

AN ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE LEAST SHREW, *CRYPTOTIS PARVA*, FROM MACON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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The least shrew [*Cryptotis parva* (Say)] is a brownish or gray soricid (Insectivora: Soricidae) easily distinguished by its diminutive size and short tail. This species superficially resembles a miniature *Blarina* but has only four unicuspid teeth on each side (one of which is minute and not visible from the side; Caldwell and Bryan 1982) and a total of 30 teeth. *Cryptotis* is widely distributed in the southeastern United States, but is restricted in the southern Blue Ridge of western North Carolina, northwestern South Carolina, and northern Georgia (Laerm et al. 1999). Unlike most shrews it appears to be uncommon to rare in mature hardwood and coniferous forests, and is instead most commonly associated with oldfields and early successional habitats (Laerm et al. 1995; Ford et al. 2005). The least shrew is seldom collected above 905 m in the United States (Whitaker 1974), although it has been reported at 1,036 m in Georgia (Laerm et al. 1995) and at 1,524 m in Virginia (Pagels 1991) and eastern Tennessee (Harvey et al. 1992).

Previous records reflect the relative rarity of *C. parva* in the Blue Ridge. For example, using pitfalls Laerm et al. (1995) collected only four least shrews from 64 localities during 134,100 trap nights in Georgia (<0.002% of all shrew captures), and none from 26 localities in North Carolina or from 17 localities in South Carolina during 54,636 trap nights. Other researchers have reported a similar paucity of *Cryptotis* within the Blue Ridge Province (Sherman 1937; Harvey et al. 1991, 1992; Laerm et al. 1999).

There are limited records of *C. parva* in the southern Blue Ridge of North Carolina from Buncombe, Henderson, Clay (Laerm et al. 1995; Greenberg and Miller 2004), and Polk counties (D. Webster, pers. comm.). However, there appears to be only one previous report of this species from Macon County. A single least shrew was collected in August of 1994 from a xeric site at the Coweeta Hydrological Laboratory (GMNH 19656).

An adult male *Cryptotis* was collected on 10 November 2008 from Harvest Cove Road in the Cullasaja community of Macon County near Franklin, North Carolina (35.18348N 083.31271W; elevation 707 m). The habitat at this location is primarily xeric

oldfield horse pasture and early successional forest consisting mainly of Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana* Mill.), red maple (*Acer rubrum* L.), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera* L.), and a variety of oaks (*Quercus* spp.). Other small mammals previously collected from this site include the white-footed mouse [*Peromyscus leucopus* (Rafinesque)], the meadow vole [*Microtus pennsylvanicus* (Ord)], and the northern short-tailed shrew [*Blarina brevicauda* (Say)].

The least shrew was discovered lying in the grass where it had apparently been found and killed by a dog sometime earlier. Although a few maggots were present, the specimen was in relatively good condition. Body measurements were: total body length 63 mm, tail length 14 mm, hindfoot 9 mm, and mass 3.1 g.

The skin and skull were deposited in the Highlands Biological Station mammal collection (HBS 08-02). The remaining skeleton and tissue samples were sent to the biology department of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington for future DNA analysis. This specimen is to my knowledge only the second record of *Cryptotis parva* from Macon County, North Carolina. More importantly, it represents one of the few such records of this rare and elusive species in the entire southern Blue Ridge.

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