

March - May 1970
(mailed in June)

COLLECTING NOTES FOR
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VA.

TURTLES (I)

In a recent issue of the Virginia Herpetological Society BULLETIN, four types of turtles were listed as "expected" in Rockbridge County and the probability of one other species being present in the county is proposed. The expected reptiles include:

Common Snapping Turtle
Stinkpot (Musk Turtle)
Eastern Box Turtle and
Midland Painted Turtle

Chelydra s. serpentina
Sternotherus odoratus
Terrapene c. carolina
Chrysemys p. marginata

The species reported to be "probably" present is the Bog Turtle, (Clemmys muhlenbergi). The VHSB reported that there were no (preserved) records of any of these species from the County of ROCKBRIDGE.

It is the purpose of this paper to clarify and document the occurrence of some of these reptiles in ROCKBRIDGE County, Va.

Four species of turtles were collected and identified in this survey. They included the Common Snapping Turtle, the Stinkpot, Eastern Box, and E. Painted turtles. The first three were extremely abundant in appropriate habitat throughout the county. Eastern Painted Turtles were obtained from a pond, Big Springs, about 6 mi. W of Lexington, Va., on U.S. Route No. 60, and ½ mile N. on county road #631 and abundant only at that location.

In all field trips, no specimens of the Bog Turtles (Clemmys muhlenbergi)

See VHSB #57-58, (1968).

or the midland painted turtle (Chrysemys picta marginata) were observed in this county. The total absence of these species is somewhat surprising. These species are: (a) either absent, or, (b) present in such small numbers during the summer that they were totally missed by the survey. All turtles were identified with the aid of Conant's "A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians," Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1958.

Representative specimens were preserved and placed in the museum of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

Charles T. Garten
C. H. Kern, and
J. A. Geason

Undergraduate Assistants,
Washington and Lee University,
Lexington, Va.

ADDITIONAL COLLECTING NOTES FROM CAROLINE COUNTY, VA. (Since VHSB #60 pp. 3-6(1969))

Common Snapping Turtle
(Chelydra serpentina) 6"

Northern Fence Lizard
(Sceloporus undulatus hyacinthinus) 4/12/69

Rough Green Snake 4/19/69
(Opheodrys aestivus)

Eastern Worm Snake 4/20/9
(Carphophis a. amoenus)

E. Painted Turtle 4/27/69
(Chrysemys p. picta)

Black Rat Snake 4/29/69
(Elaphe o. obsoleta)

Eastern Garter S. 5/3/69
(Thamnophis s. sirtalis)

Eastern King Snake 5/4/69
(L. getulus) PRESERVED by
Mrs. D. Brittle; Gile's Pd.
Co. Rt # 630, Caroline Co.

Northern Copperhead 5/28
(Agkistrodon c. mokasen)
Rappahannock Academy, Va.
Coll by John Reines Rt 615

Corn Snake (Elaphe g. guttata) PRESERVED 5/23/69
County record collected by
Pat Blanton, Ruther Glen,
Va., near X-rds Co. 652-654.

Northern Black Racer 9/16/
67/ (Coluber c. constrictor)
PRESERVED; S. Powell, coll.
Bowling Green, Va., 2 juv.
and adult: S. Ball, Port
Royal, Va. County record.

Courtesy of Mrs. Brittle,
and Biology Students.

SALT MARSHES AND THE SEASHORE'S BARRIER ISLANDS:

Dr. John and Mrs. Mildred Teal have written a book on the long (Newfoundland to Florida) narrow ribbon of low-lying and brackish tidal marshes of the east coast of North America. They describe it lovingly as a definite but elusive border, now hidden, now exposed, as the Atlantic Ocean's tides fluctuate.

Their book provides great detail on the history of the Atlantic salt marshes, their plants and animals. These tidal wetlands are faced with extinction, according to the Teals, unless the dredging, draining, and filling-in for new construction is halted. The writers' closing sentence is a plea for an early recognition of real wetland values: "The maximum value of the marshes to the country is as marshes, and unless this value is realized and action taken soon to save them the remaining marshes will quickly disappear."

"LIFE AND DEATH OF THE SALT MARSH" John and Mildred Teal, 278 pages text. Little, Brown -- Atlantic Monthly Press. \$7.95 ...

