

# KLAUBERINA

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Department of Herpetology

December 1999 San Diego Natural History Museum

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## Department of Herpetology Prepares for the Next Millennium

The Department of Herpetology is ending the century after a upbeat and productive year. The majority of the collection is now safely housed at the Collections Annex building located at the old Naval Training Center near the airport. It is shelved, organized, and will remain off-site for the duration of building construction. The Collections Care Department, under the direction of Dr. Paisley Cato, successfully moved the 65,000 or so wet specimens in the summer of 1998. Adrienne Russell coordinated the move and was assisted by Department Associate Jim Berrian. Adrienne is currently serving as the collections manager.

### Status of the Collection

Over the last six years, the Department of Herpetology has been without a curator. During this time, there has been little activity with regard to the collection. The last specimen accessioned was in 1993 and a minimal number of loans have been processed. Since the move of the collection, the department is once again processing loans, receiving visiting scientists, and clearing up stagnant paperwork. The latter also involves the recovery of borrowed material long since forgotten. Considering the long period of inactivity, the collection is in good condition. The wet collection is housed in three separate rooms with jars shelved taxonomically (as they were previously in the old wet range). The osteological collection is still on the third floor of the museum on the mezzanine level of the Department, along with the type collection. Aside from the odd jar which needs to be topped off and an outdated taxonomy, the collection has survived the long period of inactivity in fine form.

### Computerized Database

In 1987, the Department of Herpetology, then under the direction of past Curator Dr. Greg Pregill, received a NSF collections grant to computerize the catalogue. Three computers were purchased and Greg hired Dr. Robert Sullivan to oversee the input of collections data. After about four years of work, the entries from the eight volumes of catalogues, totaling over 68,000 specimens, were entered into the MUSE database. Over the last year, the old MUSE system was abandoned and the database was converted to ACCESS. Unlike the old MUSE system, the new database is user friendly and a wide variety of searches can be quickly implemented. In the last five months, there has been 19 data requests, totaling 10,958 specimens, with the average turnover time at about five days. Data requests are now sent electronically through the internet. It appears that with the advent of ACCESS and the conversion of the old database from the MUSE system, the computerized database is in excellent condition.

### Postdoctoral Fellowship in Herpetology

The postdoctoral fellowship for the Department of Herpetology was established through the generous donation of a museum supporter and is an one-time one year appointment. Dr. Bradford Hollingsworth was awarded the fellowship in February 1999 and started with the museum on July 1 of this year. The fellowship ends on June 30, 2000. Brad recently completed his doctorate work from Loma Linda University under Dr. Lee Grismer, after receiving both his B.S. and M.S. from San Diego State University under Dr. Richard Etheridge. Because a postdoctoral fellowship has never been offered in the past, the position has been broadly defined as a research position. Brad has been encouraged to continue with his research program on the evolution of amphibians and reptiles from Baja California and its associated islands. Brad reports to the Director of Research, Dr. Exequiel Ezcurra.

### Preparing for 2000 and beyond!

With a well-managed collection, an accessible database, and an full-time researcher, the Department of Herpetology is prepared to make great progress in the next millennium. Loans are being processed, requests are being honored, and research is getting done. The Department is also moving forward in its public outreach with the Website Fieldguide. Volunteers Kathy Roberts, Kim Gray-Lovich, Rob Lovich, David Gonzalez, and Elijah Burns are assisting Brad in writing the species accounts for the more than 200 amphibians and reptiles from the museums region of focus. In addition to the website, Brad has been reaching out to the community by giving lectures in snake identification, handling, and first aid. He has given, or is scheduled to give, lectures to the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation, State Parks and Recreation, and the Sierra Club. In the Spring, Brad will begin a series of herpetology courses on the identification and natural history of amphibians and reptiles from San Diego County and Baja California and its associated islands.

