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OBSERVATIONS ON WIGGLER DIGGING ON
GUN LAKE AND PINE LAKE, BARRY COUNTY - WINTER OF 1945

by

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While engaged in winter mapping activities on Gun Lake in Barry County, Dr. Hazzard requested us to make daily observations as to the number of commercial wiggler diggers operating each day. Casual observations had been carried on independently, but beginning February 12 a daily record was kept of the number of operators and their identity.

On February 12, 1945, there were two parties digging. The first one contacted was Arthur Rambo, Van Buren St., Battle Creek, Michigan, proprietor of Rambo's Bait Business in Battle Creek. He operated alone, digging from 2,000 to 3,000 wigglers each time. He usually dug 2 or 3 times each week.

The second party operating on February 12 was Leroy Sibberson, Doster, Michigan, and Arnold Lyons of Doster, Michigan. These two men dug almost every day, taking 4,000 to 5,000 wigglers each day, counting them as dug, and selling them to the retail bait dealers who called at Gun Lake and also to others. These two men owned and operated from the shanty on the ice. They were assisted later by Merrill Lyons of Delton.

On February 13, Arthur Rambo of Battle Creek and Leroy Sibberson of Doster, assisted by Arnold Lyons of Doster and Merrill Lyons of Delton were operating.

On February 14 there were two different parties consisting of Glenn Baum, Hastings, Michigan assisted by one man, and Paul Wierenga, Henry Wierenga, and Leonard Marsman, all of Grand Rapids. Mr. Baum from Hastings usually took 1,000 or 2,000 each day of digging, while the party from Grand Rapids usually took 4,000 or more each digging.

On February 15 Leroy Sibberson and his party were operating. Leonard Marsman and the two Wierenga boys from Grand Rapids dug part of the day.

On February 16 only Leroy Sibberson, Doster, Michigan and his party operated a few hours.

On February 17 Leroy Sibberson and his party operated. Leonard Marsman, Paul Wierenga, and Henry Wierenga from Grand Rapids also were digging. There were one or two parties digging a few wigglers for their own use on Gun Lake this morning.

Digging operations usually began about 10:00 or 10:30 A.M. and by 4:00 P.M. most operators had left the lake.

These same commercial diggers operated during the month of January and February before an accurate record was made of their activities.

In the last week of February there was little or no digging at all.

During the weeks of February 4 - 10 and 12 - 17, the local fishermen and commercial wiggler diggers were reporting that large numbers of wigglers were observed leaving their burrows and congregating around the open holes. The wigglers appeared to be weak and of a yellowish color. One operator reported digging 4,000 one day, and all 4,000, which he sold to a bait dealer, died and had to be replaced.

Considering the appearance of the area where operations were carried on, it was kept fairly clear of debris. All ice blocks were pushed under

the ice and vegetation and other undesirable material were returned to the holes. Very few small wigglers were wasted by leaving them on top of the ice. All other forms of life such as snails, crayfish, and bullheads were returned to the water. The area worked was located east of the large rice beds and covered approximately a spot about 1,500 feet long and 500 feet wide. Two smaller areas were also worked as shown on sketch of map. (Attached to Institute copy of report).

Wiggler digging on Pine Lake, Barry County, was almost nil. An area of approximately 200 square feet was disturbed adjoining the public entrance at the Prairieville Township Park opposite Tubbs' Resort. No data were acquired as to the identity of the diggers, but it appears that most of the wigglers dug were used for fishing on Pine Lake.

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(Faint handwritten notes)