

GREEN LACERTA REDISCOVERED IN TOPEKA, KANSAS

JAMES GUBANYI
2501 Burnett Road
Topeka, Kansas 66614

On 2 August 1996, a lizard that had been caught earlier in the day was brought to me for identification. I identified the specimen, which was an adult with a snout-vent length of 9.7 cm, as a Green Lacerta, *Lacerta viridis*. A friend, Jerry Jones, had caught the reptile in the backyard of a home in a residential area of southwest Topeka. In past decades, these lizards had been captured in this general vicinity, and a colony of them had once become established in this area of the city. The original members of this colony had been examples that had escaped (or been released) sometime in the 1950's from a biological supply warehouse, called Quivera Specialties, owned by the late Charles E. Burt. I had caught these lizards myself in Topeka until the late 1970's. Although I had heard rumors from reliable sources regarding the continued presence of the Green Lacerta in southwest Topeka, I had not seen a live example nor heard of any actually being caught there in almost fifteen years. Collins (1974, 1981, 1993) considered the Green Lacerta, which is indigenous to Europe, as an introduced species in Kansas. Conant and Collins (1991) noted the Topeka introduction, but because no recent specimens were available, they did not provide an account of this lizard. The current specimen is thus a significant find since its discovery confirms the continued presence of *Lacerta viridis* in this southwestern residential area of Topeka, Kansas. I am currently maintaining this animal alive; a color slide voucher has been deposited at the Natural History Museum, The University of Kansas, Lawrence (KU Color Slide 11235).

LITERATURE CITED

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THIRD GRADERS CONDUCT AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE FIELD STUDY

LARRY L. MILLER
Science Chairperson
Topeka Collegiate School
2200 S.W. Eveningside Drive
Topeka, Kansas 66614

It was warm and sunny, and reptiles were on the move! That is the best way to describe Thursday afternoon, 10 October 1996, near Colby Creek just to the north of Wakarusa, Kansas, in southern Shawnee County. It was also the afternoon that thirty Topeka Collegiate School 3rd graders along with several parents and teachers conducted a 1.5 hour herpetological survey of the area.

It did not take long to find the first critter. Even before all of the children were out of the cars, one of the students spotted an adult Ornate Box Turtle walking near a small pond. A few minutes later two Common Garter Snakes were discovered under a large piece of plywood along with several Ringneck Snakes. Next, one of the adults almost stepped on a young Racer. What an adventure!

Between 1300 and 1430 hours examples of thirteen species of amphibians and reptiles had been located and identified on the ten-acre area researched. For some of the third graders, it was the first time that amphibian and reptiles had been observed in the wild. It was the first opportunity for some of the adults, as well as some of the 3rd graders, to touch a live snake. Much of the excitement was captured on film.

The thirteen species encountered included Plains Leopard Frogs, Bullfrogs, Northern Cricket Frogs, Common Snapping Turtles, Ornate Box Turtles, Painted Turtles, Great Plains Skinks, Five-lined Skinks, Racers, Eastern Rat Snakes, Ringneck Snakes, Northern Water Snakes, and Common Garter Snakes. The animals were returned to the wild before the group returned to their school. The young herpetologists had lots of stories to tell their parents and friends that Thursday evening.

