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HERPETOFAUNAL DISTRIBUTIONS IN GOGEBIC COUNTY, MICHIGAN

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Abstract

This project sought to provide valuable data for the Michigan Herp Atlas by conducting wide and intensive surveys of 140 sites in Gogebic County. Surveys with pitfalls and drift fences, visual searches of 25 m x 25 m plots, incidental captures, and visual open water surveys for turtles were implemented to maximize species observation. Nineteen species of herpetofauna were captured, totaling 3048 adults, tadpoles, and larvae. Uncommon captures included a state species of concern, the wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*; two individuals), and several other patchily-distributed species (e.g., four-toed salamander [*Hemidactylum scutatum*; 1 individual], smooth green snake [*Opheodrys vernalis*; 1 individual]). Based on habitat assessments of capture sites and literature reviews, species distribution maps were created to predict presence throughout the county. Statistical analyses indicated that the species did not stray from their acknowledged microhabitat preferences, but that larger-scale landscape patterns were not influential. Although some were rarely captured, no single species appeared to be at risk of extirpation in Gogebic County (based on available habitat). Additionally, a county-wide landuse GIS layer was created, which may prove valuable to future studies in the region.