

NOTES

FIRST OCCURRENCE OF WANDERING SALAMANDER ON THE SUNSHINE COAST OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The wandering salamander (*Aneides vagrans*) (Figure 1), formerly known as the clouded salamander (*A. ferreus*), occurs at low elevations on Vancouver Island and some adjacent offshore islands. Although it occurs in Oregon, there are no records from mainland Washington and only a few scattered historical records for the extreme southwest mainland coast of British Columbia. (Green and Campbell 1984; Corkran and Thoms 1996). The status of this species outside Vancouver Island is not well known. It is likely that this fairly common species was trapped in two separate refuges during the past Ice Age. The purpose of this paper is to document the presence of the wandering salamander on the mainland coast outside the lower Fraser River valley.

While conducting fieldwork in BC Hydro transmission corridors on the Sunshine Coast, 21 km north of Vancouver, British Columbia, in spring and summer 2001, we located single wandering salamanders on three occasions. All records were from within transmission corridors even though nearby mixed coniferous and deciduous forests were searched.



Figure 1. Wandering Salamander (*Aneides vagrans*), Cleland Island, BC. 16 May 1970 (R. Wayne Campbell).

A juvenile was found near Trout Lake, 12.1 km north of Sechelt, on 26 May. It was uncovered in a small pile of old western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) shakes. The salamander had a dark gray body with a reddish-bronze concentration of speckles and blotches on the lower back and tail. On 10 and 15 June an adult wandering salamander was found near Homesite Creek, 1.5 km east of Trout Lake, in a grassy shaded ditch and under a large stump.

The wandering salamander is considered a terrestrial species that inhabits low elevation, humid coastal forests of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) where decaying logs, stumps, and snags are common (Green and Campbell 1984; Corkran and Thoms 1996).

In British Columbia, the diversity of habitats it occupies is greater than reported. On Cleland Island, off the central west coast of Vancouver Island, the species is abundant in a treeless environment on a rocky island with a grass-brush belt comprised of wild rose (*Rosa nutkana*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), cow-parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), Douglas' aster (*Aster subspicatus*), and wild ryegrass (*Elymus mollis*) (Campbell and Stirling 1968). In transmission corridors on the Sunshine Coast the wandering salamander is patchily distributed within long narrow strips of shrubby habitats composed of salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), black twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*), salmonberry, blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

The wandering salamander appears to occupy a wider variety of habitats in British Columbia than previously known. As research and fieldwork continues we will be able to better understand and more accurately define its habitat requirements in the province.

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About the Authors

Glenn began recording wildlife observations as a child in 1943 in the north Okanagan Valley. Today he continues his passion from his home in Aldergrove. His collection of daily field notes occupies nearly 10 feet of library space.

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