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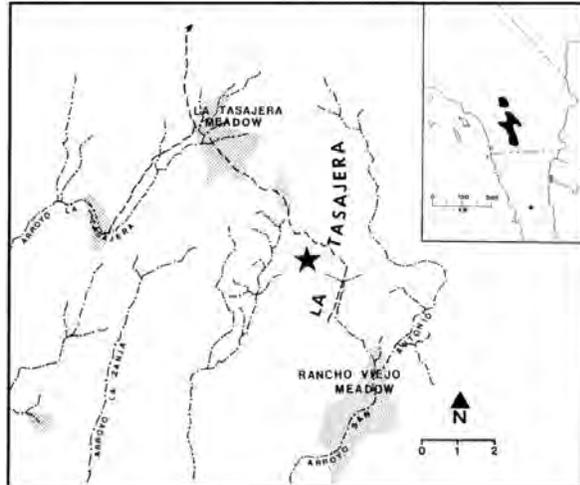
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## Department Associates Discover the Salamander *Ensatina eschscholtzii klauberi* in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir, Baja California, México

Two museum associates from the Department of Herpetology published an article detailing their discovery of *Ensatina eschscholtzii klauberi* from a mountainous locality four hours drive south of the border. Clark Mahrtdt, a Department Associate, and Dr. Lee Grismer, a Research Associate, described their findings in the journal *Herpetological Natural History* (1998, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 73-76), along with co-author Ron McPeak.



It had been speculated that *Ensatina eschscholtzii klauberi* occurred in the Sierra Juárez by Klauber in 1927 based on the reported locality of an observation from 125 km southeast of the city of San Diego. However, due to the lack of a voucher specimen, many subsequent authors dismissed the record as erroneous. Still, others believed this species would be present in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir given the continuous nature of the habitat south of the nearest known locality in Pine Valley, San Diego County.

In August, 1998, Clark discovered *Ensatina eschscholtzii klauberi* in the vicinity of La Tasajera in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir on a southwest facing slope next to a sparsely vegetated meadow. At this time of year, the Mártirs experience daily afternoon thundershowers which provided enough moisture for the summer activity of these salamanders. Over much of the range of *Ensatina eschscholtzii*, activity is usually confined to the winter months. Like much of the herpetofauna of the Sierras Juárez and San Pedro Mártir, this record is the southernmost locality of *E. e. klauberi*, disjunct from its more widely ranging distribution to the north. Lee believes this species dispersed from the north and entered Baja California through montane corridors that opened up 1–2 million years ago. They became restricted to extremely high elevations as the surrounding lowlands warmed up and became more arid during the Pleistocene.

Clark Mahrtdt served as a Curatorial Assistant to the Department from 1969 to 1974 and is currently a biological consultant in San Diego County. Lee Grismer is the foremost authority of amphibians and reptiles of Baja California and is a Professor of Biology at La Sierra University in Riverside County.

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## Professor at San Diego State University Honored at International Herpetology Meetings

Richard Etheridge, Professor Emeritus of Biology at San Diego State University and world-renowned herpetologist, was honored at the International Joint Meetings of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, The Herpetologists' League, and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. The meetings were held from June 24–30 of this year at Penn State University. A day long symposium was held in his name which featured many of Richard's past students and current colleagues. Based on the standing room only attendance, the symposium was a tour-de-force of speakers. The symposium was followed by a dinner and roast where he was bestowed the honorary title of *Zen Master of Herpetology*.

Richard completed his doctorate in 1959 from the University of Michigan, came to the University of Southern California on a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, and was hired by San Diego State University in 1961. He retired in 1997. Richard served as the Curator of the Department of Herpetology at the museum, starting the same year as his position at SDSU.

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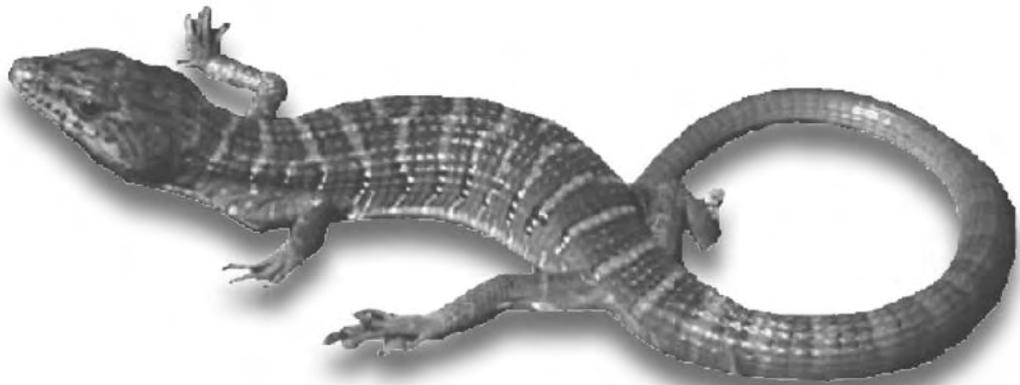
## New Species of Alligator Lizard from Baja California

