

THE SEMI-AQUATIC SNAKES OF A RECLAIMED SURFACE MINE: HABITAT UTILIZATION AND POPULATION BIOLOGY

Author: Michael B. Keck

The semi-aquatic snake population of a reclaimed surface mine in northeast Texas was studied throughout 1991 and 1992 at eight reclamation ponds and two pre-existing ponds. In descending order by abundance, the five species present were: *Nerodia rhombifer*, *N. erythrogaster*, *N. fasciata*, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*, and *Thamnophis proximus*. Neither the density of *N. erythrogaster* nor of *N. fasciata* were statistically different among the ponds. The densities of *N. rhombifer* and *A. piscivorus* were not uniform among the ponds; some ponds had significantly more captures of these species than others. The non-uniform abundance of snakes could not be explained by pond age, shoreline length, or shoreline vegetation. The two pre-existing ponds did not form a homogenous group that differed from the reclamation ponds in a quantifiable manner. Radiotelemetry revealed that *N. erythrogaster* may often utilize ephemeral streamlets between ponds.

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Department of Biology
The University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, Texas 76019