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Range Extension and First Holocene Record of the Arctic Shrew, *Sorex arcticus*, from the Driftless Area, Southeastern Minnesota

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A specimen of the Arctic Shrew, *Sorex arcticus*, was secured in extreme southeastern Minnesota, at a locality within the late Pleistocene Driftless Area. This new record extends the known range approximately 198 km and is discussed in the context of the Pleistocene distribution of the Arctic Shrew.

Key Words: Arctic Shrew, *Sorex arcticus*, Driftless Area.

Sorex arcticus is a boreal species with large geographic and broad ecological ranges across Canada (van Zyll de Jong 1983). In the United States, the species reaches the southern limit of its distribution in Wisconsin and Minnesota (Hall 1981). Heaney and Birney (1975) reported it to be common in a grass-sedge meadow and at the edges of a marsh near what was thought to be that limit, Anoka County, Minnesota. Hazard (1982) depicted the known localities in Minnesota as extending south only as far as the Minnesota River and the Mississippi River east of its confluence with the Minnesota River.

We report finding a *S. arcticus* dead on a road in Beaver Creek Valley State Park, Houston Co., the most southeastern county in Minnesota, on 3 May 1980. The specimen was a parous female with seven embryos. The standard measurements (total, tail, hindfoot, and ear(n) lengths, in mm; weight, in g) were, respectively, about 105 (the rostrum was broken off cleanly), 39, 13.5, 7, and 8.8. Identification was made on the basis of cranial and mandibular characters, and the tricoloration typical of this species (Junge and Hoffmann 1981).

Beaver Creek Valley is narrow (about 650 m wide at the top) and deep cut (about 90 m maximum depth). The forest canopy was originally Boxelder

(*Acer negundo*), Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), maple (*Acer* spp.), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), and oaks (*Quercus* spp.), much of which persists today with an assemblage of at least eight plant species officially recognized by the state of Minnesota as endangered, threatened, or of special concern (K. Bolin, personal communication). Surrounding land is intensively and extensively cultivated. Attempts to secure additional specimens here and elsewhere in the area failed in 1990 and 1991, although the effort was hampered by flash floods and, presumably, Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*). Nor was *S. arcticus* secured on algific (cold air producing) talus slides elsewhere in southeastern Minnesota in 1984.

The historic and geographic patterns of this species in Minnesota are uncertain. First, it is possible that the species distribution is currently and historically continuous between the more northern localities (Hazard 1982) and the one in Houston Co., and that it is simply not documented in the hiatus of approximately 198 km. This is not likely considering extensive collecting in this region of the state. Secondly, the species may be expanding its range. Frey (1992) correlated the southward expansion of the range limits of four species of boreal small mammals with recent cool, mesic climatic

