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Denzel E. Ferguson

*Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon*

K. Ellsworth Payne

*Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon*

Robert M. Storm

*Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon*

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NOTES ON THE HERPETOLOGY OF BAKER COUNTY,  
OREGON<sup>1</sup>

Denzel E. Ferguson, K. Ellsworth Payne  
and Robert M. Storm

Baker County, located in northeastern Oregon, is separated from Idaho by the Snake River and from Washington by Wallowa County. Its climate is quite diverse due to a wide variation in physiography. Vegetation types vary with altitude and exposure from rather typical sagebrush lowlands to montane and subalpine forests at intermediate elevations, with a few higher peaks extending above timberline. Major streams in the area flow eastward and empty into the Snake River with their main tributaries originating within the Elkhorn and Wallowa Mountain ranges. The county is of particular herpetological interest because it apparently represents the periphery of northward distribution for certain Great Basin forms whose ranges extend down the Snake River Valley. For example, see the range maps for *Cnemidophorus tigris tigris* Baird and Girard and *Phrynosoma platyrhinos platyrhinos* Girard in Stebbins (1954). Within the county the Snake River Valley progressively narrows toward the north until it is transformed into Hell's Canyon near the Baker-Wallowa Co. boundary. This entire area is little known, largely because of its inaccessibility. Our collection from this area is inadequate, but seems to indicate that many of those Great Basin species preferring a sandy sagebrush type of environment do not inhabit the canyon, appearing instead to drop out short of it in northern Malheur County.

In the period from April to July, 1954 and again in May of 1955, brief collecting excursions were made into the county. In all, 6 species of amphibians and 9 species of reptiles were obtained, most of which had not previously been recorded. Part of the specimens mentioned in the following annotated list were procured with the aid of Dr. David L. Jameson (University of Oregon) on a trip made June 25-27 1954. We are most grateful for his assistance. We wish, also, to thank Mr. Albert Mozejko (Oregon State College), who has supplied us with several specimens collected by his students while he was on the teaching staff at Baker Jr. High School.

Amphibia

1. *Ambystoma macrodactylum* Baird. A series of 27 long-toed salamanders was collected June 26, 1954 from near a small lake 0.2 mile east of Anthony Lakes (Elev. 7100 ft.). The animals were found under objects on the ground up to 150 feet from the water's edge. A smaller series was taken from loose rocks adjacent to a pool near the entrance to an abandoned mine shaft located in the Snake River Canyon about 10.3 miles north of Home on the Robinette-Huntington road. Adults and larvae were collected from Pine Creek Reservoir on June 6, 1952 and larvae from Cow Creek, near King Mountain, on July 10, 1954. We have several adults from Baker.

1. Contribution from the Department of Zoology, Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon.

2. *Bufo boreas boreas* Baird and Girard. On June 20, 1954 near Anthony Lakes, these toads were quite abundant in small ponds derived from melting snow waters. Pairs in amplexus were observed at this time. Eggs were collected June 27, 1954 about 0.2 mile east of Anthony Lakes. The preferred habitat seems to be moist areas having grasses and sedges similar to that found along the margins of ponds, lakes and streams. Localities: 10 mi. N. Home; Main Eagle Creek, T6S. R43E. Sec. 21; Anthony Lakes; 5.5, 2.2 and 0.2 mi. E. Anthony Lakes.

3. *Hyla regilla* Baird and Girard. This little amphibian was common under objects on the ground or in grassy moist situations. Localities: Baker; Cow Creek near King Mt; Little Eagle Creek. T7S. R44E. Sec 13; Anthony Lakes; 2.2 mi. E. Anthony Lakes.

4. *Rana catesbeiana* Shaw. A single bullfrog was secured May 27, 1955 from a pond located 1.7 miles northeast of Huntington along the road to Robinette. Others were seen and heard calling at this same pond.

5. *Rana pipiens brachycephala* Cope. Several leopard frogs were captured in the grass along the margin of the same pond mentioned above in the account of *R. catesbeiana*.

6. *Rana pretiosa luteiventris* Thompson. This species frequents permanent ponds and streams. Localities: 8 mi. NW. Durkee on U.S. 30; Anthony Lakes; 4.7 and 7.7 mi. NE. Bridgeport; North Powder; Baker.

