

AN EXPANSION OF RANGE OF THE REDEAR SUNFISH,
LEPOMIS MICROLOPHUS, IN THE EMBARRAS RIVER BASIN

Donald G. Buth

Provisional Department of Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution
University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801

ABSTRACT

The Illinois range of the introduced redear sunfish is reported to include the headwaters region of the Embarras River in Champaign County.

INTRODUCTION

The Illinois range of redear sunfish was originally limited to a few localities in the Wabash basin (Forbes and Richardson, 1920). However, introductions by man have established populations in several drainages in Illinois.

Ichthyological surveys conducted by the Illinois Department of Conservation in the Embarras River basin in 1962 and 1967 yielded only a single redear sunfish specimen in Jasper County (Lopinot, 1968). Studies of Embarras River fishes in Champaign County have not reported this species in this particular drainage (Thompson and Hunt, 1930; Menzel, 1952; Larimore and Smith, 1963; Buth, 1974). Larimore and Smith (1963) reported redear sunfish from the Sangamon River in Champaign County but attributed this to introduction by man and mentioned that this species must be excluded from any distributional analysis of native species in this region. Redear sunfish have also been reported from Copper Slough, a tributary of the Kaskaskia River, in Champaign County (B. M. Burr, pers. comm.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On September 23, 1973, a single adult Lepomis microlophus was captured by seine in the Embarras River about 12 km south of Urbana, Illinois. This locality corresponds to "Station 7" utilized in studies by Menzel (1952) and Buth (1974). This individual is believed to be the first of its species to be taken from the Embarras River in Champaign County. Eleven additional adults were collected by seine at the same locality during July, 1974.

An adult specimen was also collected at Station 7 in September, 1975, and deposited in the Illinois Natural History Survey collection.

Thus, the redear sunfish population appears to be established, at least temporarily, in this headwaters region and may be of value to local fishermen. However, it remains to be seen whether or not this population will be maintained in the headwaters of the Embarras River.

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