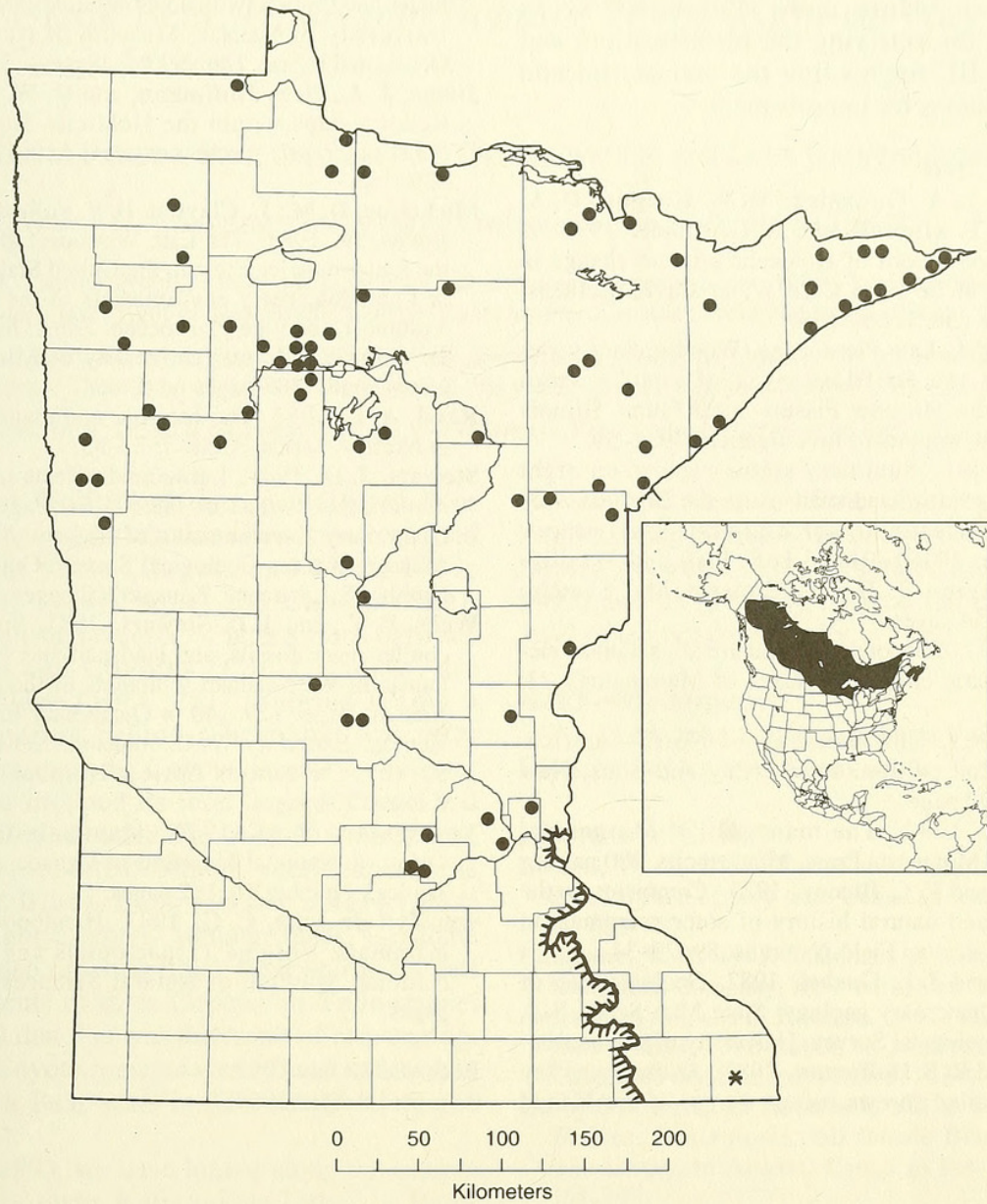


FIGURE 1. Range of *Sorex arcticus* [after Hall (1981)], extent of the Driftless Area in Minnesota [hachured line after Hobbs and Goebel (1982)], previous specimen localities in Minnesota [after Hazard (1982)], and new locality (*).

patterns. The southward range extension of *S. arcticus* reported here may be another example of this phenomenon. Lastly, the range of *S. arcticus* in Minnesota may be disjunct and the population in Houston Co. may be relictual. *Sorex arcticus* occurred on the Great Plains during the Pleistocene (Stewart 1987; Wells and Stewart 1987). Extreme southeastern Minnesota was part of the Driftless Area, which included contiguous parts of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois and which is generally recognized as having been free of the late Wisconsin ice sheet (e.g., Mickelson et al. 1983). *Sorex arcticus* is documented from the late Pleistocene Driftless Area of Wisconsin (Foley 1984). This region is known for other relict species, including, for example, an assemblage of land snails (Frest 1991). It has been suggested (Rand

1954; Youngman 1975; Junge et al. 1983) that *S. arcticus* has expanded its range northward into Canada since glacial retreat. If so, one explanation of the relict population in southeastern Minnesota is that the range there may have been continuous with that of more northerly populations until the species disappeared from what is now the intervening hiatus during a Holocene warming period (Dorale et al. 1992).

This specimen is Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) number Z82:1:10.

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