

This trip was undertaken as an attempt to verify the presence of the spiny soft-shelled turtle, *Trionyx spiniferus* (Reptilia; Testudinata; Trionychidae), in the Red River of Minnesota.

A Report Submitted to the
Minnesota Natural Heritage Program

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WILKIN COUNTY

Previous
Records:

None. A report by E.H. "Mac" Johnson of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 1954, states that six adult *Trionyx* were taken from an illegal fish trap "about halfway" between Grand Forks and Grafton, North Dakota on the Red River. Although no specimens were kept, Ernest (1972) and Ernst and Barbour (1972) include the Red River and its tributaries within the range of *Trionyx spiniferus* apparently on the strength of this report.

Results
of
Search:

September 8; morning. A reconnaissance was made by car of the lower Ottertail River (an area suggested to us by Dr. Underhill of the University of Minnesota) and it was found to be high and swift flowing. Here we saw no habitat that appeared to us to be favorable (i.e. sandbars, beaches) so we made a reconnaissance of the Red River downstream from its confluence with the Ottertail north of Breckenridge. Here we began to see sandbars along the Red River and decided to put in at Kent, Minnesota.

Inquiries put to local residents elicited only negative responses. We travelled by boat both upstream and downstream from the bridge at Kent and found several promising sandbars, so we put in a series of 11 fyke nets along a five mile stretch of river.

September 9; morning and afternoon. The traps were checked and no turtles were found in them. We decided at this point to bait the traps with fresh smelt.

September 9; evening. Road collecting along the Red River yielded a number of *Rana pipiens pipiens*, *Bufo cognatus* and *B. hemiophys*.

September 10; morning. A final check of traps yielded eight adult *Chrysemys picta belli*, all of which were retained. These specimens seemed to be of a greater size than is usually encountered in more lentic situations elsewhere throughout the state.

Although the presence of a *Trionyx* within this stretch of the Red River was not determined, its occurrence elsewhere within the system cannot be ruled out on the basis of such a limited effort. Moreover, two sight records have come to our attention since this trip which are of interest. One comes from just above the dam near Roseau, Minnesota, by Norm Flagstad. The sighting occurred several years ago but the description corresponds with that of a *Trionyx*. The second, also from the Roseau River, comes from Jack Emblom of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Emblom seems "certain" that turtles he saw from a distance entering the water from sandbars were *Trionyx*. We feel that both of these sightings appear reliable enough to justify a trapping effort on the Roseau River in the future. If specimens of *Trionyx* could be procured, it would be a significant range extension (over 250 km) to the north.