+++++

The theme of the book brings to mind efforts to save the so-called barrier islands south of the Assateague Nat'l Seashore.

The Nature Conservancy, 1522 K St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005, is trying to save the barrier islands.

Mr. Thomas W. Richards*, president of The Nature Conservancy, has obtained an option to purchase one of the islands south of Assateague Island, Md./Va. The option is for 850 acres of ocean front and marsh immediately west of an area formerly known as Ship Shoal Island. *Mr. T. W. Richards, a VHS member, resides in Arlington, Va.

The Nature Conservancy played a major role in saving the Mason's Neck area in NE Va., from real estate development. The Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy has undertaken a special project to save the barrier islands between Chincoteague, Va., and the mouth of Chesapeake Bay for a wildlife refuge and for possible extension of the national seashore park.

Virginia Chapter leaders: Dr. Robert J. Watson, Mrs. James L. Sundquist, and Mrs. Herbert M. Church. (Dr. Watson, chairman of The VIRGINIA CHAPTER, TNC, is a charter VHS member living in Arlington, Va. See his letter in the VHS "Communications" column.)

The barrier islands play a leading role in protecting the marshlands and the shore mainland from ocean storms. Residents of ACCOMACK and NORTHAMPTON counties have watched the islands with great concern since development companies have eyed these offshore areas as having construction potential.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) at Gloucester Point, Va., is attempting to determine the exact erosion rate of each of the barrier isles. Dr. Robert Byrne, quoted by the Associated Press, said the erosion study is part of an extensive investigation of the behavior of tidal inlets and marsh channels. The scientist noted that marsh conditions change when the barrier islands are altered by storms. "Washovers, that frequently accompany large storms, may fill in marsh channels in the lee of the islands, thus altering circulation of the water in the channel," Dr. Byrne said, adding: "The sand losses during storms could be dramatically reduced by building dunes immediately behind the beaches by trapping wind-blown sand.

(See VHS Communications: "Letters, Comments, Ideas"

ANOTHER PLETHODON ?!!

They said it couldn't be done! The chances of finding any new species or race of amphibians, or reptiles, inside a well-defined national park was remote. Yet, the "thunder ridge" or Peaks of Otter Salamander (Plethodon r. hubrichti) did just that! What were the chances for it to happen again? ---- None? ----Wrong again!! Dr. Richard G. Highton, a year or so ago, described a new subspecies of P. richmondi from the central district of the Shenandoah National Park. He has assigned to it the

name - Shenandoah Salamander (P. richmondi shenandoah). It occurs, under strange circumstances, on the north-facing talus slopes (rock slides) over 3,000 feet in elevation.

This animal does look and act differently than the "normal" red-backed salamanders. For example, on lifting a rock where both amphibians are concealed the red-backed (P. c. cinereus) simply curls up. The Shenandoah gallops into nearby cover. These Shenandoah Salamanders are nearly as active as

a Three-lined Salamander (Eurycea longicauda guttolineata) which is believed to be the most active salamander in the state.

The Shenandoah Salamander has two color phases - to add to the confusion; non-striped and striped!

We may only wonder how many more Plethodons lurk out there waiting...

William L. Witt, VHS
1412 Patrick Henry
Dr. (Apt. 121)
Arlington, Va. 22205

TIGER SALAMANDERS IN KING GEORGE OR WESTMORELAND CO.?

Quick survey of cornfield ponds on Coastal Plain in Va., was made during the January 1970 thaw by your VHS BULLETIN editor Tobey.

The Tiger Salamander (Ambystoma t. tigrinum) is yet to be recorded from a specific locality in Va. --- one we can pin down.

One specimen in the Smithsonian Institution (USNM) is simply recorded "from Virginia" without locality data of any kind. In past years, "TASK FORCE TIGER" was organized for meeting this challenge. However, few people wish to brave the "warm" rains of January and February.

VHS would appreciate word of temporary ponds (large puddles which persist into early spring) on the Coastal Plain. Westmoreland and King George Co.s were searched because the Tiger has been found, historically, on the Coastal Plain in Maryland, just across the Rt.#301 bridge.

