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5-2005

## AN ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE ORNATE BOX TURTLE FROM WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

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## NOTES

**AN ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE ORNATE BOX TURTLE FROM WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA** -- The ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) occurs in grasslands and semi-arid habitats from northern Mexico, north to south-central South Dakota and southern Wisconsin, and west from western Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri to east-central New Mexico and Colorado (Dodd 2001). There are few published records of the ornate box turtle from South Dakota and its distribution within the state remains ill-defined. Over (1923) stated that the ornate box turtle is found only in the “southwestern corner” of South Dakota, exclusive of the Black Hills, and “has not been taken north of Pennington County nor east of Washabaugh (now known as Jackson) County”, but provided no specimen-based locality data. Museum specimens or voucher photographs are available from Bennett (5), Jackson (2), Todd (2), and Minnehaha (2) counties (Fishbeck and Underhill 1959, Tinken 1968, Malaret 1977, Iverson 1992, Ballinger et al. 2000). The ornate box turtle is considered “imperiled because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences)” in South Dakota by the Natural Heritage Program of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks (Stukel and Backlund 1997, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks 2003).

On 11 June 2003, one of us (EJS) found an ornate box turtle crossing BIA Highway 2, approximately 7.2 km north of Sharps Corner on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Shannon County, South Dakota. The air temperature at the time of collection was approximately 30°C, and the substrate was moist from light rain the previous day. The turtle was an adult female with a straight-line carapace length of 118 mm. Other straight-line measurements were: maximum carapace width = 100 mm; plastron length = 122 mm; maximum plastron width = 82 mm; and maximum shell depth = 64 mm. We deposited voucher photographs (CUSC 2166) of the turtle in the Campbell Museum, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. Our specimen constitutes the first record of the ornate box turtle from Shannon County, and represents the westernmost occurrence of this species yet documented in South Dakota (Ballinger et al. 2000).

The habitat surrounding our collection site was grassland subject to light to moderate cattle (*Bos taurus*) grazing, and characterized by *Hesperostipa comata*, *Nassella viridula*, *Pascopyrum smithii*, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, and *Bouteloua gracilis*. Little habitat data were provided in other published records from western South Dakota. Over (1923) stated that “its [ornate box turtle] natural habitat is the sandhill region”, and two specimens photographed at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in Bennett County reportedly were found in sandhill habitat (Malaret 1977). Likewise, locality data accompanying two other records from Bennett County (3.2

km S Tuthill; 6.4 km N Nebraska State line and S of Tuthill; Iverson 1992 and unpublished data) suggested that these ornate box turtles were found either in sandhill habitat or in close proximity to it. However, our specimen and those from Todd and Jackson counties were collected north of the sandhill region, which indicates that the ornate box turtle is not confined to this habitat in western South Dakota.

We thank Stanlee Miller of the Campbell Museum for assistance with archiving our voucher photographs, Trudy Ecoffey for information on local grasses, and John Iverson for supplying locality information from his database. Comments by Thomas Rainwater, S. D. Plisken, and C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr. improved an earlier draft of our note. -- *Steven G. Platt<sup>1</sup>, Jennifer L. Stover, and Edward J. Stover III, Department of Math and Science, Oglala Lakota College, P.O. Box 490, Kyle, SD, 57752. <sup>1</sup>E-mail address: splatt@gwtc.net*

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*Received: 24 December 2003*

*Accepted: 27 May 2005*