

NATURAL HISTORY MISCELLANEA

Published by
The Chicago Academy of Sciences
Lincoln Park - 2001 N. Clark St., Chicago 14, Illinois

No. 17

April 23, 1948

Description of a Neglected Subspecies of Rattlesnake from Mexico

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In a treatise on rattlesnakes, it was pointed out that two specimens of *Crotalus basiliscus* (Cope) from Oaxaca differ significantly from other representatives of the species then available for study (Gloyd, 1940, p. 147) ². At that time it was undesirable to make a taxonomic separation based on these specimens. It was hoped that additional field collecting in Mexico would result in material which would make possible a more satisfactory discrimination. Although no additional specimens from Oaxaca have come to hand, some have been obtained from northern parts of the range of *basiliscus*. A study of this material, the results of which will be presented in a separate paper, has made it apparent that the Oaxacan specimens represent a southern population that justifies taxonomic notice.³ Dr. Doris M. Cochran and Dr. Waldo L. Schmitt of the U. S. National Museum have kindly permitted me to re-examine these specimens and I propose that this subspecies be known as

Crotalus basiliscus oaxacus, **ssp. nov.**

Diagnosis: These specimens differ from *Crotalus basiliscus basiliscus* in having a low number of ventrals, subcaudals, and tail bands, and a greater degree of subdivision of the scales of the muzzle.

Type Specimens: Holotype, U. S. National Museum 46467, female, from Oaxaca, collected June 20, 1894, by E. W. Nelson and E. A. Goldman (Fig. 1, 3). Paratype, U. S. N. M. 46468, female, from Yaganiza (San Pablo), Oaxaca, collected July 2, 1894, by Nelson and Goldman (Fig. 2).

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2 The Rattlesnakes, Genera *Sistrurus* and *Crotalus*, a study in Zoogeography and Evolution, Chicago Acad. Sci., Special Publ. No. 4, 1940, p. vii + 266, text fig. 1-10, maps 1-22, pl. 1-31.

3 Klauber, in Bogert and Oliver (Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., vol. 83, 1945, art. 6, p. 394), recognized these differences and omitted the Oaxacan specimens from a comparison of *basiliscus* and *molossus* with a series of the former collected in Sonora.

Description of Holotype: Muzzle with paired internasals and prefrontals (pre-canthals), the latter almost separated medianly by a large, irregularly subelliptical scale which is separated from the supraocular on the left by two, and on the right by three, smaller scales (Fig. 1). A small posterior canthal on each side. Frontal region occupied by 25 small scales, in addition to the transverse series of six mentioned above. Parietals not discernible, the parietal and dorsal temporal regions covered with small, carinate scales, irregularly arranged. Three lower rows of temporals smooth.

Rostral acute dorsally, higher than wide. Each prenasal separated from first supralabial by two small scales. Loreals two on each side. Preoculars normal, two on each side. Total number of scales around orbit (exclusive of supraocular and preoculars) six on each side. Orbit separated from supralabials by three scales.

Supralabials 16 on left, 14 on right, the second and third fused on right side. Infralabials 17 on left, 16 on right, the first not divided. No intergenials. One pair of elongate genials (chin shields). Gulars irregular.

Scale rows 27-25-19; lowest row at midbody not keeled, the second row faintly keeled. Ventrals 172; subcaudals 21, the last divided. Rattles 7+.

Total length 740 mm. (approx.), tail 45 mm. Length of head 38 mm.; width of head 30 mm. (approx.). Spinal ridge scarcely evident.

After more than fifty years in alcohol the colors have faded somewhat, but a pattern is evident (Fig. 3). The dorsal pattern of the head is indistinct. Although the muzzle and crown are somewhat darker than the surrounding areas, the muzzle does not seem to have been black or dark brown as in *C. molossus*. A yellowish-white line, two scales wide, extends from the preoculars obliquely backward and downward intersecting labials 10 and 11 on the left side and 8 and 9 on the right. Another light line is indistinctly visible from the supraocular to the angle of the mouth.

The dorsal pattern of the body consists of 29 or 30 rhombic blotches, brown in color with yellowish-white borders. Those toward the posterior part of the body, where the specimen is ill-preserved, are indistinct but appear to be widened transversely into crossbands similar to the bands on the tail. There is an indistinct series of lateral spots opposite the blotches of the dorsal series, those near the middle of the body extending upward to those of the dorsal series, but not broadly connected with them as in *C. molossus*. The ventral surface of the head and body is yellowish-white, faintly mottled with grayish brown along the sides posteriorly.

The tail is grayish brown with five dark brown crossbands, the third and fifth incomplete. The base of the rattle is gray.

