

THE OS CLITORIDIS IN THE BADGER, *Taxidea taxus*

DONALD F. HOFFMEISTER AND JOHN R. WINKELMANN
University of Illinois, Urbana

The os clitoridis is a bony or cartilaginous structure, found in many female mammals; it is thought to be homologous to the os penis of the male. The os clitoridis has been reported from at least a few animals belonging to most orders of mammals, but its presence or absence in the various species is poorly known. Among the fissiped Carnivora, it may occur in many species, but has been recorded from only a few. These are summarized by Layne (1954) and are as follows:

Ursidae: *Ursus*, bear; *Thalarcctos*, polar bear.

Procyonidae: *Procyon lotor*, raccoon; *Nasua narica*, coati mundi.

Mustelidae: *Martes*, marten or fisher; *Lutra*, river otter; *Putorius*, polecat or ferret; *Mustela*, weasel.

Viverridae: *Cryptoprocta*, fossa.

Canidae: *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*, gray fox.

Felidae: *Panthera*, lion etc.

The os clitoridis has apparently not been reported in the American badger, *Taxidea taxus*. In March, 1956, while examining the carcass of a freshly skinned badger, we discovered this bone. The animal (Univ. Ill., Mus. Nat. Hist., No. 14369) was an adult, pregnant female taken three miles north and one mile west of St. Joseph, Champaign County,

Illinois. This is in the east-central part of the state. Again in November, 1956, we obtained another female badger (Univ. Ill., Mus. Nat. Hist., No. 15179) from the same general vicinity, this time from six and one-half miles north, one mile west of St. Joseph. The os clitoridis was similar in shape and configuration to the first.

The vulva containing the clitoris was macerated in a 2% solution of potassium hydroxide, stained with alizarin red, and cleared in glycerin.

The position of the os clitoridis with relation to the urogenital sinus and clitoris is shown in Figure 1. It did not seem possible to us that the bone could be extruded externally as Rinker (1944:92) found was possible in the case of the raccoon, *Procyon lotor*. The bone itself is broad, flat, and curved. It is not unlike a rib, in miniature, twisted and more curved, rounded at the proximal end and with a "head" or knob at the distal end (Fig. 2). From the distal knob which is slightly off center, the shaft gradually broadens and flattens. Near its middle, the shaft twists nearly 90 degrees, and the proximal end is not only bent in another plane but also curves dorsad. This twisting of the shaft of the os clitoridis is somewhat comparable to the twisting in the distal third of the

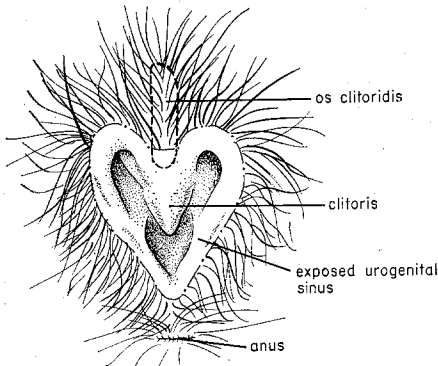


FIG. 1.—Ventral view with vulva dissected to show urogenital sinus, clitoris, and position of underlying os clitoridis. (No. 15179).

os penis in the badger. In a general way, the terminal parts of these bones in the female and male badger are similar.

The overall length of the os clitoridis of specimen No. 14369 is 13.3 mm.; of No. 15179, 11.2 mm. The greatest width of the shaft of No. 14369 is 2.0 mm.

Although the os clitoridis of the two specimens differs in size and somewhat in shape, to us these individual differences do not seem to be much greater than those in the os penis of badgers.

LITERATURE CITED

LAYNE, JAMES N. 1954. The os clitoridis of some North American Scuriidae. *Jour. Mammal.*, 35: 357-366.
 RINKER, GEORGE C. 1944. Os clitoridis from the raccoon. *Jour. Mammal.*, 25: 91-92.

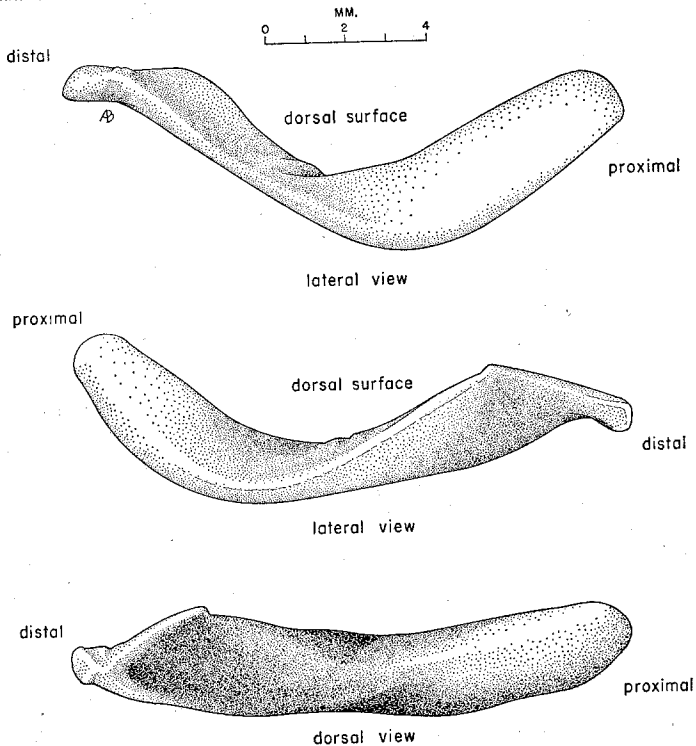


FIG. 2.—Lateral views of os clitoridis (No. 14369); dorsal view (No. 15179).