

Show & Tell

HISTORY OF THE KISATCHIE RATSNAKE (aka: Slowinski's Cornsnake), which is **NOT** a corn snake.



The hobby name, *Kisatchie Ratsnake*, was unofficially assigned to the newest Ratsnake species to be described in the United States, *Pantherophis slowinskii*, ostensibly because the "*holotype*" was collected near Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana. This doesn't mean that it was the first of its kind to be captured, because I was catching lots of these in 1971 in East Texas and Western Louisiana. The common name assigned when this species was described is Slowinski's Corn Snake, but I personally don't use that name because it contains the word CORN, and this is officially NOT a corn snake. In 2002, Frank T. Burbrink presented sufficient evidence to establish that this snake, *Elaphe slowinskii* (now, *Pantherophis slowinskii*), found between the natural geographic ranges of Corn Snakes, *Pantherophis guttatus* and Great Plains Rat Snakes (aka: Emory's Rat Snakes) was sufficiently dissimilar to those two species to warrant distinct species status. Surely

this species originated from the ancient natural intergradation of Corn Snakes and Emory's Rat Snakes? In order to preserve their genome in captive specimens, and since this snake is soundly dissimilar to those two founding species, we hope breeders will resist crossing Kisatchies with Corns or Emory's Rat Snakes. One thing I noticed when first photographing Kisatchies over a decade ago was that no matter how I filtered my strobes with opaque covers, the light heavily reflected back from these snakes. Obviously, unlike their Corn and Emory's cousins, Kisatchies have more-or differently arranged *iridophores* in their epidermis.