

NOTES ON PARTURITION IN THE MIDLAND BROWN SNAKE, STORERIA DEKAYI

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The midland brown snake is a small, ovoviviparous natricine snake, which bears its young in late July or August. Brood sizes for Storeria dekayi wrightorum range from 3 to 24 (Wright and Wright, 1957). Broods for Illinois specimens were recorded by Smith (1961) as 5, 6, 12, 17, and 23. Pope (1944) records a brood of 24. Clausen (1936) reports litters of 9 - 20 for S. d. dekayi, and also presents detailed notes on breeding in that subspecies. Inasmuch as detailed observations on birth in wrightorum seem to be lacking, however, I present my observations, to add to the present knowledge of the subspecies.

On 24 July 1971, a large female Storeria dekayi wrightorum, 427 mm. total length, was discovered at the boat dock of the Dawson Lake (McLean) Conservation Area, McLean Co., Illinois. The specimen was coiled beneath a corner of a sheet of black plastic material covering a large wooden post, about 5 feet from the edge of the lake. The snake was caged with a male S. d. wrightorum.

On 29 July, the female was seen moving about the cage. Earthworms (Lumbricus) were offered, and although it attempted to eat, the snake was apparently unable to do so.

20 young were born in the morning of 31 July. The exact time of deposition for 18 snakes was recorded (Table I). During expulsion, the female elevated her tail. When parturition was completed, strong muscular contractions forced another baby towards the vent. Each snake was encased in a membranous sack. Expulsion took from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes; the snakes were completely free of their prenatal sacks within 22 minutes.

The snakes yawned as soon as they broke free of the membranes. Shedding took place immediately. Although quite active at first, the young soon settled beneath objects in the cage. They appeared gregarious, usually coiling about the adults or gathering in cage cracks. A few began feeding upon earthworm bits. Contrary to Clausen's (1936) observations, all insects were refused.

Each snake was gray with black spots, a yellowish collar, and a gray venter. The interior of the mouth was black or pink. Total lengths for a sample of the litter (n = 9) were 90 - 94 mm., mean 92 mm.

One of the young was kept for observation. On 30 September it shed its skin and assumed a light brown color. Most of the black markings faded to dark brown. The neck band became brownish, and the belly changed to pinkish-brown. By 28 March 1972, this snake no longer had the neck ring. It had grown from 93 to 137 mm. total length.

While expelling young the female would frequently follow pre-

viously born snakes. After parturition of all young was completed, she fed voraciously, and in 2 weeks had ingested 14 annelids; afterwards her appetite curbed considerably. The posterior skin folds due to birth disappeared in those weeks.

TABLE I - Time of Parturition for a Litter of Storeria dekayi

Snake	Expulsion	
	Began	Completed
1	Time not recorded	Time not recorded
2	" "	" "
3	9:35	9:36.5
4	9:45	9:46
5	9:52	9:53.5
6	9:59.5	10:00.5
7	10:05	10:05.5
8	10:13	10:14.5
9	10:17	10:17.5
10	10:20	10:20.5
11	10:28.5	10:29
12	10:30.5	10:31
13	10:31.5	10:32
14	10:36	10:36.5
15	10:40	10:41
16	10:44.5	10:45
17	10:49.5	10:50
18	10:55	10:55.5
19	11:06	11:06.5
20	11:26	11:26.5

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