

NOTES ON THE HERPETOLOGY OF GRANT COUNTY, OREGON

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Grant County, located in eastern Oregon, occupies an area of 4,533 square miles and is bordered by Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Baker, Malheur, Harney, Crook and Wheeler Counties. The herpetology of Grant County is little known, which is indicated by the fact that many of the species are here recorded for the first time from the county.

The present account concerns collections made in the summers of 1964 and 1965 and records in the Natural History Museum at Oregon State University. Most of the specimens upon which this paper is based are deposited in the Natural History Museum, Oregon State University, Corvallis. We wish to thank the people of the Grant County for their help and hospitality.

Amphibia

1. *Ambystoma macrodactylum*. Long-toed salamander larvae were collected in the Murderers Creek drainage throughout the summer of 1964. Three larvae were observed in a small cold spring at 5,000 feet of elevation from 26 June 1964, until 3 August 1964; no change in size was noted. Metamorphosis in permanent water probably takes two years at this elevation. Larvae were also found in temporary pools filled with snow and rain runoff. Very small larvae were noted in a turbid temporary pool on Umatilla Creek 11 July 1964, and a return visit on 21 July 1964, found the pool dry and only one small juvenile under a piece of bark. Adult salamanders have been collected throughout the John Day Valley in moist habitats such as under rotten logs and in water reservoirs. *Hyla regilla* adults and tadpoles were usually found associated with *A. macrodactylum* in the early spring. Localities: Cold Spring, Murderers Creek Guard Station spring, Riley Creek Meadows, Bates, Dayville, and Umatilla Creek.

2. *Bufo boreas*. Tadpoles were collected from 29 June 1964, until 2 August 1964, in the Murderers Creek drainage. Tadpoles of *Hyla regilla* and *B. boreas* were in the same pools. Adults were collected from 1,800 to 7,000 feet of elevation. Localities: Lake Creek Guard Station, Wickiup Creek, Johnny Kirk Spring, Bates, Cant Ranch, Murderers Creek Guard Station, Riley Creek Meadows, Miners Creek, Stewart Reservoir, and Big Cabbage Patch Spring.

3. *Hyla regilla*. On 12 June 1965, hundreds of tree frog tadpoles in various stages of metamorphosis were found in a small pool

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of turbid water in the dry John Day Fossil Beds. On 23 June 1965, an adult male was collected in a squirrel hole in the middle of a dirt road on Antelope Flat. Other adults were collected in cracks of rotten logs, under logs, in ponderosa pine thickets, springs, swamps and other moist habitats. Localities: Middle Fork John Day River, Blue Mtn. Hot Springs, John Day Fossil Beds, Antelope Flat, Hines Work Road, Antelope Creek, Umatilla Creek, Big Weasel Spring, Big Cabbage Patch Spring, Stewart Reservoir, Canyon City, and Dayville.

4. *Rana pretiosa*. Representatives of this species are common in Grant County. It occupies springs, streams, lakes and marshy areas. Localities: Sugar Spring, Antelope Flat, Canyon Creek, Antelope Creek, Stewart Reservoir, Middle Fork John Day River, Blue Mtn. Hot Springs, High Lake, Lake Creek Guard Station, and South Fork John Day River.

5. *Rana catesbeiana*. The bullfrog was introduced into the John Day River Valley in 1923 by Irving Hazeltine, district game warden for Malheur, Grant, Harney and Baker Counties. Hazeltine received permission from the Oregon State Game Commission to ship frogs into the area. The bullfrogs were obtained from the Boise Valley in Idaho where they had been introduced from Alabama. The first delivery was made to Si J. Bingham, supervisor of Malheur National Forest, who was directed to liberate the bullfrogs in a pond on the Dale Ranch a few miles from Canyon City. Bullfrogs were also distributed along the John Day River in Grant County, to Harney and Baker Counties, and into California. Present habitat includes permanent ponds along the John Day River, irrigation ditches and other permanent water. Localities: Observation records show that the bullfrog is found in suitable habitats throughout the county.

Reptilia

6. *Clemmys marmorata*. A male western pond turtle was collected by Mrs. Howard Newton in May, 1965, along Canyon Creek. Turtles have been sighted in ponds bordering the John Day River. It appears western pond turtles are becoming established, but are still limited in numbers. Localities: Canyon Creek.

