

**DISCOVERY OF THE  
WESTERN SAND DARTER,  
AMMOCRYPTA CLARA,  
IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER BELOW  
THE CONFLUENCE OF THE  
MISSOURI RIVER**

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**ABSTRACT**

A recently discovered population of *Ammocrypta clara* from the Mississippi River near Grand Tower, Illinois is reported.

**DISCUSSION**

*Ammocrypta clara* is an inhabitant of sandy-bottomed rivers and large streams in the Lake Michigan drainage and the Sabine and Mississippi river systems. The distribution of the western sand darter is described in detail by Williams (1975) and Page (1983). In Illinois, the western sand darter was previously known to occur in the Mississippi River above the mouth of the Missouri River and in the Sugar and Kaskaskia rivers (Smith, 1979). The range of *A. clara* has been dramatically reduced in Illinois and the construction of reservoirs may have eliminated it from the Kaskaskia River (Smith, 1979). Currently, the western sand darter is under consideration for endangered status in Illinois.

Several recent collections from the Mississippi River near the village of Grand Tower in Jackson County, Illinois have revealed a population of *A. clara* and represent a significant range extension for this species in the Mississippi River. The capture of a juvenile specimen (16.9 mm SL) supports the contention that the specimens reported here represent a viable population. The western sand darter

ranges as far south as the Neches and Sabine rivers in eastern Texas (Williams, 1975); however, there are no published records of this species from the Mississippi River below the mouth of the Missouri River.

All specimens were collected over a sand substrate with a 20' fine mesh bag seine. Specimens were collected along the shoreline of the beach of Devil's Backbone State Park, approximate river mile 80.5, and along the western shoreline of the island at river mile 79. The mouth of the Ohio River is designated as river mile zero by the United States Geological Survey. The following specimens have been deposited in the Ichthyology Collection of the Zoology Department of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The standard length in mm of each specimen preserved is in parentheses. *Ammocrypta clara*. IL: Jackson Co., Mississippi River near Grand Tower, SIUC 12322 (29, 35.7) 7 Sep 1985; SIUC 12321 (31, 38.7, 42.7) 20 Sep 1985; SIUC 12379 (30.2, 32.1) 28 Sep 1985; SIUC 12764 (32.7) 26 Oct 1985; SIUC 15487 (16.9) 13 Sep 1987.

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