

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wilson, Larry David. 1988. *Tantillita*, *T. brevisissima*, *T. lintoni*.

Tantillita Smith

Tantillita Smith, 1941:117. Type-species, *Tantillita lintoni* Smith, 1940, by original designation.

• **Content.** Two species, *brevisissima* and *lintoni*, are included.

• **Definition.** A colubrid genus characterized by: slender body with head not noticeably distinct or barely wider than body; dorsal head scutellation consisting of a normal rostral followed by two internasals, two prefrontals, two supraoculars, one frontal, and two parietals; lateral head scutellation of a divided nasal, no loreal, one preocular, two postoculars, no suboculars, temporals 1 + 1 (anterior temporal fused to sixth supralabial in some specimens of *T. lintoni*); 7 supralabials, with the 3rd and 4th entering orbit; 6 infralabials, the first pair in contact behind the mental or not, with 4 in contact with anterior chinshields; dorsal scales smooth, in 15 rows throughout; ventrals 103 (*lintoni*) to 125 (*brevisissima*); anal plate divided; subcaudals 28 (*brevisissima*) to 56 (*lintoni*); maximum total length about 200 mm (*lintoni*); maxillary teeth 22 to 25, the posterior pair not or but slightly enlarged, not laterally offset from preceding ones, very weakly grooved or not, without a diastema; hemipenis spinose proximally, grading to calyces distally, sulcus spermaticus probably single; dorsal color pattern of two types: (1) uniform brown; or (2) dark brown anteriorly, orange suffused with brown posteriorly, head pattern of a pale nuchal collar or a pair of pale nuchal spots, with pale spotting or blotching on the snout, supraoculars, as well as anterior and posterior to the eye.

• **Diagnosis.** *Tantillita* may be distinguished from other colubrid genera in the Western Hemisphere by the following combination of characteristics: posteriormost pair of maxillary teeth not to slightly enlarged, not separated by diastema from 21-25 anterior maxillary teeth; rostral normal; loreal absent; internasals and prefrontals paired, distinct from one another; temporals 1 + 1; dorsal scales smooth, in 15 rows throughout; 103 to 125 ventrals; anal plate divided; 28 to 56 subcaudals.

• **Descriptions.** Smith (1941) described the genus. See the species accounts for descriptions of the constituent species.

• **Illustrations.** See species accounts.

• **Distribution.** See species accounts.

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Smith (1941) remains the most important work. See the species accounts for additional references.

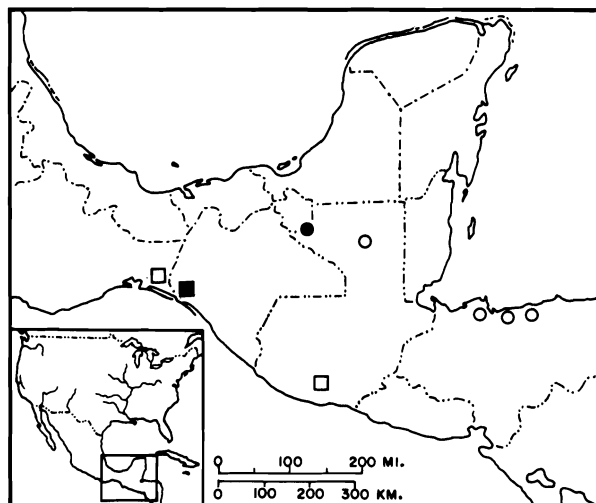
Key to species.

Pale nuchal band or paired nuchal spots present; subcaudals fewer than 35 (28-34).....*brevisissima*.

Pale nuchal band absent; subcaudals more than 35 (43-56)...*lintoni*.

• **Etymology.** The name *Tantillita* is a double diminutive, derived from the Latin *tantillum*, meaning "so small a thing," and the diminutive -*ita*, a reference to the small size of this genus.

• **Comment.** The genus *Tantillita*, as established by Smith (1941), is distinguished from *Tantilla*, its apparent closest relative, by the presence of greater numbers of maxillary teeth, apparent lack of a diastema, and rectilinear alignment of all the teeth on the maxilla in the former. The two species of *Tantillita* also are similar in pos-



Map. Distribution of *Tantillita*. Circles represent *T. lintoni*, squares *T. brevisissima*. Solid symbols mark type localities, open symbols mark other known localities.

sessing relatively low numbers of ventrals, agreeing in this feature with only a few species of *Tantilla*. Nonetheless, features of the maxilla are known for only a relatively few species of the occidenticopolitan genus *Tantilla*. There is a need to evaluate these and other features in the species *brevisissima* and *lintoni* to place recognition of the genus *Tantillita* on firmer footing.

