Nate Nazdrowicz: Fulton County - Gray Treefrog
Sean Hartzell: Montour County - Northern Ring-necked Snake
Sean Hartzell: Luzerne County - Red-eared Slider
Sean Hartzell: Columbia County - Northern Map Turtle
Sean Hartzell: Columbia County - Spotted Turtle
Sean Hartzell: Montour County - Northern Watersnake
Sean Hartzell: Columbia County - Fowler's Toad
Sean Hartzell: Montour County - Eastern Long-tailed Salamander
Wayne Hildebrand: Franklin County - Queensnake

Block Masters

PARS volunteers who currently hold the top ten slots for the most quad-blocks surveyed since the project launch.
*August 13, 2016 snapshot. **Tied for 10th place

- Ken Anderson: 414 blocks
- Kyle Loucks: 340 blocks
- Kyle Fawcett: 253 blocks
- Scott Martin: 251 blocks
- Nate Nazdrowicz: 203 blocks
- Ed Patterson: 195 blocks
- Mark Lethaby: 178 blocks
- Brandon Hunsberger: 151 blocks
- Tom Pluto: 149 blocks
- Duane Stafford**: 145 blocks
- Chris Bortz**: 145 blocks

The 100 Club

PARS members who made over 100 documentations during April, May or June of 2016:

- Chris Bortz: 229 records in April
- Kyle Fawcett: 134 records in April
- Scott Martin: 146 records in April
- Ken Anderson: 187 records in April
- Ed Patterson: 129 records in April
- Brandon Hunsberger: 142 records in May
- Duane Stafford: 161 records in April
- Nate Nazdrowicz: 133 records in June
- Scott Martin: 118 records in May

The Fantastic Five

PARS volunteers who have logged the most records since the launch of the PARS project on June 1, 2013 through March 31, 2016:

- Ken Anderson: 3,045 Records
- Duane Stafford: 3,031 Records
- Brandon Hunsberger: 2,809 Records
- Ed Patterson: 2,697 Records
- Kyle Fawcett: 2,120 Records

Marbled Salamander - Bedford County
Photo: Patrick Walker
Meet the Volunteers

Sue Muller

Greetings from Maryland! My name is Sue Muller and I serve as the Adams County Coordinator for PARS. I was raised in the lower Adirondack region of upstate NY. I was one with the outdoors from an early age. I received my first set of binoculars and “The Golden Guide to Birds” for my seventh birthday. Birds were my first passion. The NY state bird is the Eastern Bluebird and the Bald Eagle is our national symbol. I was not able to see either one of these species as a child...that bothered me. My parents sprayed pesticides in our yard to kill Japanese Beetles. One summer, birds ate the dying beetles and became sick and several died in the yard...that bothered me. There was the summer my Dad killed a snake...that bothered me. I just knew when I grew up I was going to save the planet and all the wildlife. My idol was Marlin Perkins from the TV show, “Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom”. When it came time to go to college, my parents laughed at me when I said I wanted to major in Wildlife Management. They tried to change my mind but I followed my passion and my dreams. I went to West Virginia University and received my Bachelor’s degree in Wildlife Management, long before there were exciting projects like PARS and MARA (Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas, 2010-2014).

I live in Columbia, MD and mention MARA because I come to PARS with a wealth of experience having served as the Howard County Coordinator for MARA. I work for the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks in the Natural Resources Division and I can truly say that MARA was the most exciting project I have worked on in all of my 30 years with the Department. MARA got me completely HOOKED ON HERPS! Once MARA was completed, I started having withdrawal symptoms. I heard about PARS and it wasn’t long before I was checking out the PARS website. So in April 2015, I convinced a friend to join me for a day of herping in the Gettysburg area. I continued heading up to Adams County all year and by the beginning of 2016, I was talking to Marlin Corn about stepping up as a Coordinator. I’m so glad I took this project on and want to thank all of you for welcoming an outsider! I am getting to know just how beautiful PA is. I travel through PA when I go home to visit family in NY and stop in different parks along the way. I even saw my first Wood Turtle and Northern Map Turtle in PA!

My other passion in life is travel which goes right along with my love of the outdoors. In the past year I have been to Florida to see Gopher Tortoises & Florida Scrub Jays and the Galapagos Islands to see Olive Ridley Turtles and of course, the Galapagos Tortoise. I went to Cuba in January and saw my first Northern Curly-tailed Lizard. It is wonderful to go to a country like Ecuador and witness the great conservation efforts going on to save indigenous species. On the other hand it is heart wrenching to go to a country like Cuba and see souvenir fans made from Hawksbill Sea Turtle shells being sold. Many of my trips take me to far away beaches volunteering my time to monitor nesting sea turtles. It provides me pleasure beyond words to aid in the conservation of endangered species. I have had the pleasure to lead trips around the world and I have seen so much. I always come back inspired to do more. So my new PA friends, I’m committed to PARS and will do you proud!
The Mountain Earthsnake, a sub-species of Smooth Earthsnake, is a secretive species which spends much of the year below the ground surface. Its dorsal color runs from gray to reddish brown, and it has weakly keeled scales. It lacks distinctive markings aside from tiny black spots which may be randomly scattered or roughly arranged in four rows down the dorsum. The venter and chin are creamy white to yellowish. There is a horizontally-shaped loreal scale touching the anterior portion of the eye. The only other Pennsylvania snake it might be confused with is the Northern Brown Snake (Storeria dekayi), but that species lacks a loreal scale and has strongly keeled body scales.

**Range & Habitat:** Mountain Earthsnakes are known from the high plateau regions of Pennsylvania, with recent records from Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, Potter, Tioga, Venango and Warren counties, and historical records from Fayette, Forest, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties. Damp, wooded, rocky slopes are probably the most preferred habitat, but Mountain Earthsnakes have been found in a variety of woodlands and meadows adjacent to woodland habitat.

**Search Strategy:** Primarily a fossorial species, Mountain Earthsnakes are rarely observed above ground in the open. They are most often found by lifting cover objects. Late-spring/early-summer and late-summer/early fall are the best times of year to search for this species, especially after heavy, cool rains which brings them to the surface to bask under sun-warmed rocks.
NAME THAT HERP:

Love of Lithobates

The following photos are all of Pennsylvania frog species from the genus Lithobates. Try your luck at guessing the species identity for each.
NAME THAT HERP:
Love of Lithobates
NAME THAT HERP:
Love of Lithobates
NAME THAT HERP:
Love of Lithobates

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### NAME THAT HERP: Love of Lithobates

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Preferably Alive

Scaphiopus holbrookii
A.K.A. Eastern spadefoot

Last confirmed sightings in Berks, Bucks, Lehigh, Centre, Cumberland, Franklin, Northumberland, and Union counties.

Reward: Accolades of the herping community

Photo: Brandon Ruhe
Contact & Resource Information

Regional Coordinators:
Northwestern Pennsylvania: Mark Lethaby - nw@paherpsurvey.org
North-central Pennsylvania: Duane Stafford - nc@paherpsurvey.org
Northeastern Pennsylvania: Larry Laubach - ne@paherpsurvey.org
Southwestern Pennsylvania: Ed Patterson - sw@paherpsurvey.org
South-central Pennsylvania: Tom Pluto - sc@paherpsurvey.org
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Recommended Web Sites:
Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey (PARS): www.paherpsurvey.org
The Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation (MACHAC): www.machac.org
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC): www.fish.state.pa.us
Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles: www.ssarherps.org
Northeastern Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation: www.northeastparc.org
Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas: www.marylandnaturalist.org