

Conservation Biology Research Grants Program  
Natural Heritage & Nongame Research Program  
Division of Ecological Services  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

The purpose of the trip was to verify the presence of the five-lined (or blue-tailed) skink, *Eumeces fasciatus* (*Reptilia; Sauria; Scincidae*) in the upper Minnesota River Valley. Collecting at specific sites was aided by museum records.

A report submitted to the Minnesota Natural Heritage Program

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REDWOOD COUNTY

Previous  
Records:

Redwood County (no other data); Yellow Medicine County "So. of Sacred Heart" (1938); "Redwood-Yellow Medicine County line" Breckenridge, 1944.

Results  
of  
Search:

July 11, 1979 (7:00 p.m.). Having first made a reconnaissance of the area by car, I procured permission of the landowner (a Mr. Sanders, who was familiar with the skink) to collect on his land. I chose the SW 1/4 of Sec. 7, (T114N, R37W), an outcrop of "Sacred Heart granite" (Lund, 1950), overgrown by clusters of cedar. I began turning rocks and sighted *E. fasciatus* within 20 minutes, but unfortunately the skink escaped under a large granite boulder. Further search yielded only a single specimen of the red-bellied snake *Storeria o. Occipitomaculata*, 1 Plains garter snake, *Thamnophis radix*; the Red-sided garter snake, *Thamnophis s. parietalis*, was very abundant. I also obtained a single specimen of the Prairie skink, *Eumeces septentrionalis*. Under a large, well-embedded rock in a mat of lichen, I found 12 eggs in a small chamber which I assumed to be of a *Eumeces*, which I did not collect.

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY

Previous  
Records:

1 mile south of Granite Falls (1958).

Results  
of  
Search:

July 12 (morning). Rained most of the morning, but began to diminish around 1000 CDT. Driving south from Granite Falls on T.H. 39, I no sooner left the city limits when I found to my dismay that a new road was under construction (Hwy 23) through Secs. 3 and 4, which I had reckoned to be near the collecting site. I continued south about .6 mile and searched the SW 1/4 of Sec. 4 (T115N, R39W), for about 90 minutes. This area was well pastured and very little rock was loose enough to turn, so I abandoned efforts here.

Next I concentrated on the NW 1/4<sup>NW1/4</sup> of Sec. 4, (T115N, R39W), just .2 mile south of Granite Falls, on the west side of T.H. 39. Here a gneissic granite knob interspersed with scrub cedar rose fifty or sixty feet above the valley floor. Within about 90 minutes my efforts were rewarded: I collected a single specimen of *E. fasciatus* under a well-seated rock (ca. 30 cm. diameter) in sandy, well-drained soil supporting a lush growth of lichens and moss (T115N, R39W, NW1/4, NW1/4 Sec. 4).

Early afternoon brought heavy thunder showers, so I made my way back to Upper Sioux Agency State Park, hopeful of contacting Bruce Rigge, an employee, to gain some tips concerning skinks. He was not around, however, so I continued "downstream" to the area I had visited the night before.

I returned to the rock where I had found the 12 eggs the evening previous and found and collected an *E. septentrionalis* brooding them.

Next I collected around the perimeter of an abandoned quarry in the SE 1/4 SW1/4 of Sec. 7, and was fortunate enough to procure my second specimen of *E. fasciatus* there. The situation was similar to that of the first, i.e., a large, well-embedded rock in a thick carpet of lichen and moss (T114N, R37W, SE1/4, SW1/4, Sec. 7).

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Previous  
Records:

None

Results  
of  
Search:

July 12 (afternoon). Referring to the geologic map of Lund (1950) I chose to search the area around Montivideo where I'd hoped the ground conditions would not be as damp as they were further to the SE.

I began by searching the SW1/4 of Sec. 20 T117N, R40W, where Hwy. 212 cuts through the "Montivideo granite gneiss" (Lund, 1950). Here I found the outcrops to be massive, with very little loose surface material. No skinks were sighted.

Next I collected the same outcrop in the SE1/4 SW1/4 of Sec. 20, and the NW1/4 NW1/4 Sec. 29, around an abandoned rock quarry, where I collected 2 *Storeria l. occipitomaculata* and 2 *Eumeces septentrionalis* (1 brooded a clutch of 10 eggs), but no *E. fasciatus* were found. The red-sided garter snake, *Thamnophis s. parietalis* was very abundant.

REDWOOD COUNTY

Results  
of  
Search:

July 13 (morning). Heavy rain again this morning, but I elected to drive downstream to another out-crop area (SE of the known localities) between the east Sacred Heart bridge and east Delhi bridge area. No landowners of what appeared to me to be good habitat could be found, but a cursory roadside search indicated that the ground under the rocks was "mucky".

I decided that to search further downstream would be ill-conceived at this point, since the Franklin area had received over 2" of rainfall the day before.

A search <sup>of the</sup> NE 1/4 of Sec. 34, T113N, R35W in light rain yielded no skinks, but the area looked pretty good. Redwood Co. E of No. Redwood.

July 13 (afternoon). Searched an area SE of Granite Falls in the NE 1/4 of Sec. 3 (the north side of Hwy 67) and found the ground very wet. No skinks or snakes.

After a reconnaissance NW of Granite Falls I attempted to contact the landowners of SW 1/4 of Sec. 28, which was pastured but otherwise looked promising, but the landowners could not be found at home.

July 13 (evening). I finally contacted Bruce Rigge, the park employee, by telephone. He said that he has sighted skinks ("racerunners") along the Yellow Medicine River in August when the water level was low. When asked about the report (Hedrick and Holmes, 1956) of *E. fasciatus* 10 miles south of the Minnesota River, he said he'd heard of a small-scale quarrying operation in an area of "an acre or less" in Posen Twp., Yellow Medicine County, but didn't know the exact locality.

In the interest of conserving funds for future trips, and considering the soggy ground conditions in the Granite Falls vicinity and my diminishing success in the field as the probable result, I decided to return the evening of July 13, 2 days short of the time allotted me, hopeful that drier environmental conditions would render collecting efforts in the future more profitable.

Each evening after dark was spent driving the roads between the Sacred Heart bridge and Granite Falls, on both sides of the river, in hopes of collecting *Bufo* or *Hyla*, but none were found. However, *Rana pipiens* was abundant and ubiquitous.