

OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF THE MUSEUM OF  
ZOOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

## THE KING SNAKE OF THE TRES MARIAS ISLANDS

BY L. C. STUART

RECENTLY, through the courtesy of Mr. H. W. Parker of the British Museum (Natural History) and Dr. Leonhard Stejneger of the United States National Museum, I have had the opportunity of examining all existing material of the genus *Lampropeltis* from the Tres Marias Islands, Mexico. In his revision of the king snakes,<sup>1</sup> Blanchard refers these specimens to *Lampropeltis triangulum nelsoni* Blanchard, but states:

The material at hand indicates that this is a fairly homogeneous form, characterized by a low number of pairs of black annuli separated by broad red interspaces, absence of black tips on the red scales, and by a light colored snout mottled with darker. These characters apply equally well to the Tres Marias Islands and to the adjacent mainland, but the number of ventrals and scale rows is distinctly higher on the islands. Using Boulenger's figures (1894, 204) for Forrer's specimens from the Tres Marias, the average of four specimens is 231, the extremes 229 to 232; this contrasts rather strongly with the average of 214 for 19 specimens from the mainland. The extremes for these, 200 to 221, do not even reach the numbers for the islands. All of the Tres Marias specimens attain 23 rows of scales, while from the mainland this number is possessed by only three, most of the others having the formula 21-19-17. Since the pattern and

<sup>1</sup> F. N. Blanchard, "A Revision of the King Snakes: Genus *Lampropeltis*," *U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull.*, 114, 1921: 1-260 + I-VI, Figs. 1-77.

other structural features seem to be the same in the island as in the mainland forms, it is not desirable to make a specific distinction, on the basis of the specimens now at hand.<sup>2</sup>

Inasmuch as Blanchard had seen only the single specimen in the United States National Museum, his conservatism was certainly justifiable. An examination of all the material from the islands has convinced me that they warrant nomenclatorial recognition. I follow Barbour in using a trinomial for closely related insular forms, and for my friend, Mr. K. P. Schmidt of the Field Museum of Natural History, who has contributed so much to our understanding of island faunas, I name this new form

**Lampropeltis triangulum schmidti**, new subspecies

HOLOTYPE.—British Museum (Natural History) series No. 81.10.1.97–99 (var. A., specimen c, *Coronella micropholis*, Boulenger's *Catalogue of Snakes*<sup>3</sup>), an adult male collected on the Tres Marias Islands (exact island unknown) by Mr. Forrer.

PARATYPES.—British Museum (Natural History), series No. 81.10.1.97–99 (var. A., specimens d and e as of holotype) from Tres Marias Islands, and United States National Museum, No. 24684, Maria Madre Island, Tres Marias Islands.

DIAGNOSIS.—A *Lampropeltis* very similar to *Lampropeltis triangulum nelsoni* from which it may be distinguished by:

1. Greater number of ventrals, 228 to 233 in *schmidti* as compared with 200 to 221 in *nelsoni*.

2. Much wider yellow bands between the black annuli, at least,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  scales wide in mid-dorsal region in *schmidti* as compared with 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  scales wide in *nelsoni*. Conversely the red (in life) spaces between the pairs of black annuli are narrower in *schmidti*.

3. Much lighter snout.

4. Posterior chin shields always separated.

DESCRIPTION OF TYPE.—Head scutellation normal. Supralabials 7, infralabials 9/8. One praeocular, 2 postoculars;

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: 157.

<sup>3</sup> G. A. Boulenger, *Catalogue of the Snakes in the British Museum (Natural History)*, London, 1894. 2: 204.

temporals 2 + 3. Loreal present, almost square. Two pairs of chin shields, the posterior pair much shorter than the anterior and separated by one scale. Dorsals 21-23-21-19, ventrals 228, subcaudals 50/50, anal single. Body length 725 mm., tail length 120 mm.

In alcohol the ground color of both dorsum and ventrum has faded to a pale yellow. Superimposed upon this ground color are 17 pairs of black annuli separated by yellow (in life) bands of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  scales wide in the mid-dorsal region and becoming wider towards the ventrum. The black annuli are 3 to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  scales wide mid-dorsally and become narrower ventrally. All the black annuli, except the one on the neck, are complete ventrally. An occasional black spot in the yellow band ventrally. The head from the center of the prefrontals to the posterior part of the parietals is black with the exception of the lower half of the upper labials which are yellow. The snout is yellow with a black spot in front of each nostril. Some of the sutures of the lower labials are darkened.

REMARKS.—Variation in the holotype and paratypes is slight. In pattern all are constant. The ventrals number 228 to 233 and the subcaudals 50 to 54. In 3 specimens the dorsal scale formula is 21-23-21-19 and in the fourth it is 23-21-19.

This subspecies is closest to the mainland *nelsoni*, and probably differentiated *in situ* after reaching the islands. It should be noted that it is different from all Middle American species in possessing the widened yellow bands between the black annuli.

For financial aid in making comparative studies, I am indebted to the Faculty Research Fund of the University of Michigan.

