Virginia valeriae is a secretive snake with a very restricted distribution in Kansas (see Collins 1993). Though the species has been collected in small numbers from ca 20 miles north and west of the University of Kansas Natural History Reservation (Collins & Pisani, unpublished field notes), Henry Fitch has observed only three specimens in over 50 years of snake research on the Reservation and surrounding habitats (Fitch 1999).

On 6 September 2005, while assisting with a late controlled burning on newly acquired property of at the University of Kansas Field Station and Ecological Reserves (KBS/KSR), my attention was called to a small snake observed in one of the experimental (4 x 4 meter) plots that had just been burned. Smoldering thatch was extinguished with a water blast, which exposed the snake. The snake, barely damaged macroscopically but freshly dead, was a female Virginia valeriae elegans. Post mortem examination suggested that the cause of death was cardiac arrest and brief hyperthermia. Time was ca 1300 hrs (CDST), cloud cover ca 20%, air temperature ca 83°F, exposed soil surface dry, though conditions beneath thatch pre-burn are unknown. In general, morning dew has been substantial and the month of August was unseasonably wet.

Habitat where the specimen was found was of this area is reseeded Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) tall grass prairie, about 50 meters from a woodland edge. The woods lie on and along a shallow E–W oriented ravine that may serve as a hibernaculum for others of the species based upon my observations (Pisani, unpublished). Locality is the extreme NW corner of the 40 acres that comprise the most SE corner of Sec. 32, T11S, R20E, Jefferson County, Kansas. The location is close to the border of the Reservation.

Data for the specimen are: SVL 245 mm; tail 41 mm; mass 11.0 grams; scutellation/coloration typical of the species; not gravid and oviducts did not show indication of recent birth of a litter; gut with considerable well-digested food remains (unidentifiable).

The area will be surveyed for additional specimens in coming months. The specimen has been deposited in the Fort Hays State University/Sternberg Museum Collection (MHP 12128).

I am grateful to Dean Kettle and Bruce Johanning (both of KSR) for calling my attention to the snake, and to Galen Pittman, Manager KSR Field Station, for information on the property location.

Literature Cited
