

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Reptilia, Serpentes, Colubridae, *Tantilla supracincta*: Filling gap, first provincial record, geographic distribution map, and natural history

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Snakes are among the lesser known terrestrial vertebrates in the Republic of Ecuador. Our knowledge on Ecuadorian snakes is limited at even the most basic levels (taxonomy and distribution), and in the last decade little new information has been published. Several threats are jeopardizing the long-term survival of Ecuadorian flora and fauna, and a lack of biological, ecological, and distributional information about wildlife seriously compromises our ability to evaluate its conservation status and to develop strategies to prevent negative effects such as drastic population declines or extinctions.

The taxonomy of the snakes of the genus *Tantilla* from Ecuador is relatively well known by the efforts of several herpetologists, especially L. D. Wilson and collaborators (e.g. Wilson et al. 1977, Wilson 1979, Wilson and Mena 1980, Wilson 1987, Wilson 1999, Greenbaum et al. 2004). With the exception of *T. melanocephala*, the Ecuadorian species of the genus (*Tantilla andinista*, *T. insulamontana*, *T. miyatai*, *T. petersi*, *T. supracincta*) are represented by very few specimens and localities.

Tantilla supracincta inhabits the lowlands and foothills on the Atlantic versant of Central America from extreme southeastern Nicaragua to central Panama, and on the Pacific versant from Costa Rica south to Ecuador (Wilson 1985, Wilson 1987, Wilson 1999, Savage 2002, Köhler 2003). This species is known in Ecuador from three widely separated localities (each based on one specimen): the type locality in the province of Guayas (Peters 1863, Wilson 1987); and two localities in the province of Esmeraldas (Wilson et al. 1977, Wilson 1985, Wilson 1987, Almendáriz and Carr 1992). The type-locality of *T. supracincta*

was reported as “Umgebung von Guayaquil” (= surroundings of Guayaquil) by Peters (1863), and probably corresponds to some place close to the Chongón hills (near to Guayaquil), rather to the city of Guayaquil itself.

Two specimens of *Tantilla* (adult DFCH-USFQ S101 and juvenile S102; D. F. Cisneros-Heredia's collection, housed at Universidad San Francisco de Quito), collected on 30 June 2004 by Pablo Caqua at Cabo Pasado (00°23 S, 80°28W, ca. 100 m above sea level, Figure 1), province of Manabí, correspond well with the descriptions of *Tantilla supracincta* (Table 1); including the dorsal pattern (Figures 2 and 3) of black-bordered white crossbars on a red ground color (Wilson 1987, Wilson 1999, Savage 2002, Köhler 2003). This new locality fills the gap between previous Ecuadorian localities of *T. supracincta* (Figure 1), constitute a first provincial record, and represent the fourth and fifth specimens registered from South America.



Figure 1. Geographic distribution map of *Tantilla supracincta* in Ecuador; close circle corresponds to locality reported herein, square to the type-locality, open circles to other literature records, provincial codes: E = Esmeraldas, M = Manabí, and G = Guayas.

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Savage (2002) reported that *Tantilla supracincta* undergoes an ontogenic change in coloration, with juveniles being “bicolor black and cream to yellow with the black bands as long as the combined extent of the black and red bands in adults”; Savage (2002) also described “venter and underside of tail red in adults”, implying that juveniles have different ventral coloration (not described). The small juvenile specimen reported herein (DFCH-USFQ S102) demonstrates a color pattern very similar to that observed for adults, with dark pigment not much extended as in the specimen showed by Savage (2002: Plate 458) and with a reddish-rose coloration on the venter and underside of tail (Figures 2 and 3). Therefore, there is apparently some variation in the degree of dark pigment covering the red dorsal ground color in juveniles, with the pattern varying from bicolor black and pale to black-bordered white crossbars

on a dark red ground color, and with ventral coloration in juveniles reddish rose (Figures 2 and 3).

