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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NOTES ON *ASPIDOSCELIS SEXLINEATUS* (LINNAEUS, 1766) IN MARYLAND, WITH COMMENTS ON DELAWARE AND VIRGINIA

ROBERT W. MILLER

803 Bomont Road, Timonium, Maryland 21093, USA

Corresponding author: Robert W. Miller (*opacum@hotmail.com*)

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ABSTRACT

The distribution of the six-lined racerunner, *Aspidoscelis sexlineatus* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Squamata: Teiidae), is reviewed for the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia. Unlike previous publications, documentation for mapped localities is provided. Three isolated upland localities are questioned and improbable localities are discarded. Notes on diet are also provided.

Keywords: Diet, distribution, six-lined racerunner.

INTRODUCTION

The six-lined racerunner, *Aspidoscelis sexlineatus* (Linnaeus, 1766), reaches the northeastern limit of its range in Baltimore, Maryland, and within the state is largely confined to the Coastal Plain of southern Maryland (Burt, 1931; Cooper, 1960; Harris, 1975). A few reports exist for the uplands along the Potomac River. Previous accounts of the species in Maryland (Hoffman, 1957a; Trauth & McAllister, 1996; Norden, 2001, 2005; Stranko et al., 2010; Middendorf et al., 2018; Maryland Biodiversity Project, 2026) contained errors and omissions, and these are addressed. The species' distribution in Maryland is reviewed by jurisdictions and is focused on the sources for undocumented sites. Other subjects follow distributional concerns and an updated distribution map is presented (Fig. 1). The District of Columbia is considered part of Maryland, and MARA (Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas) is used as a substitute for Cunningham & Nazdrowicz (2018).

Specimens cited are in the following collections: American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CM), Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates

(CUMV), Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida (UF), Maryland Museum of Natural Sciences (NHSM), Maryland Museum of Natural Sciences/Herbert S. Harris, Jr. (NHSM/HSH), Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum, Brigham Young University (BYU), Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University (MCZ), National Museum of Natural History (USNM), North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (NCSM), and Towson University (TSU). Discarded specimens were in the collections of the Appalachian Environmental Laboratory, Frostburg State University (AEL) and Clyde F. Reed (CFR).