SHORT TAIL OF A BLACK RAT

Probably the latest record in Northern Virginia for the Black Rat Snake Elaphe o. obsoleta: A juvenile specimen turned up in the City of Falls Church, in a shopping center store room 29 December 1969. It was

brought in, alive to the U.S. National Museum but died 4 January 1970. It was preserved and placed in the National Collection; USNM# 167,236

USNM R.G.Tuck

The immature Black Rat is often mistaken for other varieties of snakes. Sometimes taken for a baby of the poisonous copperhead, it is killed on the spot. The average person is not aware that juvenile black snakes are "spotted"...

LETTERS, COMMENTS, AND IDEAS:

SAVING THE BARRIER ISLES
(see page two)

"The news that the VHS is interested in saving the wetlands is most welcome. ... The Va. Chapter, The Nature Conservancy, is now engaged in raising a fund of \$20,000 to establish a 'Coastal Reserve' in the state. ... TNC dues payments (\$5, regular membership; \$10, sustaining;) should be sent to the "K" Street address. TNC members living in Virginia are automatically members of the Virginia Chapter and will receive notices of chapter meetings and other activities. . . .

Contributions to the TNC Coastal Reserve project in any amount, large or small, would be most welcome from VHS members. . . . As a member of the Va. Herpetological Society, I agree with you that such an organization, made up of a relatively small number of professionals and serious amateurs of this branch of zoology, should not dissipate its strength by trying to engage in efforts of its own.

It is important, however, to encourage members to lend their strength to other organizations which are equipped to undertake such efforts, and I am glad that you propose to do this. One can assume, also, that members will

realize the importance of acting as individuals to let their legislative representatives know their opinions on (these) issues!"

(Dr.) *Robert J. Watson
2636 Marcey Road
Arlington, Va.
22207

+ + + + +

VHS had a great response to a June 1969 mailing of "The Turtles of Virginia" (VHS BULLETIN Nos. 57-58). The total mailing was as follows:

Virginia High School Biology Teachers . . .	152
New VHS Members . . .	30
Va. College/University Biology Departments. . .	33
Camp and Park Naturalists	35
Total:	250

The return "safe arrivals" mailed back to the VHS Secretary requested added information on VHS, applications, or otherwise indicated interest. FJT

+ + + + +

SEND COMMUNICATIONS TO:

Editor, VHS BULLETIN
4706 Tallahassee Avenue
Rockville, Md. 20853

". . . As a student at Hampden-Sydney College I, have not had much time to collect, but I plan to get out some this spring. I have worked several years in herpetology at Duke University in my home town (Durham, N.C.) under Dr. Joseph R. Bailey and several of his graduate students. Most of my collection is now there. Dr. Bailey first interested me in VHS and I am sorry I have waited so long to apply for membership. I will try to make up for it in the future." Sincerely,

* Charles Llewellyn
Box 258, Hampden-Sydney, Va. 23943

VHSB is a newsletter on Virginian herpetology. It should not be cited in the technical or scientific literature. The VHSB does not pretend to be "a professional journal!" It is not. Appearance of an item in the VHS Bulletin does not constitute first publication since the VHS readership is too small to render it more than a "personal communication!"

SEND DUES PAYMENTS TO:

Dr. Phoebe H. Knipling,
VHS Treasurer,
2623 Military Road
Arlington, Va. 22207

VPI PRESERVED COLLECTION: -

VHS has received the VPI Biology Department's data on preserved amphibians and reptiles. The recorded specimens are now posted on the VHS maps (No.22) and the notes are on file by VPI catalogue number.

As new material is added to the VPI collection, we will be alerted by Dr.R.D. Ross or one of his students. Thanks are due Dr. Ross, Michael Clifford, and Brian Craig, VPI-VHS.

Other VHS members on the VPI campus may wish to offer their assistance; adding their specimens to the growing collection.

Dr. Ross writes: "I shall continue to send you additional records, as they come in to us, on 3"X5" cards. ... I have the specimens (at VPI) for all records now in your hands. The records are also preserved here on the data sheet on which I list animals taken on field trips. My collection number thus is the index to anything in the (VPI) collection. Each bottle has a collection number in it along with the name of the animal. Thus one can go from the specimen to the collection sheets (now beginning volume 24) for data on the animal in question."

