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# THE HERPETOFAUNA FOUNDATION

Author:

**Rogier van Rossem**, Founder, The Herpetofauna Foundation, The Netherlands

The Herpetofauna Foundation (**HF**) was founded in 2008 in Tilburg, The Netherlands by Rogier van Rossem.

He had been working with reptiles and amphibians from a very young age. The passion for these animals was so great that he wanted to do more for the conservation, education, and

research of these creatures. Consequently, **the HF** was founded on these 3 primary principles. At the beginning most of the work was mainly focused on creating a vast network of reliable international conservation partners.

The philosophy of the **HF** has always been to host fundraisers with lots of educational aspects



**Figure 1.** The sign that was placed at the Bahia rainforest after it was declared a protected area; the Herpetofauna foundation participated in the species evaluation that led to this development.

in combination with entertainment, so attendees can be attracted from all walks of life and not only spark the interest of the herpetological community. This out of the box thinking has made it possible to start with the «for nature» events where the foundation has become famous for, like the body art for nature event, one of the bigger body paint events in the Netherlands. They also host the auction for nature, at which many terrarium materials are auctioned off for the various projects in which the foundation is invested.

Many more fundraisers have been organised and some have an annual edition. To be able to be a force for education and research, the **HF** also organises smaller and bigger symposia. The first big international symposium was the first ever **International King Cobra symposium** in 2017 with prominent speakers like Mark O'Shea, Bryan Fry, Colin Strine, Romulus Withaker, Joe

Wasilewski, Matt Goode, Gowri Shankar and many more.

At this symposium there were discussed plans on the conservation of the king cobra and the development of a collaborative book on king cobras with the world's leading experts.

In 2019 this was followed up by another big international symposium «**Venomous snakes as flagship species**» which had an even more impressive line-up: Gowri Shankar, Romulus Withaker, Mark O'Shea, Bryan Fry, Johan Marais, Wolfgang Wuster, Joe Wasilewski, Mahmood Sasa, Colin Strine, Sylvain Ursenbacher and many more discussed the important role of snakes as potential flagship species.

From 2008 onwards the **HF** has collaborated with many international programs regarding conservation and research. They also funded many of these programs that include, conservation of the *Cyclura lewisi*, *Cyclura*

*collei*, *Cyclura rileyi*, *Ctenosaura melanosterna*, *Iguana delicatissima*, *Ophiophagus hannah*, *Lachesis muta*, *Heloderma horridum*, *Salamandra salamandra*, *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*, *Astrochelus radiata*, *Dermochelys coriacea*, *Crotalus unicolor*, *Gavialis gangeticus*, *Atelopus varius*, *Darevskia* species to name a few.

The work also included species and habitat protection through collaboration with «Arco Nepal», «Arco Spain», «Sakearat Thailand snake team», «Ravon», «Gery Martin project», «Bahia rainforest conservation», «Brain youth group», «Forest restoration agency», «Snake patrol Surinam», «Health action international».

Also, a lot of research has been supported and (partly) funded on venom extraction and pharmaceutical use, venom evolution in toads, chytrid fungal disease, snake fungal disease, yellow fungal disease, cryptosporidiosis, *Iguana* genetics, vitamin D production.

In 2017 the **HF** also started the «snakebite survival fund» in which snakebite victims (especially children) in India and Africa are supported with financial means to aid in their recovery. We also train snake handlers to relocate animals safely and promote the educational aspects of snake conservation in those areas.

For educational purposes, Rogier produced two books for children. One is about the dangers many reptiles and amphibians face that are primarily caused by humans. A tortoise named Astro is featured in this story and was later adopted as the official mascot for the foundation's children's activities. The book is called «Astro, the tortoise that became a hero».

The other book was especially prepared for the snakebite survival fund and is currently being translated in many different languages. It is available as an open-source document on the new website for all to share. This book tells kids about venom snakes and explains how to act around snakes and what to do when you get bitten.

Through the years, the **HF** has partnered with the government (the Netherlands) regarding various animal welfare legislation and policies.

The ambition is to keep supporting many programs that protect species as well as assist in protecting their natural habitat.

We aim to be partners with scientists and help them with funding for their much-needed research which will also aid in better management and conservation.

Children will be a part of our educational

**Figure 2.** Our mascot Astro at one of our events for children. In this case the release of the children's book «Astro, the tortoise that became a hero».



**Figure 3.** Field work with the *I. delicatissima*.



**Figure 4.** Handing out the cheque for the work at Sakaerat (Thailand) for the purpose of radio-telemetry monitoring of the king cobra.

programs in schools and internationally we hope to diversify and expand the curriculum on these topics.

The «for nature» events are up and running again after a few Covid years and hopefully they will raise many more funds that we can invest in all things reptile and amphibian related.

The symposia are also being planned as we speak, and we hope to be a beacon of information for the herpetological community for

years to come.

**The Herpetofauna Foundation** is 100% non-profit and all the funds raised go towards conservation, education and research. Our team consists of only volunteers and our presence is currently in 23 countries around the world.

For more information, please check out our website

[www.herpetofaunafoundation.org](http://www.herpetofaunafoundation.org)



**Figure 5.** Group photo of our team and all the attending speakers at our international symposium “venomous snakes as flagship species”.



# KEEPING AND BREEDING OF MOPHEAD IGUANA (URANOSCODON SUPERCILIOSUS)

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*Uranoscodon superciliosus* (Linnaeus, 1758) also known as mophead iguana or diving iguana is the middle sized arboreal iguana with about 40 cm (15.74 in) of total length) inhabiting large territory of South America from Venezuela on the North until Bolivia on the South, being registered in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Venezuela, Surinam and Peru (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Current distribution of *U. superciliosus* (GBIF.org).



**Figure 2.** Adult female of *U. superciliosus*.



**Figure 3.** Adult male of *U. superciliosus*.