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NEW RECORDS OF REPTILES FROM THE VIRGINIA BARRIER ISLANDS--- The Virginia barrier islands extend 100 km along the seaward margin of the southern Delmarva Peninsula. They are centered approximately 37° 30' N and 75° 40' W (McCaffrey & Dueser, 1990) in Accomack and Northampton counties, Virginia. The islands lie 0.5 to 12.1 km offshore, range from 1 to 10 m in elevation, and vary from 27 to 7029 ha in area. These islands are isolated by deep inlets, tidal lagoons, and salt marshes. They are accessible only by boat except for Chincoteague, Fishermans, Wallops (which are connected to the mainland by roadways and bridges), Assateague (connected to Chincoteague by a bridge), and Assawoman (connected to Wallops by a bridge). Several islands have been occupied sporadically since the 1600s, but most are now deserted.

The herpetofauna of the islands is a subset of species that occur on the mainland of Virginia's Eastern Shore. Twenty-eight species of reptiles (4 lizards, 12 snakes, and 12 turtles) and 19 species of amphibians (14 anurans, 5 salamanders) occur on the mainland (Mitchell, 1994, 1999; Mitchell & Reay, 1999), whereas 23 species of reptiles (2 lizards, 10 snakes, and 11 turtles) and 8 species of amphibians (7 anurans, 1 salamander) have been reported from 11 of the islands (Lee, 1972; Conant et al., 1990; Mitchell & Anderson, 1994).

Conant et al. (1990) provide the most recent (and the only comprehensive) review of the distribution of reptiles and amphibians on the Virginia barrier islands. In 1986-1987 they surveyed seven large islands (Assateague, Chincoteague, Wallops, Parramore, Hog, Cobb, and Smith). Despite observations (Conant et al., 1990; Mitchell, 1999) that there is a need for comprehensive surveys, many of the smaller islands have not been thoroughly examined. Two of us (NDM, RDD) initiated an intensive study of rodent populations on Myrtle and Ship Shoal islands in 1995. During that study, and during subsequent searches for herps on other islands (MPB), we have documented new island records for four species of reptiles.

Little brown skinks (*Scincella lateralis*) were observed in the grassy areas of Myrtle and Ship Shoal islands on 19 September 1998, 13 June 1999, and 17 July 2000. Most were found beneath roofing shingles used as bases for small mammal traps. This species has been reported from only two other Virginia barrier islands, Smith and Fishermans (Conant et al., 1990).

A single rough green snake (*Opheodrys aestivus*) was seen on Ship Shoal Island on 18 September 1998. This species has been reported from 10 other Virginia barrier islands (Conant et al., 1990).

Diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*) are the most commonly seen reptiles on or near the islands (Brady, 1925; Lee, 1972; Conant et al., 1990). We frequently observed them near the beach on Ship Shoal Island. Tracks and eggs were occasionally found as well. Vouchers of a few hatched eggs and the remains of hatchlings from Ship Shoal Island were collected on 21 March 2000 (VMNH Department of Herpetology catalog number 10336). Diamondback terrapins have been reported from 11 other islands (Conant et al., 1990) and probably occur on all of the Virginia barrier islands.

An adult black rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*) was observed on the trail of the forested area known as Italian Ridge, near the middle of Parramore Island on 24 May 2001. Previous records of this species exist from Assateague, Wallops, Hog, Cobb, and Smith islands (Conant et al., 1990). The occurrence of black rat snakes may reflect the presence of forest and/or extensive shrub thickets on these islands.

In addition to our observations of little brown skinks, only two other reptiles are known from Myrtle Island (Conant et al., 1990): diamondback terrapins and rough greensnakes. This is the first report of any herp species for Ship Shoal Island. The paucity of reptiles and amphibians on Myrtle and Ship Shoal islands may be due to their relatively small size and low diversity of habitats (McCaffrey & Dueser, 1990). Also, there are no permanent sources of freshwater on these two islands. In contrast, Parramore and Cobb islands are relatively large with a variety of habitats and sources of freshwater. Consequently, they have a greater diversity of herps (nine and six species, respectively; Conant et al., 1990).

Despite the fact that the Virginia barrier islands have been part of a Long-Term Ecological Research site supported by the National Science Foundation since 1988, the distribution of reptiles and amphibians on these islands remains poorly understood. Many records of herps represent isolated observations made during single visits (Conant et al., 1990), and some species have not been observed or reported for more than 75 years (Brady, 1925; Fowler, 1925). Although occasional observations of some species continue (B. Truitt, pers. comm.), no comprehensive herp surveys have been conducted within the past 14 years. More intensive field efforts, especially on the smaller islands, are clearly warranted.

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