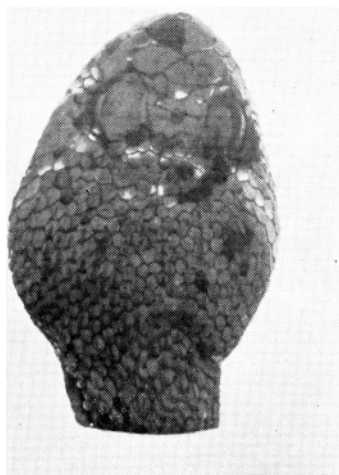


Figure 1. Holotype USNM 46467, 9, Oaxaca, Oaxaca.

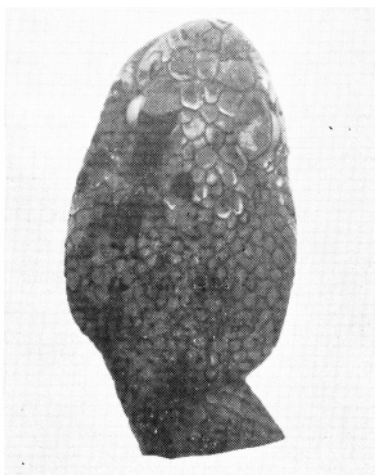


Figure 2. Paratype, USNM 46468 9, Yaganiza (San Pablo), Oaxaca.

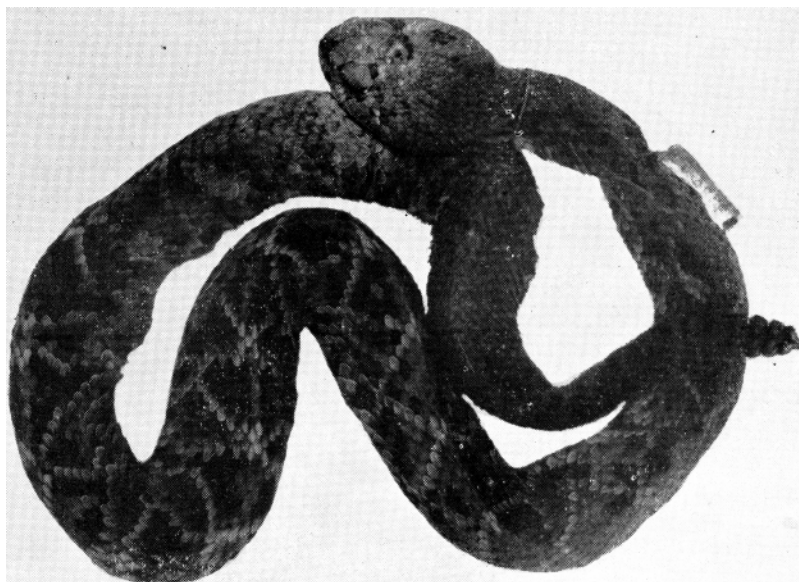


Figure 3. Holotype, USNM 46467 9, Oaxaca, Oaxaca.

Description of Paratype: This specimen is not in as good state of preservation as the one just described, but resembles it in most particulars. Muzzle with paired internasals, partially divided posteriorly; paired prefrontals (precanthals), the left divided longitudinally (Fig. 2). A small postcanthal on each side. Frontal region covered with small, irregular scales: three in the first transverse row, four in the second; these followed by seven, irregular in arrangement. Parietals not discernible as such, the parietal and upper temporal areas covered with small, carinate scales, the lower three rows of temporals smooth.

Rostral higher than wide. Prenasals partially separated from the first supralabials by a small scale at the anterior end of the suture, near rostral. Loreals two on each side. Right lower preocular divided obliquely. Scales bordering the orbit ventrally and posteriorly five on left side, six on right. Orbit separated from supralabials by three scales.

Supralabials 17 on left, 16 on right. Infralabials 15-15, the first not divided. No intergenials. One pair of elongate genials. Gulars paired medianly, in oblique rows laterally.

Scale rows 29-27-21; lower three at midbody not keeled. Ventrals 175; subcaudals 21, the last divided. Rattles 9, complete.

Total length about 620 mm.; tail 42 mm. (approx.). Length of head 37 mm., width of head 27 mm. (both approx.). Spinal ridge faint or absent.

In coloration this specimen is similar to the one described above. When held under water about 30 dorsal blotches and five tail bands can be discerned. The base of the rattle is gray.

Affinities: finities: Although no specimens showing intergradation with the population of *C. b. basiliscus* to the northwest (Colima) are at hand, the divergences are not of sufficient magnitude, in the opinion of the writer, to warrant consideration of this form as a distinct species. Its generally light coloration separates it from *C. molossus nigrescens* which is known from adjacent areas (southern Puebla and southern Veracruz). Better understanding of its relationships must await the acquisition of more comparative material.