Tantilla supracincta inhabits non-seasonal and seasonal evergreen forests (vegetation classification *sensu* Sierra 1999 with modifications by Anderson and Jarrín 2000) on the Pacific lowlands of Ecuador from sea level to 225 m elevation in the provinces of Esmeraldas, Manabí, and Guayas (Figure 1) (Peters 1863, Wilson et al. 1977, Wilson 1985, Wilson 1987, Almendáriz and Carr 1992, this paper). This species reaches the southernmost limit of its geographical range in Ecuador, along the coastal seasonal forests near the coastal line and along the Cordillera de la Costa (a low range parallel to the Andes and along coastal Ecuador) (Figure 1).

Table 1. Measurements, scalation, and color pattern data of two specimens of *Tantilla supracincta* (DFCH-USFQ S101–2) from Cabo Pasado, province of Manabí, Ecuador.

Characters	DFCH-USFQ S101	DFCH-USFQ S102
Age	Adult	Juvenile
Snout-vent length (in mm)	307	149
Tail length (in mm)	85	14 (incomplete)
Tail length/total length ratio	0.22	-
Ventrals	151	155
Subcaudals	63	incomplete
Preocular	1	1
Postoculars	2	2
Supralabials (in contact with eye)	7 (3-4)	7 (3-4)
Infralabials	6	6
Postnasal in contact with preocular	Yes	Yes
First pair of infralabials separated	Yes	Yes
Number of crossbands on body	15	13
Percentage of interrupted crossbands on body	66 %	69 %
Number of crossbands on tail	6	-
Percentage of interrupted crossbands on tail	100 %	-
Pale nuchal band interrupted medially	Yes	Yes
Red nape band present	No	No

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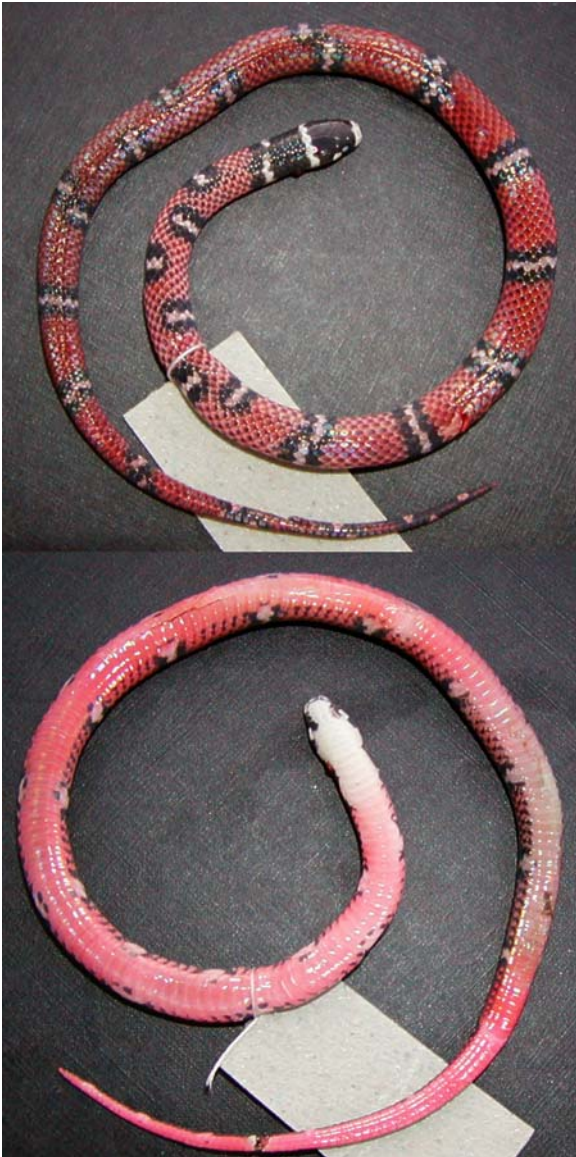


Figure 2. *Tantilla supracincta*. Dorsal and ventral views of adult specimen DFCH-USFQ S101, a few hours after having been euthanized. Cabo Pasado, province of Manabí, Republic of Ecuador.

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Figure 3. *Tantilla supracincta*. Dorsal and ventral views of juvenile specimen DFCH-USFQ S102, one year after been euthanized; note reddish rose tint still present. Cabo Pasado, province of Manabí, Republic of Ecuador.

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