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THE FISHES OF ROCK CREEK, SHARP COUNTY, ARKANSAS

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ABSTRACT
A survey of the fishes of Rock Creek in northcentral Arkansas was made on 9-10 November, 1978, and 15-16 March, 1979. Field collections were made using a minnow seine and backpack shocker. The creek system was inhabited by 28 species of fish representing eight families. Fish collections were typical of a small Ozark stream. The most abundant species were: Campostoma oligolepis Hubbs and Greene, largescale stoneroller; Notropis telescopus (Cope), telescope shiner; Notropis zonatus (Putnam), bleeding shiner; Moxostoma duquesnei (Lesueur), black redhorse; Etheostoma blennioides Rafinesque, greenside darter; Etheostoma caeruleum Storer, rainbow darter; Etheostoma spectabile (Agassiz), orangethroat darter; and Cottus bairdi Girard, mottled sculpin. Lampeira seppytens (Abbott), least brook lamprey, represented an extension of the previously known range of this species in the state.

INTRODUCTION
Rock Creek is a predominantly clear, spring-fed Ozark stream totally within Sharp County, Arkansas. The main spring area is referred to as Bubbling Springs and consists of one large spring with approximately one acre of numerous small bubbling springs. Six small intermittent tributaries flow into Rock Creek producing an upper stream with swift, long, narrow riffles and short, shallow pools and a lower section of long, swift, wide riffles and long wide pools (Fig. 1). The watershed consists of hardwood woodlands with few open fields. The substrate is composed of bedrock and gravel with varying sizes of swift riffles separating the pool areas. Periods of flooding flush the system free of leaf and debris. From the heart of the canyon, water flows to the mouth, which empties into Spring River, the distance is 14 kilometers.

Similar studies have been conducted on Black River and its tributaries by Beadles (1972), Fowler and Harp (1974), Green and Beadles (1974), and Yeager and Beadles (1976) and on Sylamore Creek by Frazier and Beadles (1977).

METHODS AND MATERIALS
Collections were taken with the following equipment:
1) A 6-meter-long, 3-centimeter mesh minnow seine;
2) A gasoline-powered backpack shocker producing 230 volts with DC current; and
3) Hand held dip nets.

The electrofishing technique described by Ricker (1971) was used. The seine was primarily used to catch fish at the foot of a shoal area as they were washed downstream in front of the shocker. Hand held dip nets were used in all collection locations. Specimens were netted, fixed in 10% formalin for three to seven days, then washed, identified and preserved in 40% isopropanol.

Classification was accomplished with the keys of Pfieger (1975), Buchanan (1973), and Miller and Robison (1973). Genera and species are arranged alphabetically within each family in accordance with the scheme proposed by Greenwood et al. (1966). Scientific and common names of fishes follow those of Bailey et al. (1970).

RESULTS
This study yielded 28 species distributed among eight families. The following is an annotated checklist of the fishes of Rock Creek.

Petromyzontidae (Lampreys)
Lampeira seppytens (Abbott), Least brook lamprey.
One specimen was captured during the spring collection and was found in a swift, shallow, rocky riffle. This record is a range extension of this species with the closest specimen recorded by Johnson and Beadles (1977) from the Eleven Point River system.

Cyprinidae (Minnows)
Campostoma anomalum pullum (Agassiz), Central stoneroller.
One specimen was collected just below Bubbling Spring during November, 1978.
Campostoma oligolepis Hubbs and Greene, Largescale stoneroller. Very abundant in all collection sites.
Hybopsis amblopi (Rafinesque), Bigeye chub.
Collected on the larger section of the creek. Uncommon.
Nocomis biguttatus (Kirtland), Hornyhead chub.
Collected in the pool section of the creek. This species was considered common.
Notropis cornutus chrysocephalus (Rafinesque), Striped shiner.
Common inhabitant of rocky pools; however, their occurrence was slightly below common. One specimen taken was 19.7 centimeters in length. Following Miller (1968), the writers consider Notropis chrysocephalus a subspecies of Notropis cornutus (Mitchell).

Figure 1. Collecting sites (△) on Rock Creek, Sharp County, Arkansas. *Bubbling Springs.
Notropis galacturus (Cope). Whitetail shiner.
One specimen was found in the pool region of the lower section.
This species is reported to be in the Spring River system by Buchanan (1973).
Notropis telescopus (Cope). Telescope shiner.
Abundant throughout the stream; however, mainly inhabitant
of pools over gravel bottoms.
Notropis zonatus (Putnam). Bleeding shiner.
Abundant throughout the stream; collected in all collection sites.
Chrosomus erythropterus (Rafinesque). Southern redbelly dace.
Collected throughout the system mainly from flowing water over a
rocky bottom.
Semotilus atromaculatus (Mitchill). Creek chub.
Common in the calm pools above riffles.