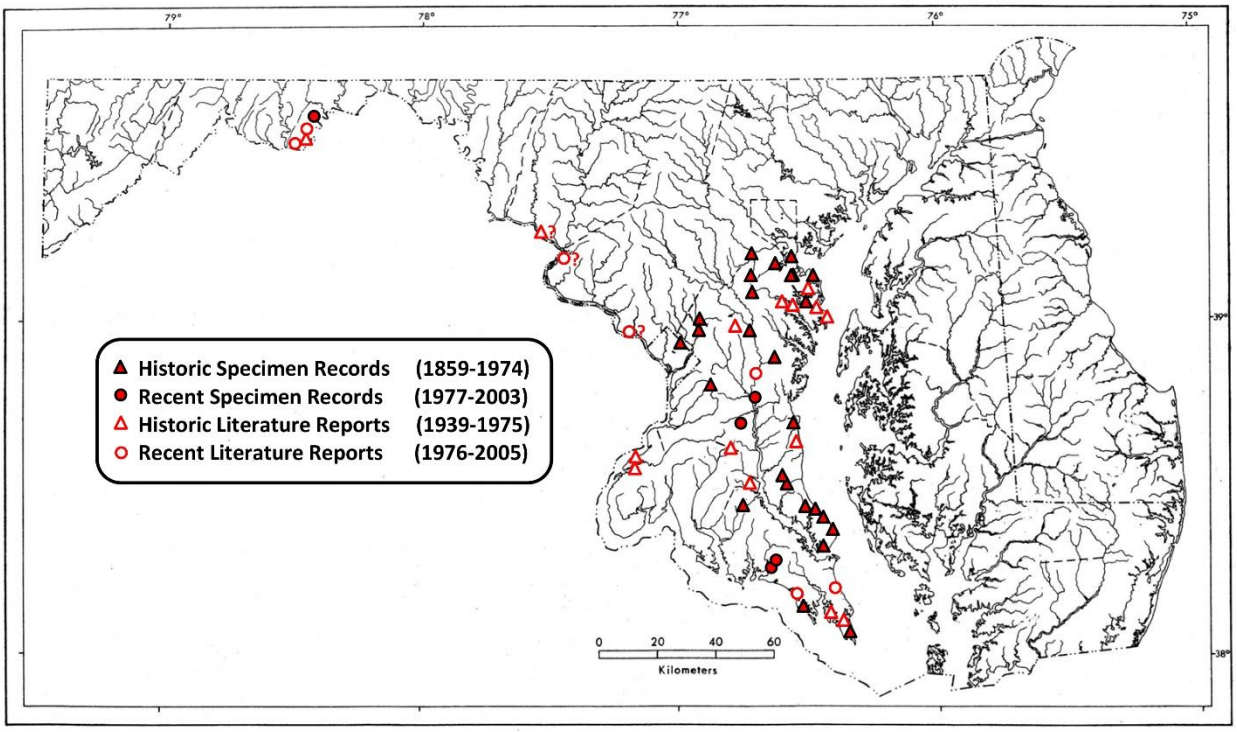


Figure 1. Map of Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia showing records and reports for the six-lined racerunner, *Aspidoscelis sexlineatus*, in Maryland and DC.

DISCUSSION

Allegany County: Harris (1975) reported that Richard A. Hahn "collected" the species opposite Paw Paw (Morgan County), West Virginia, in 1975, providing the first report for this montane county. However, no specimens are extant. Thompson (1982) added a second locality for the county: 8.2 km E Oldtown: Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, 19 September 1980. This specimen was catalogued as AEL 90 [Appalachian Environmental Laboratory, Frostburg State College (now University)], but has been discarded and the collection itself is in disarray with many specimens missing (Richard L. Raesly, personal communication, 2026). A third unvouchered site was provided by Martin (2007) for "Outdoor Club Shale Barrens above Potomac River," 26 May 1991. The coordinates provided by Martin do not work, so I was unable to determine precisely where this site is located. It appears to be off the east side of Outdoor Club Road, near or opposite Jerome, Morgan County, West Virginia, and has been mapped herein.

Anne Arundel County: Historic unvouchered sites for this county are: Camp Linstead (1.6 km SW Severna Park), Indian Landing, Lake Shore and Shore Acres (McClellan et al., 1943). Bodkin Point was listed by Mansueti (1941) but not by McClellan et al. (1943), nor did they comment on this omission. However, McCauley (1945) listed and plotted Bodkin Point. I have not mapped it. Klingel (1944) observed one lizard at Sandy Point (mapped). Inexplicably, Middendorf et al. (2018) considered Klingel (1944) an important distributional reference, but not McClellan et al. (1943) or especially McCauley (1945). Cooper (1956) listed the species from "nr. Friendship," but due to the uncertainty surrounding this locality (Miller, 2026), it was not mapped. Recent unvouchered but mapped reports are Bayard: Sands Road (R. W. Miller, personal observation, 20 May 1983) and Wooton's Landing Wetland Park (Touré & Middendorf, 2002). These two sites are only 1.25 km apart and are treated as one. Miller (2015) noted a site for Tanyard Cove Road, 1 May 1990, but there has been no room to map it herein.

Baltimore City: The earliest record from Maryland is MCZ 984, received – July 1859 (catalogue) or – August 1859 (José P. Rosado, personal communication, 1991), and was listed and mapped by Burt (1931). Cooper (1960) was not aware of this specimen. I do not necessarily believe this specimen was collected in Baltimore for reasons stated previously (Miller, 2015, 2016). Baltimore City's boundaries were extended in 1918 by annexing small portions of Anne Arundel County east and southeast of the mouth of the Patapsco River (Arnold, 1978; LeFaivre, 1997). This allowed Harris in Cooper (1965) to provide the first specific record for the reconstituted Baltimore (Curtis Bay: JCT Chemical Road and Hawkins Point Road, NHSM/HSH 127, – April 1961).

Baltimore County: Reed (1956) listed a specimen in his private collection from the Piedmont locality of Reisterstown (CFR 1042, no date), and later (1958) mapped it. Although the specimen was probably correctly identified, it was not among Reed's collection when I inventoried it after its donation to the Natural History Society of Maryland (now Maryland Museum of Natural Sciences) in 1994. Neither Cooper (1960, 1965) nor Harris (1969, 1975), who were familiar with Reed's publications, paid any attention to this report or, for that matter, much of anything that Reed published. Stranko et al. (2010) mapped *Aspidoscelis* as occurring on the Coastal Plain of this county, but there is no evidence for it. There is no basis for including Baltimore County within the range of *Aspidoscelis*. Middendorf et al. (2018) did not cite Reed (1956, 1958), although both publications were listed in MARA. Oddly, Stranko et al. (2010) was not listed in MARA.

