The snake capture records in this database primarily are from the field work of Henry S. Fitch at the Fitch Natural History Reservation and nearby tracts of the University of Kansas Field Station. The methods used by Fitch to capture snakes and make measurements are described in general terms in his 1999 book (Fitch, H.S. 1999. “A Kansas Snake Community: Composition and Changes over 50 Years”, Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar FL.).

Fitch recorded his field observations on hand-written data sheets. Using photocopies of these data sheets George R. Pisani entered individual capture records into species-specific Filemaker-Pro databases. Pisani corrected any verifiable mistakes in the original data sheets, standardized record information as required, made notations where necessary to help with interpretation of the data, verified the numerous recapture notations whenever possible, and entered and error-proofed the final electronic file. Please note that in a few cases the photocopied sheets did not contain the last record or two from the original data sheet (i.e., occasionally the bottom of the page was “cut off” when photocopied). This did not occur extensively, but arrangements are being made to obtain the original data sheets so that the complete set of records is in the electronic file. Records involved are noted as such in the NOTES field.

Many capture records contain descriptions of specific locations. General locations on the Fitch Natural History Reservation and adjacent KBS properties are identified as named subdivisions (i.e., unit or field). More precise locations often are referenced relative to one of the more than 750 named landmarks used by Dr. Fitch. These landmarks include named trees, cultural features (fences, buildings, roads), geological elements (e.g., rocks or drainages), and miscellaneous descriptors. Subdivisions, and landmarks on the Fitch Natural History Reservation, can be viewed through our web mapping application here: http://kars.ku.edu/geodata/maps/kansas-university-field-station/. Landmarks for areas other than the Fitch Reservation have not yet been mapped. For historical reference, an early example of named subdivisions can be seen in Fitch’s 1965 publication “The University of Kansas Natural History Reservation in 1965” (Natural History Museum, Miscellaneous Publication No. 42, 60 pp).

General notes on George R. Pisani’s (GRP) transcription of Fitch’s hand-written data sheets:

1. Brackets in a record indicate an addition by GRP during transcription.

2. Wood/board and tin/metal used interchangeably.

3. GRP verified recaptures using the word "confirmed" (or in some "unconfirmed") which revealed many more recaptures than Fitch found. The date of initial capture is not noted - users should sort by scale clip and date to note earliest (first) capture.

4. Recapture dates: If a date is not in quotes, it is one GRP found by searching; Fitch’s are in quotes.

5. All dead snakes coded as DOR, whether or not found on roads.

Fitch’s default capture method was trapping but through the 1960s TC in margin meant trapped and HC meant hand capture, both of which GRP included in records as "trapped" or "hand capture" as applicable.