COLLECTING NOTES FROM
NANSEMOND - NORFOLK CO.
LINE; LAKE DRUMMOND

A group of Smithsonian Institution staff, from the Division of Mammals, made a trip into Lake Drummond in the Great Dismal Swamp on 16 May 1970, bringing back some live specimens for the US National Museum's Division of Reptiles and Amphibians.

All specimens were collected at the north end of Lake Drummond near the intersection of the Jericho and Washington Canals, on the NANSEMOND-NORFOLK Co. line. Collected were:

Red-backed Salamanders (4) (Plethodon c. cinereus) taken alive by Dr. Ronald H. Pine; Ground Skink (Scincella lateralis) (was formerly Lygosoma laterale) one specimen taken alive by Dr. Pine on 16 May '70. Scarlet King Snake (L. triangulum elapsoides) ? ? ? collected alive on 17 May '70 by Miss Kay C. Ferris.

Rough Green Snake (Opheodrys aestivus) collected D. O. R. by Dr. Richard W. Thorington, 16 May 1970, preserved as USNM #167400.

PRESERVED AND CATALOGUED SPECIMENS WILL BE PLACED ON THE VHS DISTRIBUTION-MAPS (See VHS B#61 pp.1-2)

ADDITIONAL COLLECTING NOTES

Dr. Ronald H. Pine said the group saw or heard a number of other species in the Great Dismal Swamp. Among these were:

Bullfrogs (Rana catesbeiana) heard; Green Frogs (Rana clamitans melanota) heard; Toad (Bufo sp.) Common Snapping Turtle (Chelydra s. serpentina); Musk Turtles (Sternotherus odoratus); Copperhead (Agkistrodon c. mokasen X contortrix); and several Skinks (Eumeces ssp.) some of which were probably the Broad-Headed Skink (E. laticeps). All these specimens caught were released. (through RGT)

NOTE: UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE
ZOOLOGY, BIOLOGY, SCIENCE
DEPARTMENTS AND FACULTY

Beginning in 1967, the US National Museum, Division of Reptiles and Amphibians, has acknowledged donations of preserved material collected in Va., through the VHS BULLETIN's pages. Now, please consider this:

Those interested in the state herpetofauna would find this a welcome quick reference on recent collecting information. Your data belong here too. If you send data regularly--we can keep up with the accounts and keep current VHS DISTRIBUTION MAPS.

REGIONAL VHS MEETING IN MAY

A regional meeting was held in Bedford, Va., on 16 May 1970. A combination of bad weather and short notice cut into the VHS attendance. Members and friends who attended were not disappointed.

The May meeting was held at Liberty High School in Bedford with 24 attending. On the program were: Mrs. J.J. Thaxton, Chairman of the Liberty High Science Dep't; Mrs. Margaret (Pat) Duncan of the Science faculty and Junior Science Club sponsor; Dr. Richard L. Hoffman of Radford College's Biology Dep't; Dr. Robert D. Ross, Biology Dep't, VPI, Blacksburg, Va, and Mr. Franklin J. Tobey, the VHS Bulletin editor.

Mrs. Thaxton welcomed the group and spoke of the many science activities at Liberty High School. (She had just returned from the International Science Fair in Baltimore.) She introduced officers of the Liberty High Senior Science Club which sponsored the VHS meeting.

Mrs. Pat Duncan, Liberty High Biology Teacher and candidate for an M.S. degree at Radford College, gave a slide talk on her project in herpetology: "A Study of the Mating Season of the Seal Salamander." Dr. Hoffman spoke of the importance of Mrs. Duncan's project, its pioneering nature and the fact that only one

other person had written definitively on the topic. His presentation was very encouraging, not just for Mrs. Duncan, but the way it underscored VHS goals.

Dr. Robert D. Ross, VPI Biology Professor, spoke of the growing VPI collection of preserved specimens and acknowledged the assistance of students at VPI who are VHS members. Two in the audience were: Mr. Michael Clifford of Portsmouth, and Mr. Brian Craig of Bedford. (See p.5).

VHS would like to thank Mrs. Thaxton, the Liberty High School Science Clubs, and Mr. Costello M. Craig of Bedford, and all who attended the VHS meeting.

