

HerpDigest

Publisher/Editor Allen Salzberg

Sunday February 15, 2004

Volume # 4 Issue # 24

1) Highway Mortality Of Turtles And Other Herpetofauna At Lake Jackson, Florida, USA And **The Efficacy Of A Temporary Fence/Culvert System To Reduce Road Kills.**

By Aresco, M. J. 2003. In: C. L. Irwin, P. Garrett, and K. P. McDermott (eds.), 2003 Proceedings of the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, pp. 433-449. Center for Transportation and the Environment, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N. C. pdf version available. For More information: Matthew J. Aresco/Department of Biological Science/Florida State University/Tallahassee, FL 32306-1100 (850) 562-3093 aresco@bio.fsu.edu
<http://bio.fsu.edu/~aresco/www.lakejacksonturtles.org>

9) Miss. **Frog Habitat Preservation Sought** (Gopher Frog)

Tue Feb 3, (AP)

D'IBERVILLE, Miss. - Developers of a retirement community in Harrison County hope to sell about 80 acres to preserve the only Mississippi breeding ground of the rare gopher frog. The land sale also would provide a buffer between the community and the frogs' habitat, both located off Mississippi 67.

Glen Johnson, a senior lab technician at the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Institute of Forest Genetics, said the wooded habitat is actually a pond.

"It dries up during part of the year and this is part of the frog's breeding strategy to avoid predators," said Johnson.

Studying the gopher frog is Johnson's personal hobby. He found the first frogs in 1988. Since then, he's watched the population shrink to about a hundred.

"They breed in ponds that are found generally on high ground where we build roads, where we build houses and farms and pastures," he said. "So largely through human activity, the numbers have been greatly reduced."

Johnson said the buffer zone is to prevent any activities at the retirement community from interfering with the habitat. He said the retirement community's property begins about 100 yards or so from the pond.

Scientists said a malaria-like illness has been killing the tadpoles. They said a potentially lethal fungus has also been found in the pond.

Johnson said because of those threats, there is a search underway for other ponds in the six coastal counties where the frog can safely reproduce, before it becomes extinct.

The sale of the 80 acres must be approved by the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the Forest Service. Last August, the University of Memphis and the Memphis Zoo announced a program to try to spawn a frog population in exile from the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The university and the zoo accepted 75 tadpoles from the Harrison County pond for a captive breeding program. Gopher frogs once were spread across pine forests of the Southern coastal plains but gradually died out. They were thought to be extinct before the discovery of Mississippi gopher frogs at Glen's Pond in Harrison County. The frog was designated an endangered species two years ago. Their name refers to their digging abilities, researchers said.