

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

by Konrad Schmidt, Cottage Grove, Minnesota

I think all avid collectors eventually tire of the same old stuff (SOS) and eventually set their sights on a few prized species. Unfortunately, more times than not, the quarry has a spotty distribution and can be very difficult to find. Local and regional publications provide some assistance, but the information on location is usually very general and superficial.

Where else can one get some expert and current information on an as-needed basis? Why not consult those privileged few who make their livings surveying lakes and streams? Over the years, I have kept in regular contact with nongame biologists, fisheries managers, and university professors who have provided a wealth of information on the locations of collection sites and results of recent surveys. Because public agencies conduct these studies and surveys, the information is available to anyone who requests it.

I admit that in the beginning, some individuals were openly suspicious of my inquiries, but even then, they always provided the requested information. I in turn have provided them with annual reports of my collection records, and now, a few regularly request specific information from me on locations and habitat types. It all evens out in the end.

Names, addresses, and phone numbers for these individuals should be available from the natural-resource agency, at least from the office in the state capital. Other bonuses may also be available from these offices. For example, the DNR Fisheries Section in St. Paul has a Special Publications list which contains over one hundred reports on various studies conducted throughout the state. Recently-compiled, free reports beginning with titles such as "A Biological Survey of..." or "Fisheries and Wildlife Resources of ..." provide invaluable information on where, and how abundant, fishes are in the lake or river studies. They include very detailed maps which highlight collection sites and accesses. Also available from this same office are all the lake and stream surveys conducted throughout the state. These cannot be removed from the office, but someone will find you an empty desk, and you can take notes to your heart's content.

Admittedly, I have only explored the information sources available in one state, but I'm sure that some information such as that found in Minnesota can be found elsewhere. All that is required is spending some time fishing in a paper sea.