

A NEW LOCALITY RECORD FOR THE BLUE SUCKER, *CYCLEPTUS ELONGATUS* (LE SUEUR) IN OKLAHOMA

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The blue sucker is placed in a monotypic genus, quite distinctive from other suckers in North America. Its distinctive features include its long slender body, very long dorsal fin with about 30 soft rays, small head, and coarse papillae on its lips.

Moore defined the distribution of the blue sucker, *Cycleptus elongatus*, in the book by Blair, et al (1) to be large streams and artificial impoundments from the Pearl and Mississippi Rivers to the Rio Grande. In his book on the Fishes of Montana, Brown (2) described the natural distribution of the blue sucker to be the Missouri-Mississippi River System from Montana east to Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and south to the Gulf of Mexico.

In Oklahoma, *C. elongatus* until very recently had been reported in the literature from only Lake Texoma and Grand Lake and the tailwaters of these reservoirs. It was first reported in 1950 by Moore and Cross (3) from Lake Texoma, Love County, Oklahoma. In 1959, Riggs and Bonn (4) reported *Cycleptus* to be rare in Lake Texoma but slightly more common in the tailwaters. Robinson, et al (5) reported that a young *Cycleptus* was collected by Gordon Hall from Grand Lake, Delaware County, Oklahoma. Mr. Hall explained that this was a 5 cm juvenile taken in the early 1950's. That was the first and presently the only report of young *Cycleptus* being collected in the state. Dr. John H. Carroll collected a single large specimen of *Cycleptus* in 1969 from the Red River south of Valliant, Oklahoma. Recently, Pigg and Hill (6) reported collecting large numbers (about 40) of this sucker in gill nets below Hugo Dam. This was the first known record of the blue sucker from the Kiamichi River watershed.

Ricardo Gomez of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has stated that in 1968 a commercial fisherman collected a specimen of *Cycleptus* from the Grand River System. This specimen was

verified by Dr. J. D. Reeves of North-eastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The exact collection site is uncertain and the specimen was not preserved. Mr. Gomez explained that Kim Erickson, also of the ODWC, collected a single specimen of *C. elongatus* in 1973 while doing striped bass research in the Webbers Falls area. This specimen was released.

Jim Smith, with the ODWC, netted three blue suckers near the mouth of the Illinois River while conducting a study of the Illinois River trout fishery in June, 1972. Length and weight measurements were taken for two of these specimens. One specimen was 66.8 cm in length and weighed 2352 g; the other specimen was 63.7 cm in length and weighed 1700 g.

Moore (7), in his publication pertaining to the fish fauna of Oklahoma, reviewed collection records for the Poteau River System dating back to the early 1850's, but he reported no records for the blue sucker in the Poteau watershed. In 1947, Cross and Moore (8) conducted a watershed survey of the Poteau River but found no *Cycleptus*. Other fishery investigations of Wister Lake, its tributaries and stilling basin began in 1949 and continued through 1951. These investigations included those of G. E. Hall and W. C. Latta (9, 10, 11), but *C. elongatus* was not collected.

The Poteau River and its tributaries drain an area which includes the mountainous areas of eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas. The Poteau River is about 222 km long and drains an area of about 4889 sq km. It enters the Arkansas River at river mile 303 on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation Channel near the town of Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

Wister Lake was constructed on the Poteau River at river mile 60.9 about 32 km south of Wister, Oklahoma, in 1949. In 1971, Lock and Dam No. 13, part of the navigation system, became operational. This

structure is located approximately 24 km downstream from the mouth of the Poteau River and made approximately 16 km of the Poteau River navigable. What changes in fish distribution this construction has made are not well known.

Recently, the Tulsa District, Corps of Engineers, sponsored an environmental study of Wister Lake including the Poteau River and its tributaries. Determinations of water quality parameters and inventories of aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities were made. During this study, in August, 1974, Dr. Hague Lindsay of the University of Tulsa and two of his graduate students, and Corps biologists sampled a portion of the Poteau River downstream from Wister Lake. The area included a 5 km section of the Poteau River and tributaries approximately 2 to 5 km east and northeast of Panama, Oklahoma, in LeFlore County. Field collections of fishes were made by seining, electroshocking, and gill netting. Identifications were made by the authors and verified by Dr. George Moore. This three-day effort resulted in the collection of approximately 30 species.

One specimen of *Cycleptus elongatus* was taken in an overnight gill netting operation about 4 km downstream from a bridge which spans the main stem of the Poteau River approximately 2.4 km east of Panama, Oklahoma. The specimen was collected in an 8 ft deep, 1½ in sq mesh monofilament gill net which was tied back to a depth of 6 ft.

This specimen, measuring 41.9 cm, represents the only known record of *Cycleptus* from the Poteau River System and tends to fill in the gap between specimens from the Red River System to the south and the Grand River in the north. The blue sucker is now believed to be more widespread in Oklahoma than previously thought but remains an elusive species.

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