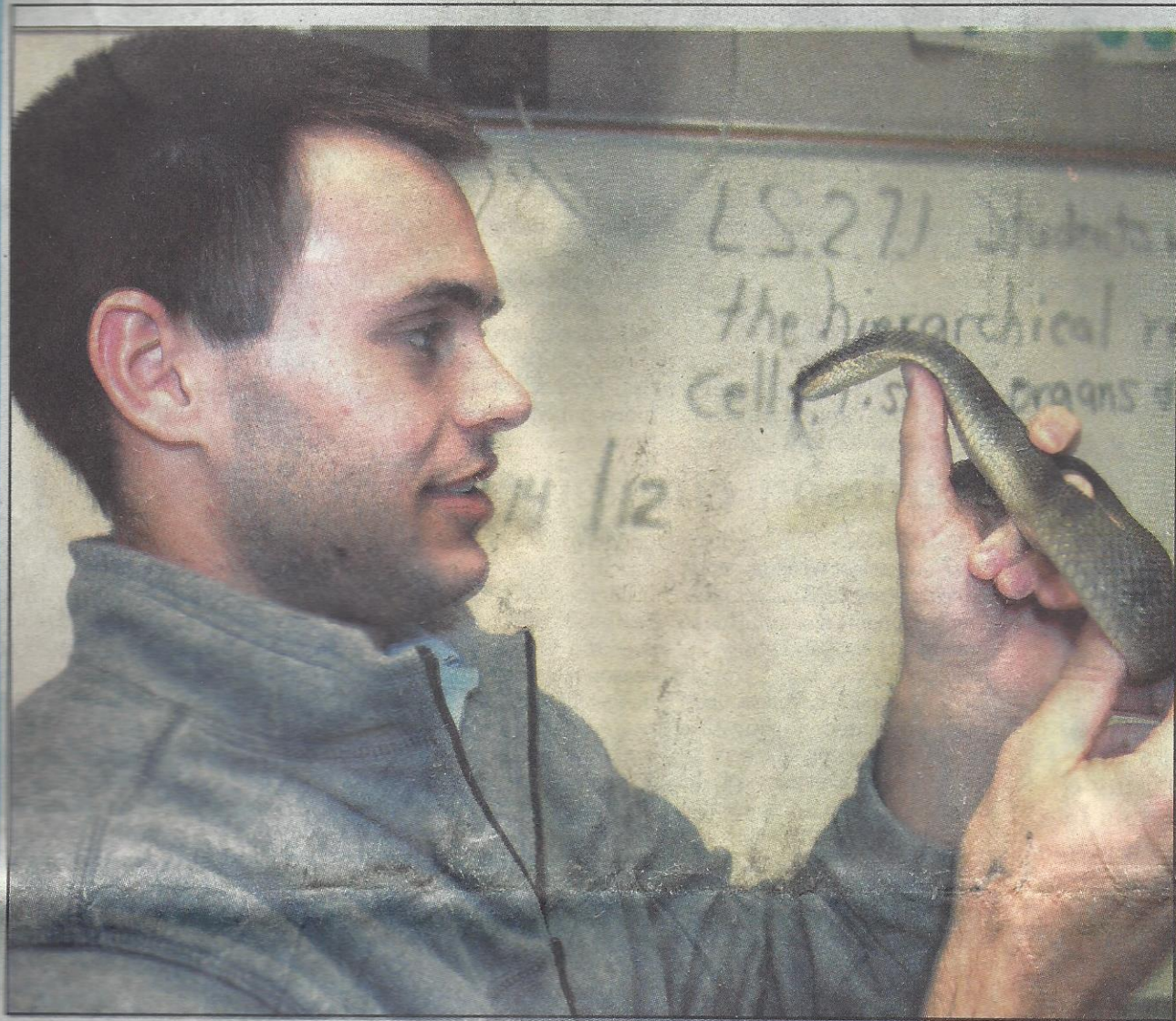


# Making science interesting, fun

*Jonathan Elston does it by demonstrating the science in every day life, and occasionally bringing a critter.*



*Jonathan Elston looks over a hognose snake at Forrest City Junior High during a recent school day.*

## DAVID NICHOL

Advertiser Editor

**FORREST CITY** — "You can be just a curious person and become a scientist, as long as you ask questions and are willing to work to try and solve those questions. That's all it takes to be a scientist."

Jonathan Elston is talking

science. We want to make sure they know that you don't have to be the smartest kid the class or the richest kid in the class."

Elston is a graduate student at Arkansas State University, who is participating in a program called GK-12. Barry Hodges, a coach and teacher, is one of the local instructors whose students are benefiting.

"A few years ago then-

"They've given money so they can buy supplies. They can bring animals, they can bring supplies from ASU," Hodges continued, adding that the grant from the National Science Foundation is due to expire this year. "And we're hoping they'll be able to write a new grant."

It is the third year that Forrest City Junior High has participated in the program



# SCIENCE

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Elston's graduate studies concerns reptiles, particularly turtles.

"Specifically, I study conservation and the ecology of turtles — reptiles and amphibians, but turtles are kind of my specialty," said Elston.

Getting even more specific, he says his master's thesis deals with urban habitat for turtles.

"I walk through muddy ditches and catch turtles, tag them and release them," he continues. "And I do a population survey to see how many turtles are there and what kinds. The over-all goal is to find methods were companies and businesses and construction crews can continue to expand, and still maintain the critical habitat components of the animals. So schools can still be built, restaurants can still be built, etc. and the animals can still live there."

Although he specializes in turtles, on this day he has brought a small hognose snake, which although harmless, hisses defensively when he starts to take it out of its cage. Once in Elston's

hands, it looks around for a while, testing the air with its tongue, and then tries to go up his sleeve.

"Anyplace dark and warm," Elston says, placing the snake back in its cage.

Elston says the National Science Foundation wants the grad students in the program to incorporate their own personal research, as well as try to generate an over-all interest in science.

"So I try to have some of my personal area of interest in every lesson," he says. It's not always possible, but he tries.

"We try tell to them what we need for our standards," says Hodges. "Like today he's doing things on responding to stimuli. And Coach Klein will be on something different next week."

According to Hodges, the students really look forward to Elston's visits.

"The kids just eat it up," he says. "They go nuts when they see he's coming. And if he's not going to be here they want to know why."

Hodges continues, "It's such a great thing. They're trying to write a new grant. I hope they succeed."