

Albino Eastern Garter Snakes, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*, from Ontario

WAYNE F. WELLER

9 Mississauga Road North, Mississauga, Ontario L4H 2H5

Weller, Wayne F. 1983. Albino Eastern Garter Snakes, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*, from Ontario. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 97(4): 456.

Two albinos were present in a litter of 14 Eastern Garter Snakes (*Thamnophis s. sirtalis*) born in captivity to a female of normal pigmentation taken in 1970 at Moira Lake, Hastings County, Ontario. Although reports of albinistic newborn and adult Eastern Garter Snakes are not uncommon, this represents the first documented record for Ontario.

Key Words: Albinism, Eastern Garter Snake, *Thamnophis s. sirtalis*, Ontario.

Hensley (1959) presented records of albino or partially albino Eastern Garter Snakes, *Thamnophis s. sirtalis*, from Michigan and Indiana eastward through Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York to Connecticut. Subsequently, Dyrkacz (1981) reported albinos from West Virginia and Maryland, and Bartlett (1981) from Massachusetts.

Two previous Ontario reports are vague. Hensley (1959: 155) noted that an albino specimen was "kept alive for some time in the Zoology Department, University of Toronto", but no locality was recorded. No records of albinistic garter snakes from Ontario are documented in the collections or files of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (J. Lovisek, personal communication, May 1982) or the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa (F. R. Cook, personal communication, May 1982). An albino garter snake was reportedly collected at Fort Erie, Ontario, sometime in 1963-66 and given to the Buffalo Zoo but no other details are available (B. Froom, personal communication, May 1982).

The following record is therefore noteworthy in giving the first documented evidence of albinism in Ontario garter snakes.

A female of normal pigmentation for *Thamnophis s. sirtalis*, taken at Moira Lake (44°28'N, 77°28'W, near the town of Madoc, Hastings County), gave birth to 14 young on 10 August 1970. Of these, two were albino. No measurements were recorded at birth.

Both albinos were active from birth and fed initially on earthworms, Redback Salamanders (*Plethodon cinereus*), juvenile American Toads (*Bufo americanus*), and, in later months, on young-of-the-year Leopard Frogs (*Rana pipiens*). One albino lived 18 months, the other, 27 months. Colour slides taken of both individuals, (W. W. photo numbers 10-14; 147-154; 970-975) and one of these was earlier published

by Froom (1972: 8e) who omitted any details of the specimen's origin. The eyes of both specimens were bright pink. The background colour was chalk-white, but the striped pattern was apparent as the dorsal stripe and the two laterals were bright yellow. The two blotches on the parietal head scales were also bright yellow. Regrettably no measurements or weight were recorded for these specimens and neither was preserved.

One other albino garter snake was seen in the Moira Lake area in 1970. The same week that the normal pigmented adult female was collected, a cottage resident on Moira Lake reported a "2-foot long white snake with yellow stripes and pink eyes". It had been seen basking on rocks at the shoreline of Moira Lake approximately 0.4 km from where the female which gave birth to the albinos was taken.

Acknowledgments

The assistance of F. R. Cook, J. Lovisek, and B. Froom in obtaining information on albino Ontario garter snakes is appreciated.

Literature Cited

- Bartlett, R. D. 1981. An albino eastern garter snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, from western Massachusetts. *Herpetological Review* 12(2): 52.
- Dyrkacz, S. 1981. Recent instances of albinism in North American amphibians and reptiles. *Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles*, *Herpetological Circular* No. 11. 31 pp.
- Froom, B. 1972. *The Snakes of Canada*. McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto/Montreal. 128 pp.
- Hensley, M. 1959. Albinism in North American amphibians and reptiles. *Publications of the Museum, Michigan State University* 1(4): 133-159.

Received 8 September 1982

Accepted 10 July 1983



Weller, Wayne F. 1983. "Albino Eastern Garter Snakes, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*, from Ontario." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 97(4), 456–456.

<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.355054>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/89042>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.355054>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/355054>

Holding Institution

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Sponsored by

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.