

Unusual? *Orconectes virilis* burrows in the Wanapitei River Ontario, Canada.

By Premek Hamr 2010

“After I returned from beautiful Columbia, Missouri in late July, I undertook a short canoe trip with my brother down the Wanapitei River near Killarney in North-Central Ontario. The river alternates between rocky rapid sections which contain *Cambarus robustus* sheltering under rocks and slower meandering sections with clay banks bordered by mixed forest (Fig 1). The clay banks of the river were full of burrows networks which were made by *Orconectes virilis* (Fig. 2). The networks appeared complex, had as many as ten openings per meter of shoreline and no chimneys were observed (Fig. 3). The River banks have few if any rocks or cover and therefore the burrows presented the only available shelters. I was able to excavate a burrow (while balancing in the canoe, using my hands only) and found a large male in form 1(Figs 4&5). This situation was reminiscent of a population of *O. propinquus* which I observed in 1984 and described in my (first!!) crayfish paper (Hamr, & Sinclair 1985) and further supports the suggestion that crayfish species which are thought of as “non-burrowing” are very capable of constructing elaborate burrow networks when the habitat conditions are appropriate.

Reference:

Hamr, P. and L. Sinclair. (1985). The Burrowing Activity of the Crayfish *Orconectes propinquus* (Girard) in Southern Ontario. American Midland Naturalist 113(2): 390-391.

Fig. 1. General view of Wanapitee River.



Fig. 2. River bank with *O. virilis* burrows.



Fig. 3. *O. virilis* burrows.



Fig. 4. Author collecting crayfish in burrows from canoe.



Fig. 5. Large Form I *O. virilis* male collected from burrow.

