

Show & Tell



Back in the 1970s, when I worked at the Sedgwick County Zoo Herpetarium in Wichita, Kansas, we didn't have sophisticated photographic devices, so when we got a new snake, we mimiographed the belly of the snake on our XEROX™ machine. This is because no two snakes have the same belly markings (or other markings, for that matter), and in virtually all cases, not even the same scalation. Hence, this was our way of maintaining evidence from the DAY of acquisition, in case we ever confused one snake with another of the same species? Not only are the (chin) scales of this snake not exactly bi-laterally symmetric, but the white patches on them are unique to this snake via pattern, scale location, and volume. ToDAY, the same identification evidence could be acquired via photographic documentation of the snake's body patterns via camera or, in the case of belly scalation and pattern, flat-bed scanner. Such scalation and markings are the equivalent of finger printing humans, since no two humans have the same finger prints.

