

Road closed for snake crossing in Illinois park

WASHINGTON, D.C. — You've seen road signs that read "Deer Crossing," "Moose Crossing" and the like. But what about "Snake Crossing?"

You probably won't find such a sign on the highways today, said district ranger Joe Newcomb of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, but maybe there ought to be one, for snakes do have at least one official "crossing."

That crossing is on a road in the LaRue Pine Hills Ecological Area of Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois, where snakes have the legal right-of-way on two occasions each year.

The area is an isolated community of plant and animal species whose uniqueness dates back over 400 million years. It's administered by the Forest Service as one of many areas in the 190 million acres of national forests managed for their special historical, archeological, geological, or as in this case, ecological interests.

Hundreds of plant and animal species, many of which are rare, make their homes in this ecological area. Among them are 35 species of snakes. In the spring, the snakes migrate from their winter homes — dens — to their summer homes in the swamp. In the fall, they go back to their dens. They cross the road each time they

make the trip.

Due to the increasing popularity of the LaRue Pine Hills Ecological Area, Forest Service officials became worried about the impact increased visitor use may have on the ecological area as well as on the snakes. In 1972, they decided to do something about it.

"The seasonal migration caused a major problem for our snake population," said district ranger Joe Newcomb.

"Some people would drive or walk along the road and shoot the snakes as they tried to cross. We saw this human activity as being inconsistent with the idea of an ecological area. We decided that the easiest solution was simply to eliminate vehicle use of that stretch of road temporarily while the snakes were migrating," he said.

So a three-mile stretch of road at the base of 350-foot-high bluffs is closed during the last three weeks in April for the spring migration and the last three weeks in October for the fall migration.

"Even this three-week road closing assures the safety of only 80 percent of the snakes," said Newcomb. "The others don't come straggling home until later, but we simply can't close the road that long."

During the peak migration, which occurs between the 15th and the 25th of both months, the snakes

move in waves.

"No matter how warm or cool it is, they start migrating in mass the second week in April and the second week in October," Newcomb said.

It normally takes about a day for one snake to migrate from den to swamp.

With several thousand snakes participating in the three-week migration, there is a constant stream of 10 to 15 individual snakes migrating at a given time. They are partial to good weather, migrating in greater numbers on nice days.

What causes the snakes to migrate? It's the reptilian instinct for hibernation, said Newcomb.

"They all hibernate in the winter

and re-enter the world in the spring," Newcomb said. "They find small caves in the rocky ground to use as dens because the temperature of the ground doesn't change much."

The snakes take refuge from winter by entering an inactive state in the fall and remaining that way in the den until a natural alarm clock awakens them in the spring. Then they embark on a journey from den to swamp.

Although there has been some minor dissent by the public over the temporary road closing, most public comment has been favorable, said Newcomb. Environmental groups praise the action and user groups accept it without much comment, he said.

JOIN 4H



The satisfaction that comes from doing a good job of farming

Liming is one of the most important factors in keeping your soil in the highest productive range. By raising the pH from a level below 6.0 to 6.5 or higher, you can expect to harvest as much as 5 more bushels of corn per acre, with similar increases for all other forage and cash crops.



ORDER NOW FOR PROMPT DELIVERY

Blue Ball (717) 354-4125
Gap (717) 442-4148

Attention
Beef & Pork Raisers
CUSTOM BUTCHERING

HESS' BUTCHER SHOP



2635 Willow Street Pike
Willow Street, PA

717-464-3374

— We Process the Old Fashioned Way —
• Pudding • Hams • Bologna
• Scrapple • Bacons • Dry Beef

We also Specialize in Beef
For Your Freezer, Sides of Pork,
Sides of Beef.

Quality
Stanfield
Product

CREEP FEEDER



Includes:

- Large open feed pan to simulate floor feeding.
- Sturdy aluminum bracket for quick feeder in-and-out
- Generous 1 1/4 gallon hopper capacity.

Not just another creep feeder! A farm tested natural way to start two and three day-old pigs on solid feed. Pigs learn to eat creep feed before weaning. So you wean faster and pigs do better under less stress.



HEAT PADS

For Farrowing Crates And Nursery
With Stanfield Surface, Draft Barrier
Cleats, Twin Cords.

Swine Systems
FARMER BOY AG.

457 E MAIN AVE., MYERSTOWN, PA 17067
1/2 Mile East of Myerstown
717-866-7565



DRIVE SHAFT REPAIRS
OLD OR NEW

lancaster truck bodies

lancaster automobile spring co., inc.
310 RICHARDSON DRIVE
LANCASTER-HEMPFIELD INDUSTRIAL PARK
P O BOX 4626
LANCASTER, PA 17604

- U-JOINTS • CROSSES
 - HEX • YOKES
 - SLIP-YOKES
 - SQUARE SHAFTS
 - KEY-WAY CUTTER SERVICE
- ALL IN STOCK - IMMEDIATE SERVICE

MACHINIST ON DUTY - MON THRU FRI
8 A M til 4:30 P M

PHONE: 717-394-2647 — 800-732-0004

**AIR COMPRESSOR
SALES & SERVICE**

**DeVilbiss
CURTIS AND**

CAMPBELL HAUSFELD

AUTHORIZED DEALERS FOR THE
ORIGINAL STAUFFER
PNEUMATIC WATER SYSTEM

- E&R Plumbing (717) 354-5554
- Scenic Road Farm Supply
- Benj Beiler & Ben Beiler Jr.
- Beiler Hydra-Matics
- David S. King

ATTENTION DAIRYMEN:

- ★ Zurn Air Drying Equipment For Moisture Free Air
- ★ Air Compressor Units Built To Your Specifications
- ★ We Service Pneumatic Milking Systems
- ★ Spray Welding
- ★ Machine Shop Service

**SCHRADER AIR
LINE EQUIPMENT**
NATIONAL DETROIT SANDERS

Belts & Pulleys, Roller Chain, Coleman
Lantern Service, hardware

STAUFFER'S MACHINE SHOP

RD 3, Ephrata, Pa. Phone: (717) 738-1516
1/4 Mile South of Rt. 322 on
Pleasant Valley Rd., Ephrata Exit New Rt. 222.



**Makes good
silage better.**

See your Pioneer salesman today

SILA-BAC.
BRAND
SILAGE INOCULANT

The Limitation of Warranty and remedy appearing on the label is part of the terms of the sale.

•Registered trademark of Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., Des Moines, Iowa, U.S.A.