7. *Sceloporus occidentalis*. The western fence lizard was collected sunning on rocks and under sagebrush on hillsides of the Picture Gorge and John Day Fossil Beds. Localities: Picture Gorge, Cant Ranch, and Sheep Rock.

8. *Uta stansburiana*. The side-blotched lizard is common in the rocky gullies and open sagebrush areas of the John Day Fossil Beds. Localities: John Day Fossil Beds, Monroe Fossil Beds, and Picture Gorge.

9. *Eumeces skiltonianus*. The western skink was found at 4,600 feet of elevation in the ponderosa pine of Oregon Mine Creek and on

the rocky sagebrush-covered hillsides of the John Day Valley. Localities: Picture Gorge, Canyon City, Oregon Mine Creek, and Dayville.

10. *Charina bottae*. Seven rubber boas were collected in Grant County during the summer of 1964. On 12 June 1964, an adult was found under a 5 gallon milk can along Canyon Creek. Golden-brown juveniles were collected on Tennessee Creek and Todd Creek on 29 August 1964, and 10 September 1964. Wayne Stewart collected a large female on the Stewart Ranch on 15 September 1964. On 16 September 1964, this female gave birth to three young. The young were golden dorsally and pink ventrally. An adult male *Peromyscus maniculatus* was confined with the adult and the young on 17 September 1964. At 11 P.M. noise was heard in the cage where one of the young had wrapped itself around the mouse's neck. The tail was always in an unprotected position waving in front of the mouse, while the head was well-protected behind several coils around the neck. The battle continued until the tip of the snake's tail was bitten off. Adult rubber boas were found to readily eat young *Microtus sp.* Localities: Canyon Creek, Tennessee Creek, Aldrich Mountain, Wayne Stewart Ranch, and Cottonwood Creek.

11. *Coluber constrictor*. On 24 July 1965, a large racer was found coiled around a water pipe in a spring box on the Cant Ranch near Dayville. Part of its coils were under water. It was reported that this spring box usually contained many *H. regilla*, but at this time only two frogs could be found. The racer is common at lower elevations in Grant County. Localities: John Day, Cant Ranch, Birch Creek, Fields Creek, and South Fork John Day River.

12. *Pituophis melanoleucus*. This snake is common in the rim-rocks and alfalfa fields at lower elevations. Localities: Canyon Creek, Cant Ranch, Kimberly, and Dayville.

13. *Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi*. Members of this subspecies have been found with *T. e. vagrans* around temporary ponds in the Murderers Creek area where young *H. regilla* and *B. boreas* were numerous. *T. s. fitchi* seems more restricted to aquatic habitats than does *T. e. vagrans*. Localities: John Day, Seneca, Antelope Creek, Murderers Creek Guard Station, Middle Fork John Day River, and Blue Mtn. Hot Springs.

14. *Thamnophis elegans vagrans*. The wandering garter snake was usually found near water. Two large adults were collected along Murderers Creek on 20 July 1964. One contained three naked young of *Peromyscus maniculatus*, the other regurgitated a six inch rainbow trout. Localities: Bates, Page Ranch, Antelope Flat, Hines Work Road, Canyon City, Murderers Creek, Charlie Mack Creek, south-east of Izee, and south of Seneca.

15. *Crotalus viridis*. Members of the subspecies *C. v. oregonus* are common in Grant County, but one specimen from near Izee appears to be the subspecies *C. v. lutosus*. Coloration in *C. v. oregonus*

varies from light gray in sagebrush areas to dark green at higher elevations. Most are found in the dry foothills surrounding irrigated valleys. Localities: Ritter, John Day, Murderers Creek Ranch, Cant Ranch, Fields Creek, and Shaw Spring.

Phrynosoma platyrhinos was not collected from the county, but locality records in the John Day country are reported by Gordon (1939). The following reptiles and amphibians have been reported from adjacent areas and may occur in Grant County; *Ascaphus truei* *Scaphiopus hammondi*, *Sceloporus graciosus*, *Cnemidophorus tigris*, *Masticophis taeniatus* and *Hypsiglena torquata*.

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