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## Field Notes: *Nerodia sipedon sipedon*

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changing positions over the next three days, but generally remained about 3 m up in the understory. Snakes were observed from 0800 h until dark (1800 h). It is possible that they remained above ground overnight.

During the morning of 7 January 1998, the weather pattern began to change with the cloud cover breaking and both humidity and temperature dropping. The smaller snakes began to descend towards the den site before the larger snakes. One of the presumed males was observed entering the burrow at 1130 h. As the temperature dropped into the lower 50's, all snakes returned to the hibernaculum by early afternoon. No snakes were observed above ground on subsequent visits during the winter.

During the same time period as discussed above, spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) were heard calling from their hibernating sites. They called fairly frequently from scattered localities in a wooded section of Springfield, Fairfax County, Virginia. Calls were heard during both day and night. The temperature and humidity remained high throughout the period.

Other evidence of black rat snake activity during this warm spell was a road-killed specimen found on 4 January 1998 along County Route 1501 in Westmoreland County, Virginia. It had moved approximately 2.5 m from a pine forest adjacent to the road.

#### Acknowledgments

We wish to thank Ms. Melissa Champion of the National Park Service, George Washington Memorial Parkway, for supplying the permits to collect on this property. We are indebted to Dr. Dave Johnston and the Washington Biologists' Field Club for their grant which made possible our research in Dyke Marsh.

#### Literature Cited

Ernst, C. H. and R. W. Barbour. 1989. Snakes of Eastern North America. George Mason University Press, Fairfax, Virginia. 282 pp.

Schulz, K.-D. 1996. A Monograph of the Colubrid Snakes of the Genus *Elaphe* Fitzinger. Tanneweg, Würselen, Germany. 439 pp.

#### FIELD NOTES

*Elaphe guttata guttata* (Corn Snake). VA: Lancaster Co., State Rt. 354, 1.3 km SW junction State Rt. 201. 19 May 1997. Faye Ferrall.

A road-killed corn snake was found at 2145 h on 19 May 1997. The next day I returned to the spot to more accurately determine the location and found the remains of yet another corn snake. This was the third road-killed corn snake that I had observed on this road within a two-week period. I also found a corn snake in my front yard several years ago (exact date not recorded); it was photographed and released. Mitchell (1994. The Reptiles of Virginia, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 352 pp.) does not record the corn snake from Lancaster County; his only record for the Northern Neck is an unvouchered sighting in Westmoreland Co. A photograph of the snake found on 19 May is being deposited with the Virginia Museum of Natural History as a voucher.

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*Nerodia sipedon sipedon* (Northern Water Snake). VA: City of Alexandria, Huntley Meadows Park, 0.25 km SW junction of Cedar and Heron Trails. 18 April 1998. Timothy R. and Michele L. Brophy.

On the morning of 18 April 1998, we observed a mating pair of *Nerodia sipedon sipedon* on a large clump of mud and grass within 3 m of a boardwalk which crosses a freshwater wetland at Huntley Meadows Park. Both snakes were completely out of the water and fully exposed to bright sunlight. The average temperature on this date was 13° C, with a high of 17° C and a low of 9° C (National Airport-Washington, D.C.; National Weather Service).

The mating behavior of these northern water snakes was consistent with the description given by Mushinsky (1979. Mating behavior of the common water snake, *Nerodia sipedon sipedon* (Reptilia, Serpentes, Colubridae) in eastern Pennsylvania. Journal of Herpetology 13: 127-129). The snakes were already in the process of copulation when we approached them at 1100 h.

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The male was positioned left of and parallel to the longer, thicker-bodied female. The chin of the male rested on the dorsum of the female slightly anterior to the midpoint of her body. The posterior region of the male was coiled around the female in a position consistent with copulation. Both snakes remained essentially motionless except for an occasional movement of the head or tail by the male. At 1130 h the male released the female and retreated into the water. The female also proceeded into the water and the snakes departed in opposite directions.

According to Mitchell (1994. *The Reptiles of Virginia*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 352 pp.), mating *N. s. sipedon* have been observed in Virginia between 17 April and 12 June. The current observations occurred only one day later than the earliest observed mating in Virginia. This is not surprising, however, as the winter of 1997-1998 was one of the warmest on record for the Washington D.C. area. The average monthly temperatures for December 1997 (5.0° C), January 1998 (6.1° C) and February 1998 (6.5° C) were 0.9, 4.7 and 3.4° C warmer than normal, respectively (National Airport-Washington, D.C.; National Weather Service).

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*Chrysemys picta picta* (Eastern Painted Turtle). VA: Smyth Co., South Fork Holston River at Buller Fish Cultural Station. 29 April 1998. Scott J. Cooney.

At approximately 1300 h, an eastern painted turtle was found foraging on aquatic vegetation in a drain pipe at the Buller Fish Cultural Station near Marion. Weather conditions were overcast and cool (~16° C), with little to no wind, and sporadic light rain. The turtle measured 26.4 mm carapace length, 25.1 mm plastron length and weighed 5.5 g. Mitchell (1994. *The Reptiles of Virginia*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 352 pp.) did not record this species from Smyth County; his nearest records were from Wythe County to the east. Because non-native fish species are regularly brought to the station, it is possible that this turtle population is the result of

an accidental introduction. Further surveys outside of the station would help to determine the range of this potentially localized population. Based on its size and the date of capture, the specimen was a hatchling, possibly indicating that reproduction is occurring in the area. However, there have been no observations of nesting or egg laying, even though several adult painted turtles are present at the station (personal observation). The specimen has been donated to the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

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*Hemidactylum scutatum* (Four-toed Salamander). VA: Scott Co., Jefferson National Forest, Cove Creek Mine off Co. Rt. 722, along Cove Creek. 27 March 1996. Christopher S. Hobson, John MacGregor and James Kiser.

The range of the four-toed salamander includes scattered records throughout much of Virginia west to Floyd County with one isolated record from extreme western Scott County (Roble, S. M. and C. S. Hobson. 1995. Geographic distribution: *Hemidactylum scutatum*. *Herpetological Review* 26: 41; Roble, S. M. and C. S. Hobson. 1995. Records of amphibians and reptiles from the Clinch Ranger District, Jefferson National Forest. *Catesbeiana* 15: 3-14). These records represented a new county record that partially filled in the range gap between Virginia and Kentucky depicted in Conant and Collins (1991. *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America*. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Massachusetts. 450 pp.).

On the night of 27 March 1996, John MacGregor, James Kiser and I found an adult female *H. scutatum* brooding eggs beneath a sphagnum mat in a headwater seepage near the Cove Creek Mine in Scott County. The salamander was released at the site of capture after a brief examination. We encountered no additional specimens despite a thorough survey of the area. The Cove Creek Mine site is approximately 14.5 km SW of the Scott County collection site reported by Roble and Hobson (op. cit.) and