

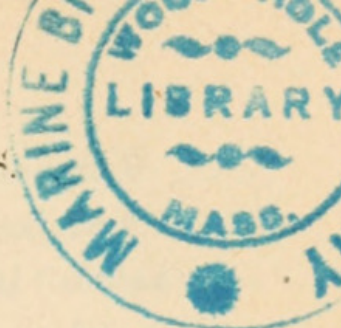
NOTE ON OTTAWA SALAMANDERS.

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(Read 27th January, 1887.)

Vertebrate animals are usually arranged by naturalists in five classes—mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes. To the fourth of these divisions the salamanders belong. They have the general form of lizards, an elongated body, four feet, and a long tail; but their body is naked and not covered with scales, and their heart, like that of the frogs, has but one auricle, while the heart of the lizards and other true reptiles has two. While many species of salamanders, after becoming adult, never resort to the water except to deposit their eggs, all pass there the earlier stages of their existence and there undergo a series of remarkable changes of form. It was formerly a widely prevalent opinion that the salamanders were very poisonous; and in ancient natural history many astonishing instances are recorded of their poisonous qualities and of their powers to withstand the action of fire. They are, however, almost, if not quite, innocuous. The stories related of their appearance in the midst of blazing logs in fireplaces and their escape unharmed through the flames are not without foundation in fact. Several species live buried deep in decaying wood, and should a log containing them be placed on the hearth and lighted, they naturally endeavour to make their way to cooler quarters—the abundant viscid fluid which they secrete all over their body enabling them to resist fire to a considerable extent and in many instances to make good their escape.

Six species have been noticed in the vicinity of Ottawa. The Spotted Salamander (*Amblystoma punctatum*, Linn) is the largest species found in this vicinity where it is not uncommon. I have taken it on the McKay Estate, on the Canal Bank near Dow's Lake and in the Laurentides at Cantley. It usually attains a length of six inches, and I have one specimen which measures eight. Its colour above is a dark violet with numerous irregular bright yellow spots. Barton, who was the first in America to describe this species, called it the Poisonous Salamander (*S. venenosa*), but it is quite as harmless as other species.



Jefferson's Salamander (*Amblystoma jeffersonianum*, Baird) is nearly as large as *A. punctatum*, and like that species is terrestrial in its habit. It is brown in colour and is irregularly marked along the sides and on the back with numerous small bluish spots. Specimens have been taken in Hull by Mr. Harrington and by Mr. John Stewart.

The Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon erythronotus*, Baird) is found in considerable numbers in rotten logs in the woods west of Hemlock Lake. The intensity of the colouring of the reddish lines along the back from which it takes its name varies greatly. The body is very slender and the legs are apparently weak, but the animal is notwithstanding able to move quite rapidly.

At Kingsmere, in May, 1884, a Two-lined Salamander (*Spelerpes bilineatus*, Baird) was captured by Mr. D'Arcy Scott. I have not seen the specimen; but it was identified by Dr. Merriam and no doubt correctly. It is a small, yellow species with dark lateral lines.

The Spotted Triton (*Diemyctylus viridescens*, Raf.) was found by Mr. Harrington, at Casselman, in 1884. It has not to my knowledge been found nearer Ottawa, but probably occurs here. It is a brightly coloured species, usually reddish above, with a row of bright and rather large vermilion spots along each side.

The dusky Salamander (*Desmognathus fuscus*, Baird) is a small, brownish species which occurs in great numbers in the Rideau River, near Hogsback, where a stone a few inches in diameter will be found to cover three or four individuals. When disturbed they seek shelter with incredible rapidity, and very easily escape capture. That they are sometimes taken unwittingly by persons who drink from the streams which they frequent is, I think, not improbable. If my memory is not badly at fault a case was reported in a Pembroke newspaper about ten years ago of a boy from Sheen, on the Upper Ottawa, whose mysterious illness had long baffled the skill of local physicians. Powerful emetics were at length directed to be administered, and the boy was relieved from several loathsome living animals which, from the description published, I believe to have been a species of Salamander.

There are three or four species other than those recorded which will probably be found here. Every specimen observed should be

collected ; and if in the larval form its metamorphoses should be carefully noted. These observations, when collected and compared, would be useful as the basis for a paper of interest and value on the Salamanders found in the vicinity of Ottawa.

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REPORT OF THE CONCHOLOGICAL BRANCH.

To the Council of the Ottawa Field-Naturalist Club :

The absence of my colleague, Mr. Poirier, and my own business engagements have prevented this branch from doing during the past year the amount of work that it should do. Very little collecting was possible. At Buckingham on our first excursion a number of shells were taken, *Succinea obliqua* was on that occasion found in quantity at the roots of sugar maples in the grove north of the railway station. *Sphaerium occidentale* was also found in abundance in ponds in the same locality. One specimen of the rare *Zonites binneyanus* was found about a mile up the Lievres, but no other shells except the commonest species were noted.

Late in the season the microscopic *Helix minutissima* was found in considerable numbers under poplar logs in a moist station on the Exhibition Grounds. In this locality I collected in a few minutes more specimens of *H. minutissima* than I had seen in the previous five years.

It is well known that many land shells which occur in Western Ontario, some of them very beautiful, are not found in this vicinity. An attempt has been made to establish these species here. Through the kindness of Mr. G. W. Dean, of Kent, Ohio, and Mr. Geo. J. Streator of Garrettsville, in the same State, I was enabled to place in the woods at various points around Ottawa, and in my garden, in the city, a number of living shells, including *M. thyroides*, *M. multilineata*, *Triodopsis tridentata*, *T. palliata*, *Patula solitaria*, *P. perspectiva*, *Zonites ligera*, and *Stenotrema hirsutum*. I was unable to visit afterwards the localities outside the city in which the shells were placed, but of those which were under my eye at home I observed that *Zonites ligera*, *Patula solitaria*, and *P. perspectiva*, all died. The others lived. *M. multilineata* seemed to flourish best, and in November young



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