Calvert County: The open symbol on the map is Camp Roosevelt (McCauley, 1945). In Norden's survey of the herpetofauna of Cove Point, which he published twice (2001, 2005), he included an appendix listing preserved specimens from Cove Point. Errors occur throughout his article but are rife here. It is evident that Norden did not personally examine any material but merely copied catalogue data. Even so, NHSM 9 was stamped DISCARDED (and was clearly marked as such by me in 1976 or 1977, over 20 years before Norden's project began), the date is wrong, and the collector was listed as "H.C.R." as though he was unknown. A simple check of the catalogue's first page or the card file would have revealed that the collector was Harry Charles Robertson. NHSM 26 has the wrong collectors. NHSM 583 was overlooked by Norden. For NHSM 667, the collectors are incomplete. NHSM 782 was also overlooked. For NHSM 784-792, 784, 788 and 791 were clearly stamped DISCARDED in the manner of NHSM 9. Concerning other collections, AMNH 57839 has an incorrect date; the correct one is unknown. For USNM

139467-139470, these specimens are all *Carphophis amoenus* (Say, 1825) from the District of Columbia. Other overlooked specimens were USNM 141367-141370.

Charles County: Historic symbols on the map are: 1.0 mile (1.6 km) above (NE) Sweden Point: E side Mattawoman Creek (McCauley, 1945), Cedarville State Forest (Cooper, 1953), Indian Head (Cooper, 1953) and near Benedict: MD Route 231 (NHSM 404, 7 June 1942—discarded). In a survey of the herpetofauna of the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Forester & Miller (1992) collected Indian Head 18 times, but did not see *Aspidoscelis*. Oddly, no extant specimens are known from this county, the second largest in land area in southern Maryland.

District of Columbia: East (1927) reported the only known locality for this jurisdiction: Terra Cotta (USNM 72592, 10 June 1927). However, he added: "Numerous other individuals of this lizard were observed at this place." James A. Fowler revisited this site on 6 September 1941 and collected one specimen (CM 140160). Hoffman (1957a) said he examined two specimens from the District in the National Museum, but only the one cited here is listed on their website.

Frederick County: Harris (1975) mapped a site for Point of Rocks provided by Robert G. Tuck, Jr. in 1969. I emailed Tuck in 2017 and 2025 asking for details of this unusual report, the most isolated in Maryland that has validity, in particular whether he saw evidence of a population, but was unable to learn anything. Contrary to Middendorf et al. (2018), there is no specimen from Point of Rocks; Harris (1975) clearly stated it was an observation. This locality has been mapped with a question mark.

Montgomery County: *Aspidoscelis* has been reported three times from this Piedmont county. On 18 June 1976, Grogan (1985) noted a foraging adult "1 km SW of Cabin John ... approximately midway between Lock 12 on the C&O Canal and the southern [eastern] tip of Plummer's Island ..." This locality is actually about 1.8 km WSW Cabin John. The proximity of Grogan's site to Washington, DC and the amount of biological attention paid to the area (e.g., Brady, 1937; Manville, 1968; Perry, 2007) suggest this lizard was probably an introduction. Also, Grogan did not describe the habitat. I emailed him twice on this subject (2025, 2026), but received no response. Middendorf et al. (2018) mentioned Grogan's report, but did not discuss it. This locality has been mapped with a question mark. A second site was reported from Dickerson in an environmental impact statement by Faustini et al. (2005). Faustini et al.'s list strains credulity. There was little elaboration on the 26 herp species they reported. At least one racerunner and nine other species "were found in the upland areas of the site ..." Their reports of *Rana sphenocephala* Cope, 1866 and *Scincella lateralis* (Say, 1822) are well outside the known range in Maryland (Cooper, 1960; Harris, 1975), and the listings for *Bufo americanus* Holbrook, 1836 and *B. fowleri* Hinckley, 1882, *Kinosternon subrubrum* (Bonnaterre, 1789) and *Sternotherus odoratus* (Latreille, 1802) *Plestiodon fasciatus* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *P. laticeps* (Schneider, 1801) require verification. Their *Aspidoscelis* report has been reluctantly mapped herein with a question mark. A third report, ca. 2005, from Walter Reed Medical Center (now Walter Reed National Military Medical Center), appeared in an environmental impact statement that is no longer online. Robert P. Langstroth (personal communication, 2026) salvaged a portion of this report from his email that stated, in part: "Shrub areas also provide foraging areas for many species that eat insects, or berries or seeds. Wildlife occurring in this habitat include ... reptiles such as eastern mud turtle (*Kinosternon subrubrum*), six-lined racerunner (*Cnemidophorus sexlineatus*), and Eastern banded water snake

(*Nerodia fasciata* [Linnaeus, 1766]).” The center is well outside the range of the mud turtle; the nearest report is from the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, 7.9 km SW of the center (Brady, 1937). Brady stated: “Occasional, in the canal at low water.” *N. fasciata* does not even occur in Maryland. Hence I do not believe the report of racerunners from the center is reliable and it has not been mapped.