A new species description of *Elgaria* has been submitted for publication to the journal *Herpetologica*. Dr. Lee Grismer and Dr. Bradford Hollingsworth review the systematics of *Elgaria paucicarinata* from Baja California. Currently, *E. paucicarinata* is recognized by two subspecies, *E. p. cedrosensis* and *E. p. paucicarinata*. From added material collected during the 1997 Binational Multidisciplinary Lindblad Expedition it was determined that the populations inhabiting the peninsula north of the Cape Region represent a distinctive form, diagnosed by a number of characters. In addition to describing this new form, they also elevate the two subspecies of *E. paucicarinata* to full species.

There is nothing like the emotions felt when collecting an amphibian or reptile you know represents a new species. As we enter into the year 2000, many people think that new species are things hard to come by, only to be found in the tropical rainforests. Do we really know how much diversity is in our own backyards? Over the last two decades, herpetologists have described a number of new forms from southern California and Baja. For example, Dr. David Wake describe *Batrachoseps gabrieli* from the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County in 1996; Dr. Jimmy McGuire described *Crotaphytus grismeri* from the Sierra de Los Cuapah in northern Baja California in 1994; Dr. Robert Murphy described *Coleonyx switaki* from southern California and Baja in 1974; and Dr. Lee Grismer described a new Night Lizard, *Xantusia henshawi gracilis* in 1986 from Anza Borrego State Park, a new Longnose Snake, *Rhinocheilus etheridgei* from Isla Cerralvo in 1990, a new Barefoot Gecko, *Coleonyx gypsicolus* from Isla San Marcos, and three new species of Side-blotched lizards from islands in the Encantada Archipelago in 1994.

With careful investigation and hard fieldwork, the description of new life forms continues!

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## New Snake Records from the Sierra Vizcaíno and Islands in Gulf of California

Postdoctoral herpetologists, Dr. Bradford Hollingsworth, has recently returned from two consecutive research trips to Baja California. The first trip, in late August and early September, was with Dr. Lee Grismer. It focused on the systematics of Alligator lizards and a herpetofaunal survey of islands in the Gulf of California. During his second trip, he joined up with scientists from CIBNOR to investigate the herpetofauna of the Sierra Vizcaíno.

While searching for reptiles on Isla Santa Cruz, two species of snake previously unknown to the island were found. Grismer's (1999) checklist of the insular herpetofauna of the Gulf of California is the most recent (just published in August 1999) and most complete accounting of these island's biodiversity. Yet, the discovery of two additional snakes on Isla Santa Cruz demonstrates the need for further exploration.

Brad joined Patricia Galina from the Centro de Investigaciones Biologicas del Noroeste to assist her team with a herpetofaunal survey of the Sierra Vizcaíno. These mountains are located along the west coast of the central portion of the Baja California and their remote nature has contributed to the poor understanding of their herpetofauna. Besides from documenting lizard abundance and diversity, they also discovered a previously unreported Lyre snake from this area. These observations will be included in an upcoming paper on the herpetofauna of the Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve. The only herpetofaunal account of the Sierra Vizcaino is Grismer, McGuire, and Hollingsworth (1994), *A report on the herpetofauna of the Vizcaíno Peninsula, Baja California, México, with a discussion of its biogeographic and taxonomic implications*.

Clark Mahrtdt also confirms another new snake record from an island in the Gulf of California. It has been submitted for publication by the biologists from Palomar College; a night snake from Isla Salsipuedes.

All in all, our understanding of the diversity from near and far is going by the year.

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# The Klauber Library

Laurence M. Klauber, a herpetologist by avocation, was a man with a wide diversity of interests. An electrical engineer by training, he became president and later chairman and chief executive officer of the San Diego Gas and Electric Company. His hobbies ranged from poetry, opera, and poker to inventing electrical devices and serving the San Diego community. Undoubtedly, his greatest passion was the study of amphibians and reptiles. From this, came one of his most prized possessions, his personal library on amphibians and reptiles. This collection of herpetological works was generously donated to the San Diego Natural History Museum in 1968. It remains one of his last great contributions to the field of herpetology.