### Reptilia

7. *Sceloporus graciosus graciosus* Baird and Girard. This small lizard was common at the base of sagebrush plants in areas having sandy soils. Localities: Baker; Huntington; 3.2 mi. NW. Durkee on U.S. 30; 4.7 mi. NW. Pleasant Valley on U.S. 30.

8. *Phrynosoma platyrhinos platyrhinos* Girard. A single specimen was obtained from the sandy south slope of a hill located 0.5 mile east of Huntington. It constitutes the northern-most record of occurrence known for the species in Oregon.

9. *Cnemidophorus tigris tigris* Baird and Girard was collected at several localities (0.8, 1.5, 2.5 and 5.2 mi. N. of mouth of Brunt River) along the Huntington-Robinette road and 0.3 mile north-east of Huntington. The habitat was in sandy areas adjacent to sagebrush and large boulders along the river bank. The species has not been collected north of these collection sites although it has previously been taken nearby (3 mi. NE. Huntington) by Gordon (1939), and Nate Cohen, a graduate student in zoology at Oregon State College, reports having seen it near Robinette.

These specimens have been compared with *C. t. tigris* from several places in Malheur and Harney Counties in Southern Oregon and their pigmentation and color pattern were found to differ quite strikingly in many cases. The population is presently under investigation.

10. *Eumeces skiltonianus skiltonianus* Baird and Girard. Localities: Baker; 12 mi. SE. Baker on U.S. 30; 0.8 mi. N. mouth Burnt River.

11. *Thamnophis elegans vagrans* Baird and Girard. Localities: Baker; 4 mi. E. Haines on U.S. 30.

12. *Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi* Fox. Localities: 4 mi. E. Haines on U.S. 30; 1 mi. E. Anthony Lakes; 3 mi. NW. Lime on U.S. 30; 4.7 mi. NE. Bridgeport.

13. *Coluber constrictor mormon* Baird and Girard. Localities: 5 mi. S. Medical Springs; 5 mi. S. Robinette; 2 mi. NE. Huntington; 5.3 mi. N. mouth of Burnt River; 5.2 mi. E. Hereford on Ore. Hiway 7.

14. *Pituophis catenifer deserticola* Stejneger. Localities: 3 mi. S. Bridgeport; 12 mi. SE. Baker on U.S. 30; Cow Creek near King Mt.; DOR 1 mi. N. Home; DOR 17 mi. N. Huntington; 0.5 mi. E. Huntington; 0.4 mi. N. Bridgeport Jct. on Ore. Hiway 7.

15. *Crotalus viridis* Rafinesque. On May 29, 1955 a den of rattlesnakes was discovered in some basaltic cliffs located at a point 1.3 miles southeast of Pleasant Valley. At the time of our visit, the snakes were apparently just emerging from the den as seven were found basking in the sun near large crevices leading back into the cliffs. The four specimens which were captured show the light coloration characteristics of the subspecies *lutosus*, and are probably intergrades between *lutosus* and *oreganus*. Specimens found DOR 17 miles north of Huntington and near Lime on U.S. 30 were more typical of the subspecies *oreganus*.

*Scaphiopus hammondi*, *Sceloporus occidentalis* and *Charina bottae* were not collected from the county, but locality records are reported by Gordon (1939). Representatives of these species are not available in the Oregon State College Museum of Natural History Collection. The following reptiles and amphibians have been reported from adjacent areas and some of them probably occur in Baker Co.: *Ascapus truei* (reported from West Eagle Creek in Union Co. by Ferguson (1954), the locality being only 0.5 mile outside Baker Co.), *Chrysemys picta*, *Bufo woodhousei*, *Pseudacris nigrita*, *Crotaphytus collaris*, *Crotaphytus wislizeni*, *Phrynosoma douglassi*, *Uta stansburiana*, *Hypsiglena torquata*, and *Masticophis taeniatus*. It will be noted that the list consists largely of members of the Great Basin herpetofauna to which the Blue Mountains may act as a distributional barrier.

#### Literature Cited

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