

1915

Notes on the Distribution of the Prairie Spotted Skunk in Iowa

B. H. Bailey

Copyright ©1915 Iowa Academy of Science, Inc.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias>

Recommended Citation

Bailey, B. H. (1915) "Notes on the Distribution of the Prairie Spotted Skunk in Iowa," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 22(1), 355-357.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol22/iss1/54>

This Research is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa Academy of Science at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRAIRIE
SPOTTED SKUNK IN IOWA.

B. H. BAILEY.

In 1906 the U. S. Department of Agriculture published faunal bulletin No. 26 by Arthur H. Howell, Assistant Biologist of the U. S. Biological Survey on the "Revision of the Skunks of the Genus *Spilogale*". According to this report the only species referred to Iowa is *Spilogale interrupta* Raf., three specimens of which were examined from this state, one of which came from Gladbrook, and two from Marshalltown. His distributional map shows the range of this species as extending to southeastern Minnesota on the following statement by Mr. E. T. Seton "He (E. T. Seton) states that two were killed by a trapper in March, 1904, on the Mississippi river 40 miles southeast of Minneapolis. The animal was previously unknown to trappers in that region, so that this is doubtless an instance of recent extension of range."

In a more recent work, "Mammals of Illinois and Wisconsin," by Dr. C. B. Cory of the Field Museum, Chicago, is the following: "This species may occur in western Wisconsin, as its range is known to extend to northeastern Iowa and the southeastern border of Minnesota but so far as known it has not as yet been taken within our limits." Whether Dr. Cory or others have actually examined specimens from northeastern Iowa I do not know, but a head of *Spilogale interrupta* which was killed at Chester, Howard county, Iowa, April 20, 1915, makes certain the fact that they are found there.

As to the region in Iowa south and east of Marshalltown no published account of the distribution in this territory of animals of this genus could be discovered. I knew that spotted skunks or civet cats, as they are commonly called, are found about Cedar Rapids, and, hearing rumors that they extend farther south and east, a trip to Burlington and Keokuk, April 1 and 2, afforded the opportunity to make inquiry about this species in that part of the state.

At Burlington I purchased from Mr. H. Ranke, a local furrier, a raw skin of *Spilogale interrupta* which was taken about four miles north of the city, and he also permitted me to examine a number of tanned skins which unfortunately had the tails re-

moved in the process of tanning. Though they varied in the amount of white in the body markings they were apparently all skins of *Spilogale interrupta*.

Mr. Ranke stated that he has never seen one of the civets with white at the end of the tail. The skin purchased shows as much white in body markings as any of the others, but the tail is entirely black at the tip. Mr. Ranke also said that they are caught sparingly on the Illinois side of the Mississippi.

Mr. Weil of Weil & Hirsch, fur buyers at Burlington, said that fifteen years ago Illinois trappers who came to Burlington from the Illinois side used to ask him what those little spotted skins were which they saw among his furs. Now, however, a few are caught on the Illinois side. Mr. Hirsch also said that about 10 per cent of all skunks trapped at Burlington are civets.

In Keokuk I found in the public school collection, a mounted *Spilogale interrupta*, which was probably, though not certainly, a local specimen. It bore the date of March 6, 1873, and was labeled "*Memphitis chinga*".

Mr. Louis Sterne, a fur buyer in Keokuk, says that to his knowledge the civets always have black tails, and that about three out of ten of all skunks he buys are civets.

On April 24 at Davenport three mounted specimens of *Spilogale interrupta* were examined at the Davenport Academy of Sciences. Two bore labels and the third was without data. Number 6077 and number 6078, *Spilogale interrupta*, were both taken within the city limits of Davenport, December, 1905, by Mr. E. S. Ballord. Each specimen showed a very little white pencil of hairs at the tip of the tail. The skulls could not be examined.

Upward of sixty tanned skins of *Spilogale interrupta*, many from southeastern Iowa, were examined at the store of Richter and Sons, Davenport. The tails were still on these skins and only seventeen showed even a pencil of white hairs at the extreme tip.

Inquiry at Mt. Pleasant, Fairfield and What Cheer, indicates that the spotted skunk is a not uncommon animal in those parts.

In the Mammal Hall of the State University of Iowa Museum are two mounted specimens and one skeleton of *Spilogale interrupta*, Nos. 11670, 10624 and 11671. All were taken at Solon, Iowa, in the fall of 1894 and collected by J. M. Adams. These are typical. A skull of *Spilogale interrupta*, No. 24221, in the

State University Museum also was examined. It is from Wall Lake, Iowa, December 2, 1908, collected by John A. Spurrell.

Dr. C. B. Cory of the Field Museum, Chicago, kindly sent for examination and comparison three skins and skulls of mammals of this genus; two are of *Spilogale interrupta* and one of *S. putorius* which is reported to come into southern Illinois. The latter specimen, *S. putorius*, is a topotype and differs markedly from all our Iowa specimens examined, especially in the amount of white at the end of the tail, and to a lesser degree in cranial characters.

I find at present no evidence of intergradation between *Spilogale interrupta* and *S. putorius* in Iowa. That this may occur in western or southern Illinois is not unlikely.

The present paper endeavors simply to extend the known distribution of *S. interrupta* over eastern and southeastern Iowa, in fact making the known distribution of this species state wide.