24 OCTOBER 1970 MEETING of SOUTHWESTERN VHS MEMBERS AT ROANOKE COLLEGE, SALEM, VA.

VHS:

Dr. Gene Grubitz, III, Professor of Biology, Roanoke College, Salem, Va., has invited the VHS members to meet at Roanoke College, on Saturday, 24 October 1970 in the first of what, we hope, may be a series of college or university-affiliated get-togethers on herpetology problems--in Virginia. It is our wish to have a close tie with these departments and individuals. Thus a broader base for the Va. Herpetological Survey and related activities in the years ahead. We seek the advice and guidance of these biologists and zoologists to improve VHS.

"I herewith offer the facilities of the Biology Department of Roanoke College for a regional meeting of VHS this fall. Our new Life Science building is scheduled for completion 1 September, however, it would not be safe to depend upon these facilities prior to early October. Our new facilities will be more than adequate in terms of phys-

ical space for talks and displays and projection equipment. Also, our location is central within the Blacksburg - Radford - Salem - Roanoke - Bedford - Lynchburg area. Local accommodations are excellent for such a meeting and are not overpowered by other events at the College."

(Dr.)*Gene Grubitz, III Assistant Professor of Biology, Roanoke College, Salem, Va.

THE VHS BULLETIN WELCOMES
CONTRIBUTIONS

VHSB seeks contributions of items on the Virginian herpetofauna or anything related to, or affecting Virginian herpetology and species indigenous to Va.

We would publish synopses of scientific papers from the professional journals: COPEIA, HERPETOLOGICA and JOURNAL of HERPETOLOGY, if the item has a bearing upon Virginian herpetology.

VHS authors who are to be published in a scientific journal are encouraged to submit a synopsis of the paper for mention in VHSB. The item will be timed to appear shortly after the publication is available and, upon notification by the author that it has in fact been published. Name of journal, date, Vol. No. pages, should accompany notification for citation.

VHS BULLETIN'S purpose is to acquaint Virginians, interested in herpetology with results of studies made in the State or in the bordering counties of contiguous States.

Your suggestions welcome!

Content: Should be of interest to university and high school faculty and their students as well as others who are interested. Improved understanding of Va. herpetofauna, nature & habits, ecology & biology should be the result.

All items should be brief and reasonably understandable to the non-scientist.

If the author, or typists, wish to type the articles in the 3-column format each 25 characters wide, it will greatly reduce preparation time for VHSB.

Editing: We will endeavor to preserve individuality in style and organization. However, wordy items will be cut to conserve space. Before you start writing look over a few recent issues of VHS BULLETIN. . .

Articles: VHSB is beamed to a general but educated audience. Jargon and rare technical terms should be either: (a) avoided, or (b) translated in a brief parenthetical line; e.g., stenohaline = (uniformity of salinity, or a lack of variation in such levels).

.....
• VHS circulation is roughly as follows:

- Members* 279
- 1. College biologists 40
- 2. Cp.&Pk. naturalists 51
- 3. High School biology teachers (in Va.) 150
- 4. Scouters, Reptile Study MB Counselors 50

• Illustrations: We regret that line cuts, black and white halftones, photos, cannot be used in VHSB except in the special issue and then line cuts only.

• VHS Budget: Regretfully we cannot compensate VHSB authors under the present financial limitations imposed by dues and budget.

Articles should make a contribution to knowledge, or clarify an area which has been unnecessarily cloudy. VHS will not, consciously, repeat error or "folklore" unless labelled as such.

We need your help in keeping a finger on the true pulse of Va. herpetology.

*Members may be from any of the four categories.

.....

VHSB is a newsletter on Virginian herpetology. It should not be cited in the technical or scientific literature. The VHSB does not pretend to be "a professional journal." It is not. Appearance of an item in the VHS BULLETIN does not constitute first publication since the VHS readership is too small to render it more than "a personal communication."

Reference to VHS BULLETIN in other State herpetological society bulletins or newsletters is not discouraged since a file of VHS BULLETINS will be available to officers of these groups on "exchange" basis. Please mention in any credit line that VHS is not seeking out-of-Va. membership. Scientists will be sent VHS BULLETIN, upon written request, to

the Treasurer on the same basis as Virginia members.

Let us know if you are engaged in studies that involve Virginian species. Here is a vehicle for reaching others who share your interest or who are seeking information on Va.

Automatically your correspondence reaches interested people in Virginia.