Prince George’s County: Based on the catalogue number, USNM 5105, this is one of the earliest specimens known from Maryland, but there are no locality data or date associated with it. The hollow symbol on the map is Bowie (McClellan et al., 1943). Later in their account these authors clarified it, stating: “Near Bowie ... a colony frequented the high sandy banks of a railway cut which ran through a wooded section.” The railroad in question is Pope’s Creek Subdivision (now CSX Transportation property).

St. Mary’s County: The second earliest record for the racerunner in Maryland was reported by Yarrow (1882): Piney Point (USNM 9256, – September 1877). The historic hollow symbols on the map are Fort Point, Ridge and St. Inigoes (McClellan et al., 1943), and the recent hollow sites are 1.6 km ENE St. James: St. James Church Road (Van Deusen & Johnson, 1980) and 1.2 km NW Valley Lee: MD Route 244 (R. W. Miller, personal observation, 4 June 1984).

Talbot County: USACE (1996) reported a racerunner from Coaches Island, Chesapeake Bay. This was far outside the range of *Aspidoscelis* and its presence there, assuming it was correctly identified, can only be a source for speculation. Coaches Island is over 13 km from the nearest point of land in Anne Arundel County, and 15.8 km from the nearest known locality: Calvert County: Chesapeake Beach (USNM 26759-26760, 16 May 1900).

Washington County: Stranko et al. (2010) mapped this county, but there no records or reports supporting this.

The following comments are on subjects not tied to the jurisdictional breakdown above. Cooper (1948) made the extraordinary statement: “It [*Aspidoscelis sexlineatus*] is considered rare on the Eastern Shore and we [Natural History Society of Maryland, now Maryland Museum of Natural Sciences] have only one record based on an observation by Mr. Edward Lee Maugans.” Inexplicably, Cooper did not reveal the site, nor did he disclose who thought racerunners were “rare” on the Eastern Shore. Cooper’s note has not heretofore received any attention. Maugans’ father, George W. Maugans, Jr., was NHSM herp curator from at least 1940 to at least 1954, so the accuracy of the identification may be buttressed by this fact. Mitchell (1994) stated: “It [*Aspidoscelis sexlineatus*] does not occur on the Eastern Shore.” Later, Mitchell & Reay (1999) mapped a locality on Virginia’s Eastern Shore in extreme south-central Northampton County and unaccountably did not comment on it. According to White & White (2002, 2007) Mitchell found the report “questionable.” Virginia Herpetological Society (2026) mapped Northampton County without comment. Cooper next stated: “The racerunner seems to be moving northward in this state,” but cited no evidence. Cooper also provided dietary notes on captive racerunners. At an undisclosed locality in Anne Arundel County, Groves (1972) “observed 10 young [racerunners] (SVL 32-36 mm.) feeding on immature field crickets at 3 PM,” 2 October 1972. Neither Cooper (1948) nor Groves (1972) were cited in MARA.

Hoffman (1957a) described a new subspecies, *Cnemidophorus sexlineatus oligoporus* (name changed to *C. s. pauciporus* in 1957b), based partly on specimens from Maryland and the District of Columbia. Four sites for his new taxon were mapped in Maryland and one presumably for the District of Columbia. However, he listed eight localities from four counties and the District, but his map bears virtually no relation to the sites he listed. No collection numbers were cited except for the holotype and the "allotype" (paratype) (USNM 135232-135233), and the dates of collection do not agree with Cochran (1961) or those posted on the USNM website. Hoffman also stated that he examined two specimens from the District of Columbia in the National Museum, but there is only one that is extant, as noted above. Duellman & Zweifel (1962) synonymized *C. s. pauciporus*. MARA did not concern itself with any of these issues, but since they briefly discussed *Lampropeltis triangulum temporalis* (Cope, 1893), perhaps they should have.

In Trauth & McAllister's (1996) review of this species, neither Maryland nor the District of Columbia were mentioned in their regional summary. There are about 25 references to these areas. Among the prominent oversights were East (1927), McClellan et al. (1943), McCauley (1945), Cooper (1960) and Harris (1975). Although Trauth & McAllister mapped several isolated localities for this species from throughout its range, they overlooked the disjunct reports of racerunners in Allegany County (Harris, 1975; Thompson, 1982), Frederick County (Harris, 1975) and Montgomery County (Grogan, 1985).