Shortly before his death on May 8, 1968, at the age of 84, Laurence Klauber bequeathed his cherished library to the museum during a private dinner party attended by a select group of museum patrons. Earlier, in 1961, the museum had accepted the gift of his private collection of herpetological specimens. In order to express their appreciation for his latest contribution, the museum designed and built a separate room for his book collection in their already existing library. Architectural plans were completed on December 3, 1968 by Hatch, Heimerdinger, & Associates, Inc. of San Diego, the financing for the plans coming from a donation from Mrs. J. Dallas (Mary) Clark. The remodeling of the existing library with an additional room was placed at \$25,000, with \$18,500 being contributed by SDG&E (Engstrand and Bullard, 1999). The opening and dedication of the Klauber Herpetological Library came shortly thereafter on June 26, 1969. Today, the library is little changed with the exception of added shelving. It is maintained by an endowment from the Klauber family which allows for maintenance and the purchase of new volumes.

Laurence Klauber's interest as a bibliophile began sometime around 1925, shortly after he renewed his childhood interest in reptiles in 1920 and the publication of his first scientific paper in 1924. He served as the president of the Library Commission of the City of San Diego from 1942 until the time of his death. In 1945, his publication in the second volume of *Herpetologica* entitled "Some Herpetological Book Prices Then and Now" solidified his reputation as an expert in herpetological book collecting. The paper details some of the more noteworthy holdings of his personal library and compares the inflationary trend of the value of herpetological books.

At the time of its acquisition, the Klauber Herpetological Library was valued at \$47,500 and contained 1,400 books and 19,000 off prints, in addition to his hand-written card file, personal diaries, and original data sheets detailing his research on rattlesnakes and the collection of specimens. Today, the library contains 2300 volumes, and through prosperity, the collection is believed to be valued at over \$3 million dollars. Of a even greater value is the historical information contained in his personal notes. These detail the distribution of amphibians and reptiles throughout southern California, a region undergoing the conversion of natural habitat by urban development. This collection of books on amphibians and reptiles, and his personal notes, is certainly one of the most comprehensive private herpetological libraries ever assembled.

Contact either Margi Dykens, Museum Librarian (ext. 225) or Brad Hollingsworth (ext. 277) to make arrangements to visit the Klauber Library.

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## Museum Store

The San Diego Natural History Museum Store features books and field guides on amphibians and reptiles of North America, and the world. Some noteworthy titles include:

• Klauber, Laurence M. **Rattlesnakes: Their Habits, Life Histories, & Influence on Mankind.** University of California Press (1997) Hardcover - 1580 pages 2nd edition.

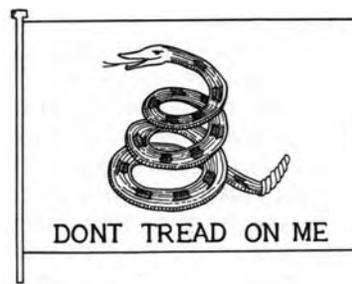
*A lifetime of fieldwork and laboratory research is incorporated in this authoritative treatise. Yet with his impeccable technical work, the author has not overlooked the fascination these remarkable reptiles command for the lay person, and includes folklore, fieldwork anecdotes, medical horror stories, and more. The original 1500-page two-volume book received the highest critical acclaim when it was published in 1956; a continuing demand for the encyclopedic work led to a revised edition in 1972 and again in 1997.*

• Greene, Harry W. **Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature.** University of California Press (1997) Hardcover - 288 pages.

*This text features writing that is clear, engaging, and full of appreciation*

*for its subject, Snakes provides an up-to-date summary of every facet of the natural history of snakes--their diversity, evolution, and conservation--and at the same time, makes a personal statement about why these animals are so compelling. 215 color photos. 3 tables.*

**The Museum Store is open every day 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM until Labor Day, then 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Members receive a 10% discount. If there is a book you would like to recommend that the store carry or one you would like to order, please call the store directly at 232-3821 ext. 239 or e-mail me at [jchenier@sdnhm.org](mailto:jchenier@sdnhm.org).**



Janet Chenier, Assistant Manager, Retail Operations

## Coming up at the Museum...

The Amphibians and Reptiles of San Diego County (2 nights, Monday/Wednesday, 21/23 February 2000) and The Amphibians and Reptiles of Baja California (4 nights, Monday/Wednesday, 8/10 15/17 May 2000). Both courses will cover the identification, distribution, and natural history of the herpetofaunas of their respective regions. The Baja California course will include a weekend fieldtrip.

**For more information, to register, or become a Museum member please call 619-232-3821 ext. 203, or check out the Museum's Web site at [www.sdnhm.org](http://www.sdnhm.org).**



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