3-2009

Ambystoma maculatum (Spotted Salamander) Occurrence

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NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

Instructions for contributors to Natural History Notes appear in Volume 40, Number 1 (March 2009, p. 66) and also are available online at: http://www.ssarherps.org/pages/HRinfo.php

CAUDATA — SALAMANDERS

AMBYSTOMA MACULATUM (Spotted Salamander). **OCCURRENCE.** *Ambystoma maculatum* is a wide ranging mole salamander found from Nova Scotia and southern Ontario through Georgia and eastern Texas (Conant and Collins 1998. Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern/Central North America, 3rd ed., expanded. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Massachusetts. 616 pp.). It is most commonly associated with lowland wetlands (Thompson and Gates 1982. Oikos 38:273–279.). In the 75+ years of ecological research at Mountain Lake Biological Station (MLBS, Salt Pond Mountain, Giles County, Virginia, USA, 37.37485°N, 80.52413°W, NAD 83; 1160 m elev.), this species has never been recorded (H. Wilbur and J. Murray, pers. comm.). Herpetological research over the last 20 years has included regular sampling of amphibian breeding locations; therefore, presence of this species without detection during the past two decades is highly unlikely.

A single adult male *A. maculatum* was captured at a drift fence surrounding Horton Pond on MLBS property on 6 April 2008 (mass = 16.31 g). It was captured exiting the pond on 12 April 2008. The drift fence was opened in May 2005 and has been run from March–October each year since. The 2007–2008 winter was mild in southwestern Virginia and this first capture *of A. maculatum* at MLBS might indicate that changes in weather conditions could make upper elevation ponds more conducive for this species. Observations such as these are important as researchers study the effects of climate change on the abundance and distribution of species.

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