Middendorf et al. (2018) made additional errors unrelated to the racerunner's distribution, which were noted above. They cited Grogan (1981) on habitat, but this publication has no bearing on *Aspidoscelis*. Next they cited McClellan et al. (1943), Harris (1975) and Mitchell (1994) on diet, but Harris wrote nothing on this subject for any species other than *Farancia erytrogramma* (Palisot de Beauvois, 1801). Mitchell's dietary data came strictly from McCauley (1939), whom neither Middendorf et al. nor MARA cite.

Until recently, the Maryland Biodiversity Project (MBP) (2026) was rife with misinformation on the distribution of *Aspidoscelis*. It mapped five Eastern Shore counties: Dorchester, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester, and then added a nonsensical statement: "Harris (1975) includes the eastern shore in the range, but this could be an extrapolation, as there appear to be no traceable records from that area." Harris did not map the Eastern Shore or even mention it in connection to racerunners. MBP also mapped Baltimore County, which, as shown above, has no credible basis. James D. Brighton (personal communication, 26 October 2026) corrected the MBP website so that it accurately reflects, in a general sense, what is known about racerunner distribution in Maryland.

On the subject of abundance, it appears that racerunners have declined in the state, at least in southern Maryland, the main portion of their range. MDDNR (2025) listed the racerunner as S3 (Vulnerable). Earlier authors had contrary experiences. Cooper (1953) found the species to be "abundant" in the sand and gravel pits of Cedarville State Forest, Charles County. In 1956, referring to Anne Arundel County generally, he found them to be "extremely abundant" and Harris (1975), in a general statement, wrote: "Very abundant in localized colonies." Hardy & Mansueti (1962) wrote that the species was "locally common" in Calvert County, and in 1993 Smithberger & Swarth reported them to be "Common" at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Anne Arundel County. Norden (2001, 2005), after interviewing older naturalists, concluded that racerunners at Cove Point, Calvert County, were more common in the past than they are today.

Cope (1892, 1900) stated that *Aspidoscelis sexlineatus* occurs in Delaware. No evidence was provided and no specimens from this state were listed in either paper. Stejneger & Barbour (1917, 1923, 1933, 1939, 1943) did not include Delaware in the range of the racerunner, nor did

Smith (1946) or Schmidt (1953). Conant (e.g., 1945, 1947, 1958) also did not mention Cope's reference to Delaware. Duellman & Zweifel (1962) cited Cope (1892), but stated the range as "From the Atlantic coast as far north as Maryland and the District of Columbia ..." Although it is clear that racerunners do not occur in Delaware, I have not located any author who has directly refuted Cope's claim. However, MCZ 590, date and collector unknown, but entered in the catalogue on 20 February 1862, bears the locality "Delaware River" and this was presumably the source for Cope's inclusion of Delaware in the species' range.

Future field work should focus on the questioned localities on the map and discussed in the text: the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (CSX) grade just west and southwest of Dickerson, Montgomery County, the region just northeast of Plummer's Island, Montgomery County, and, especially, Point of Rocks, Frederick County.

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Appendix. Specimens cited.

Specimens examined

Allegany County: TSU 6344.
Anne Arundel County: NHSM 154, 705-707, 889, 2056-2057, 2321, 2376-2377; NHSM/HSH 29, 32, 43, 48, 53, 64, 91, 98, 103; TSU 9727; UF 41120-41121.
Baltimore City: MCZ 984; NHSM/HSH 127.
Calvert County: NHSM 26, 583, 589, 667, 782, 785-787, 789-790, 792, 1306, 1409, 1474, 1522, 1540, 1556, 1558, 1574.
Prince George's County: TSU 3867, 6567-6568; USNM 313344.
St. Mary's County: NHSM/HSH 126; TSU 1729-1730, 7561, 7781.

Specimens unexamined

Anne Arundel County: BYU 22874-22880; USNM 107883,124674, 144355-144360.
Calvert County: CUMV 2811, 6061; NCSM 61920; USNM 26759-26760, 138671-138672, 107882, 139420.
District of Columbia: CM 140160; USNM 72592.
Prince George's County: USNM 55429, 127446, 139425-139427, 139428.
St. Mary's County: CUMV 2812; USNM 9256, 22178-22180, 67367-67369, 83349, 157331-157332, 162310-162312.