In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader’s awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

**STRESS IN CAPTIVE-REARED AMPHIBIANS**

A. K. Davis and J. C. Maerz [2011, J. Herpetology 45(1):40-44] note that larval amphibians are increasingly being reared for conservation initiatives to bolster declining populations. Few researchers, however, have asked whether reared individuals are functionally equivalent to their wild counterparts. Compared with those in the wild, amphibians reared in captivity may develop in relatively stress-free environments, because they are usually fed ad libitum, raised in the absence of predators and pathogens and in controlled environments. Thus, with few challenges throughout development, would their resting stress levels or reactions to acute stressors be normal? This question was addressed by rearing *Lithobates sphenocephalus* and *Ambystoma opacum* from eggs and 10-day-old larvae through to late larval stages in artificial pond environments and by determining their ratios of neutrophils (N) to lymphocytes (L) (two leukocytes that covary with stress hormones) before and after a standardized stressor. Similar samples were obtained from wild-caught larvae of equivalent developmental stages and from the same source pond. Baseline and stress-induced NL ratios of reared *L. sphenocephalus* were statistically similar to those of wild individuals. In contrast, baseline NL ratios of reared *A. opacum* were slightly higher than those of wild individuals. In general, the magnitude of the leukocyte response to stress for both species (a 3-fold increase in NL over baseline), was similar to that of wild individuals, suggesting that captive-reared amphibians are capable of mounting a normal physiological stress response. Although this last point provides support for the use of captive-rearing for conservation and research purposes, the unusually high baseline NL ratios of reared salamanders will require additional research to determine the functional meaning.

**KURDISTAN NEWTS**

C. Schneider and W. Schneider [2011, Herpetozoa 23(3/4): 3-20] verified available information on the distribution of newts of the genus *Neurergus* in Iraq during an 11-day field trip to the autonomous province of Iraqi Kurdistan in spring 2010. Published localities for *Neurergus* in Iraq were visited insofar as access was possible. In situ observations including descriptions of the inhabited streams, life history and morphology data of the newts and an updated view of their approximate distribution are presented. Kurdistan newts fully corresponding to those described in 1916 by Nesterov under the names *Rhithrotriton derjugini* forma typica and *Rhithrotriton derjugini* var. *microspilotes* were each found in close vicinity to their type localities. Both newt forms were first records for Iraq since Nesterov’s journey in 1914. *Neurergus derjugini* derjugini (Nesterov, 1916) and *Neurergus derjugini* microspilotes (Nesterov, 1916) [Syn. *Neurergus microspilotes* (Nesterov, 1916)] are proposed to constitute the valid names of these two taxa. Color pattern variations of *Neurergus crocatus* Cope, 1862, from different locations are described.

**EXTREME COLOR VARIATION IN GARTERSNAKES**

R. D. Mooi et al. [2011, Copeia 2011(2):187-200] report on the remarkable variation and frequency of color morphs within and among eight populations of the common gartersnake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) in central Manitoba, Canada, and one on Isle Royale, Michigan, USA. Five color morph categories are identified, one melanistic and four scored on a qualitative scale based on expression of red pigment. In the most northern population (Janpég, 54.464°N, 98.115°W) and two island populations (George Island, Lake Winnipeg, 52.819°N, 97.620°W; Isle Royale, 48.102°N, 88.601°W), all five color morphs were expressed. The northernmost population also exhibited sexual color dimorphism, with female snakes expressing significantly more red than males. In contrast, two central and western populations showed very little variation, with only two of the most similar color morphs present. This study provides the first report of erythristic snakes in Manitoba, found in three separate locations around Lake Winnipeg. Melanistic snakes are also reported from three new localities in the province, all widely disjunct from previously identified sites around Lake Winnipegosis. Manitoban and Isle Royale populations are compared with color frequency data from sites in mainland Michigan and in Kansas. Color patterns among populations do not follow traditionally recognized zones of intergradation between *T. s. parietalis* and *T. s. sirtalis*. The extreme intrapopulational variation suggests that subspecies of *T. sirtalis* based on color are of questionable validity.

**NICHE OVERLAP IN TWO MONITOR SPECIES**

D. R. Sutherland [2011, Herpetologica 67(2):146-153] notes that dietary separation is an important means of differentiating ecological niches and avoiding interspecific competition between sympatric species. Congeneric species that overlap in geographic distribution provide an excellent opportunity to explore the mechanisms of coexistence. Two monitor lizards, *Varanus gouldii* and *V. rosenbergii* (Varanidae), are sympatric at a local scale in the northern Jarrah Forest of Western Australia. Both species are wide-ranging terrestrial predators of a similar size and may differentiate their ecological niche by utilizing alternative foraging strategies resulting in dietary separation. Because varanid lizards are an important group of terrestrial high-order predators in the Old World, any such separation may have important implications for faunal community structure. In total, 169 scat and stomach samples were analyzed revealing extensive dietary overlap between the species. Dietary intake was not distinguishable between species or related to individual body size. Invertebrates were most important in terms of frequency and volume, although reptiles, mammals and birds were also commonly identified. Dietary partitioning is not the mechanism allowing these congeneric varanid lizards to coexist.