

Snake hunter finds rattlesnake in Neosho

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One of the snakes caught and counted during the Kansas Herpetological Society field trip to Neosho County this weekend was a rattlesnake.

Nick Gomez of Topeka collected the massasauga about 3 miles north and 1.5 miles west of Galesburg. It was a juvenile and caused no problems. It soon will be cataloged as a permanent scientific specimen in the herpetology collection at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History in Hays, said Travis W. Taggart, associate curator of herpetology at the Sternberg.

"This is not the first specimen of the massasauga taken in Neosho County. Another is in the KU collection and was taken northwest of Chanute," Taggart said.

There are two known specimens from Labette County - 23 miles south of Parsons on the Oklahoma border, and another from Altamont, he said.

"Of the possible venomous snakes in Neosho and Labette counties, the massasauga is certainly the best documented," Taggart said. "We currently have no valid specimens of either the timber rattlesnake or cottonmouth from either county, and only a single old record of a copperhead (Neosho County, 3 miles west of St. Paul, 1949).

We would very much appreciate learning of populations in your area from which a sample or two could be taken." Gomez, who was trudging around the rocky hillside near the Blue Valley North High School students Saturday, said he found the massasauga south of K-47 along the roadside.

"When I was driving I saw it basking on the side of the road so I stopped and got out and walked up to it and realized what it was upon closer inspection. I then put it in my snake bag, but then took him back out feeling a bit uneasy about not being able to see such a small, venomous snake in the bag," Gomez said.

He ended up coaxing the snake into a Gatorade bottle until he turned it over to Taggart.

He said besides a couple of ringneck snakes, the massasauga was the only snake he found alive on the weekend trip.

Caption:

Courtesy photo A massasauga, the smallest **rattlesnake** in Kansas, was found along a roadside near Galesburg last weekend when the Kansas Herpetological Society had its field trip to count and collect reptiles and amphibians.

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