Natural History of Amphibians and Reptiles of the Cohoke Mill Creek Watershed in Virginia

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ABSTRACT

Cohoke Mill Creek in King William County, Virginia was selected in the early 1990s as a reservoir site to serve the water needs of the growing human population in the City of Newport News. It would have flooded 890 ha of the watershed. At the request of the company overseeing the environmental assessment, we conducted field research during 1994 to document the herpetofauna in terrestrial and wetland habitats. We searched 12 study sites scattered throughout the watershed using multiple techniques and found 23 species of amphibians (14 anurans, 9 salamanders) and 20 species of reptiles (8 turtles, 4 lizards, 8 snakes). We provide an annotated checklist that summarizes our observations on habitat occurrence, activity times, body sizes, weights by sex, clutch size, hatchling emergence times, and prey. Two forested wetlands (seasonally flooded and semi-permanently flooded) contained the highest herpetofaunal diversity of all the sampled wetland types. The herpetofaunal diversity of the Cohoke Mill Creek watershed is typical of the Coastal Plain fauna in the Virginia portion of the mid-Atlantic region. Museum specimens provided the first voucher documentation for amphibians and reptiles in this heretofore unsurveyed watershed.

Keywords: amphibians, Cohoke Mill Creek watershed, mid-Atlantic, reptiles, wetlands.

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