

Three to Watch

By John Pogacnik, Biologist

There are three species of rare insects that call some of Lake Metroparks streams home. They are the Appalachian tiger beetle, the Uhler's sundragon, and the riffle snaketail. All three are on the Ohio list of rare species; the Uhler's sundragon is "Endangered," the riffle snaketail is "Threatened," and the Appalachian tiger beetle is a "Species of Concern." Because they are rare, Lake Metroparks staff has been surveying them for several years. Part of the reason they are rare is because they utilize very specific habitats. Lake Metroparks is monitoring these species to determine if they survived the flood, and how their habitat was affected; results will be available in the spring.

The streams where these species were found suffered severe flood damage. Many of the trees and floodplain meadows lining the banks were swept away. In many areas the streambed was scoured down to the bare shale. In some areas even solid areas of the shale stream bottom were unearthed and washed downstream. All of these species' survival depends on whether any of the young survived



APPALACHIAN TIGER BEETLE

the flood since the adults have died off for the year.

Although the July 28 flood was a huge event, it was also a part of the natural cycle of disturbances that can occur. It

impacted many species of wildlife in varying degrees. These three insects and their ability to rebound should make for some interesting wildlife viewing opportunities over the coming years.

APPALACHIAN TIGER BEETLE

Although the Appalachian tiger beetle is only listed as "Species of Concern" it is probably most rare of the three and it may be one of the rarest species in Ohio. Its entire Ohio population consisted of about ten individuals that were found on a single sandbar along Paine Creek in Lake Metroparks Paine Falls Park. Despite searching other areas of Paine Creek, no other populations have been found in Ohio to date.

On a larger scale, the Appalachian tiger beetle's range extends from Quebec south to Georgia. It is a species that is declining over much of its range. This beetle is a habitat specialist that prefers wide areas of open sand or a matrix of sand and cobble with some larger rocks and sparse

to moderate vegetation of various herbaceous species and saplings of cottonwood, willow or sycamore.

The life cycle for this tiger beetle is thought to be between two and three years, depending on where in its range it is found. The adults are active from April through early June and they are sometimes active again in the late summer.

During the flood the larvae would have been present in their burrows. Whether this species survives in Ohio depends on whether any adults may have survived.

UHLER'S SUNDRAGON

The Uhler's sundragon is a medium-sized, inconspicuously marked dragonfly. It flies with great speed, usually within two or three feet of the water's surface,

following the shoreline closely. In northeast Ohio, the Uhler's sundragon is currently found only in a mile-long stretch at Lake Metroparks Hell Hollow Park. It has also been documented in three southern Ohio counties: Adams, Hocking and Ross. This dragonfly prefers small, rapid forest streams.



UHLER'S SUNDRAGON

RIFFLE SNAKETAIL

The riffle snaketail is a medium-sized green and yellow member of the clubtail dragonfly family. It also prefers fast flowing cold and rocky streams. It needs bottom sediment of fine gravel or sand for its nymphs (early life stage) to burrow. In Lake County, it has been observed along Big Creek at Lake Metroparks Girdled Road

Reservation, along Mill Creek at Lake Metroparks Hogback Ridge Park, and along Paine Creek at Hell Hollow Wilderness Area.

It has also been found in the Ohio counties of Columbiana, Geauga and Jefferson. Riffle snaketails fly during the late spring and early summer. Adults emerge from the water in late May and fly throughout the month of July.



RIFFLE SNAKETAIL