

Button, S. 2019. *Plethodon dixi* (Dixie Cavern Salamander). *Habitat. Herpetological Review* 50(4): 756.

PLETHODON DIXI (Dixie Cavern Salamander). HABITAT. *Plethodon dixi* was first described by Pope and Fowler (1949. *Nat. Hist. Misc.* 47:1–4), but its species status was later refuted (Highton 1962. *Bull. Florida State Mus.* 6:235–367). However, this taxon was recently resurrected by Kuchta et al. (2018. *Zool. Scripta* 47:285–299) based on phylogenetic evidence. Pope and Fowler (1949, op. cit.) described *P. dixi* as occurring solely within Dixie Caverns and New Dixie Caverns in Roanoke County, Virginia, USA, and during multiple recent revisions of the *P. wehrlei* species complex (Kuchta et al. 2018, op. cit.; Felix et al. 2019. *Zootaxa* 4609:429–448) the confinement of this species to these two caves has been assumed. Herein, I report terrestrial observations of salamanders morphologically consistent with *P. dixi* from a forested ridgeline 5 km NW of the Dixie Caverns cave system. Between 2000 and 2030 h on 26 April 2018, I observed ca. 20 adult *P. dixi* on the southwestern ridgeline of Fort Lewis Mountain, near the Montgomery–Roanoke County line, Virginia, USA (37.26356°N, 80.21919°W; WGS 84). I discovered three individuals under rotting logs shortly after sunset (2000 h) and observed an additional 15–20 active on the surface over the next 30 min. All individuals were located directly atop the ridgeline. I found no evidence of fissures, caves, or rock outcroppings in the area, though I did not extensively search the mountainside. Local vegetation on the ridgeline consisted mostly of 20–50-year-old *Acer* and *Quercus* sp. intermixed with multiple other small deciduous trees. It rained lightly throughout the course of my observations, and the air temperature was ca. 15°C. Several months after my observations, the area where I observed all salamanders was clearcut to allow for the construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline; a proposed natural gas pipeline that will span ca. 500 km across Virginia and West Virginia. It is unclear how this action will ultimately affect the status of these salamanders, but clearcuts have been implicated in the declines of several closely related plethodontids (deMaynadier and Hunter 1995. *Environ. Rev.* 3:230–261). Therefore, given the data deficient status and likely microendemic distribution of *P. dixi*, it is possible that recent clearcutting of Fort Lewis Mountain ridgeline will substantially impact populations locally or even range-wide (e.g., if gene flow is reduced). My observations thus highlight the importance of considering data deficient and microendemic taxa when conducting environmental assessments of proposed development projects. I thank R. Highton and S. Kuchta for verifying the salamanders as *P. dixi*. SKY T.

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