

Original: For publication
cc: Fish Division X
Educ.-Game
Inst. for Fish. Res.
J. E. Williams
R. S. Marks
H. J. Vondett

Report No. 1588

February 24, 1960

A First Record of the Western Lesser Siren, Siren
intermedia nettingi, from Michigan

John E. Williams

Two specimens of the Western Lesser Siren, Siren intermedia nettingi, were discovered dead on the shore of Saddle Lake (T. 1 S., R. 15 W., Sections 15 and 16), Van Buren County, Michigan on June 11, 1958. The lake had been treated with rotenone (1 ppm.) the previous day to remove a carp population and apparently the suffocant was fatal also to the gill-breathing sirens.

The identification was verified by Dr. Charles Walker, Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians at the University of Michigan's Museum of Zoology. The sirens measured 223 mm. (UMMZ No. M 118525) and 151 mm. (UMMZ No. M 118526) in length after preservation and constitute the first known record of this genus from Michigan. Several additional sirens were reportedly found dead at Saddle Lake during the week after treatment but they were not preserved.

Pope (1944) stated that the only record of the Western Lesser Siren from the Chicago area "is based on a small specimen from Hebron, Porter County, Indiana and marks the northernmost point reached by this subspecies, which ranges southward through Louisiana and eastern Texas to the northeastern corner of Mexico." This earlier record from the Kankakee drainage agreed with the range indicated by Smith and Minton (1957) who

observed that this "... southern species exhibits distributional patterns correlated with stream drainage" and that "... Siren intermedia ... [has] fairly extensive ranges along the major rivers of central Illinois and in the lakes of northern Indiana, especially those associated with the Kankakee and Tippecanoe river systems." They further mention that this species is "characteristic of the shallow, warm, quiet water of ponds and sloughs where aquatic vegetation is plentiful." Conant (1958) depicts a range similar to the above and states it simply as "Mississippi Valley; west to e. Texas."

Although Saddle Lake is nearly 300 acres in area, it has quiet, shallow, weed-choked bays which apparently were suitable habitat for sirens. The lake is 43 miles north of the Michigan-Indiana border and drains via Barber Creek northward to the Middle Fork of the Black River in Allegan County. The Black River in turn flows southward into Van Buren County and enters Lake Michigan at South Haven.

There are two possible natural routes by which the siren could have spread to Michigan. In St. Joseph County, Indiana, the northernmost part of the Kankakee drainage adjoins the St. Joseph River drainage; the St. Joseph River flows northward into the State of Michigan, and empties into Lake Michigan at Benton Harbor, at a point only 23 miles south of the mouth of the Black River. A second possible route would be directly from the St. Joseph River to the Paw Paw River at Benton Harbor. In Van Buren County the Paw Paw River drainage and that of the South Branch of the Black River approximate.

There is a distinct possibility that the siren was introduced into Saddle Lake by an Indiana angler using it as bait. Regardless, however, of its means of introduction into Michigan, the Western Lesser Siren may have been both discovered and made extinct here at the same time.

Literature Cited

Conant, Roger

1958. A field guide to reptiles and amphibians of the United States and Canada, east of the 100th meridian. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 366 pp.

Pope, Clifford H.

1944. Amphibians and reptiles of the Chicago area. Chicago Natural History Museum, 275 pp.

Smith, Phillip W. and Sherman A. Minton, Jr.

1957. A distributional summary of the herpetofauna of Indiana and Illinois. Amer. Mid. Nat., Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 341-351.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

John E. Williams

Report approved by G. P. Cooper

Typed by M. S. McClure

70-21-60

Fish Division's copy of Institute report #1588 was sent to Dr. Leonard for his review on 2-29-60. It was not returned to us and cannot be found. We, therefore, made a thermofax copy of the report and will send this to Vondett, retaining his copy here for our file copy.

JK

Spec # 1588
report

2-29-60

Original to Dr. Leonard
to look over

Orig. report can't be found - should
say to just hang onto this
until it shows up -
JK
7/60

5-3-60
Check & see if
Dr. Leonard still
has this
JK
5/60