Cottus bairdi Girard. Mottled sculpin.
Specimens of Etheostoma zonale (Cope). Banded darter.
Rare inhabitant. Found only at one location in a swift riffle area.

Noturus exilis Nelson. Slender madtom.

Nygmia punctata (Mitchill). Creek chub sucker.
Common throughout the system. Found in the pool areas below
twilight.
Hypentelium nigricans (Lesueur). Northern hog sucker.
The most abundant catostomid found in swift riffles and calm pools.
Moxostoma duquesnei (Lesueur). Black redhorse.
Very abundant during the spring collection; however, only
common during the fall.

Cyprinodontidae (Killifishes)
Fundulus catenatus (Storer). Northern studdfish.
Common throughout the system. Not as abundant as Fundulus olivaceus.
Inhabitant of quiet pools over gravel bottoms.
Fundulus olivaceus (Storer). Blackspotted topminnow.
Widely distributed throughout the system but never in great
numbers. Found in quiet pools over gravel bottoms as noted by Braasch
and Smith (1965).

Centrarchidae (Sunfishes)
Ambloplites rupestris (Rafinesque). Rock bass.
A common inhabitant of deep pools. Found also under rock ledges
in shoal areas.
Lepomis cyanellus Rafinesque. Green sunfish.
Common throughout the system. It was an inhabitant of the pool
sections.
Lepomis megalotis (Rafinesque). Longfin sunfish.
Found to be the most common of the bream. Inhabitant of the pool
areas.
Micropterus dolomieu Lacepede. Smallmouth bass.
Found throughout the main creek system. Population was well
established in all year classes.

Percidae (Perches)
Etheostoma blennioides Rafinesque. Greenside darter.
Common darter inhabiting the riffle areas.
Etheostoma caeruleum Storer. Rainbow darter.
One of the most abundant perches. Inhabitant of riffle and pools
with gravel bottoms.
Etheostoma equula (Hubbs and Black). Arkansas saddled darter.
Abundant on the swift riffle areas of the lower section.
Etheostoma flabellare Rafinesque. Fantail darter.
Collected on shallow riffle areas. Moderately common throughout
the system.
Etheostoma spectabile (Agassiz). Orangefin darter.
Common throughout the system; however, found mainly along the
head of riffle areas.

DISCUSSION
Rock Creek is an Ozark foothills stream that produces a fishable
population of fish for the wading angler. The main sport species,
Ambloplites rupestris (rock bass) and Micropterus dolomieu (small-
mouth bass) were abundant. Lepomis cyanellus (green sunfish) and
Lepomis megalotis (longfin sunfish) were also present in sufficient
number for the angler. During the survey of the fish population, sus-
taining reproduction was apparent in all species excluding Lepomis
quepia, the least brook lamprey). Notropis galacturus (whitetail
shiner), and Noturus exilis (slender madtom). The record of L.
quepia, was a distributional record now placing it well within the
Spring River system. L. quepia has been recorded from the Black
River system by Yeager and Beadles (1976), from the River White
system by Harp and Matthews (1975), and from the Sylamore Creek
by Prazier and Beadles (1977).

Notropis telescopus (telescope shiner) and Chrosomus erythropterus
(southern redbelly dace) dominated the family Cyprinidae. Notropis
galacturus is reported common in the Spring River system; however,
only one specimen was collected in Rock Creek. Of the family
Catostomidae, Hypentelium nigricans (northern hog sucker) was
found throughout the system; however, it did not appear to be
overpopulated. Moxostoma duquesnei (black redhorse) was more
abundant during the spring collection. The catfish family, Ictaluridae,
was not well represented, with only a few specimens of Noturus exilis
found. The reason for this is expected to be due to the heavy predator
population present. N. exilis has been found to be common in neigh-
boring Ott Creek in which only L. cyanellus exists as the predator
population (pers. obs. by Carter).

Fundulus catenatus (northern studdfish) and Fundulus olivaceus
(blackspotted topminnow) were common over most of the system.
The family Centrarchidae was well represented with abundant numbers of
Etheostoma blennioides (greenside darter), Etheostoma caeruleum
(rainbow darter), Etheostoma equula (Arkansas saddled darter),
Etheostoma flabellare (fantail darter), and Etheostoma spectabile
(oreganthrofin darter). Etheostoma zonale (banded darter) was rare.
Specimens of Etheostoma blennioides ranged to 13 centimeters.
The darters were mainly in the upper two-thirds of the stream where
the water flowed over more riffle areas and was more shallow.

Cottus bairdi (mottled sculpin) of the family Cottidae was also
more abundant in the upper section of the system. All age classes
were present with the largest adult collected being 10.5 centimeters
in total length.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Appreciation is expressed to all Arkansas Game and
Fish Commission employees who assisted in the collect-
ion of the field data.

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