Tantillita brevisissima (Taylor)

Tantilla brevisissima Taylor, 1937 (1936):344. Type-locality, "Tonolá [=Tonalá], Chiapas," México. Holotype, Univ. Illinois Mus. Natur. Hist. 25075, adult (?), sex unknown, collected 27-31 August 1935 by Edward H. Taylor and Hobart M. Smith (not examined by author).

Tantillita brevisissima: Smith, 1941:117.

Tantilla excubitor Wilson, 1982:37. Type locality, "Finca El Salto, 2 km E Escuintla, Depto. Escuintla, Guatemala, elevation 305 m." Holotype. Mus. Vert. Zool. 88468, adult (?) male, collected in mid-March, 1969 by J.E. Woods (examined by author).

• **Content.** No subspecies are recognized.

• **Definition and Diagnosis.** A species of *Tantillita* with a uniform brown to dark brown dorsum, with or without a suffusion of orange color on the posterior portion of the body, and a white venter becoming bright reddish-orange posteriorly. The head pattern consists of a dark brown head cap followed by a narrow pale yellow nuchal band. Pale spots are located on the upper postoculars, supraoculars, prefrontals, and anterior snout. Ventrals and subcaudals range from 116 to 126 and 28 to 31, respectively. *Tantillita brevisissima* may be distinguished from its congener by pale nuchal spots and head markings, 116 to 126 ventrals and 28 to 34 subcaudals.

• **Descriptions.** The most complete description is that of Taylor (1937). A Oaxacan specimen was described by Lynch and Smith (1966). Alvarez del Toro (1982) described color. Wilson (1982) described a Guatemalan specimen as *Tantilla excubitor*.

• **Illustrations.** A drawing of scale outlines on the head and anterior body of the holotype is in Taylor (1937). Wilson (1982) included photographs of the head and anterior body.

• **Distribution.** *Tantillita brevisissima* is known only from three localities, Tonalá (the holotype and paratype came from "on top of a low mountain near the city" [Taylor, 1937]) on the Pacific coastal plain of Chiapas, at 4500 feet (+ca. 1372 m) on the Sierra Madre north

of Zanatepec, on the Pacific versant of Oaxaca in México, and 2 km E Escuintla, Depto. Escuintla, Guatemala (305 m).

• **Pertinent Literature.** The literature consists of the original description (Taylor, 1937), the allocation of the species to a newly-described genus (Smith, 1941), the report of a new state record (Lynch and Smith, 1966), the discussion in Alvarez del Toro (1982), and that in Wilson (1982) under the name *Tantilla excubitor*. Wilson (1988) synonymized *Tantilla excubitor* with *Tantillita brevissima*.

• **Etymology.** The name *brevissima* is derived from the Latin *brevis*, meaning "short," and *-issima*, the superlative ending, in reference to the short tail and small number of subcaudals.

Tantillita lintoni (Smith)

Tantilla lintoni Smith, 1940:61. Type-locality, "Piedras Negras, [Depto. El Petén], Guatemala, [at a locality some 45 miles by trail from Tenosique, Tabasco, México, on the bank of the Usumacinta River]" Holotype, National Museum of Natural History 108603, adult (?) female, collected 24 May 1939 by Hobart M. Smith (not examined by author).

Tantillita lintoni: Smith, 1941:117.

• **Content.** Two subspecies are recognized: *lintoni* and *rozellae*.

• **Definition and Diagnosis.** A species of *Tantillita* with a uniform brown through dark brown to reddish-brown dorsum and an immaculate white, yellowish-cream, yellow, or orange venter. Ventrals and subcaudals range from 103 to 118 and 43 to 56, respectively. *Tantillita lintoni* is distinguished from its congener by a uniform brown, dark brown, or reddish-brown dorsum with no pale head markings, 103 to 118 ventrals, and 43 to 56 subcaudals.

• **Descriptions.** The best descriptions are in Smith (1940), Wilson and Meyer (1985), and Pérez-Higareda (1985).

• **Illustrations.** Smith (1940) provided drawings of the head and anterior body of the holotype of the nominate subspecies. Pérez-Higareda (1985) included a pen-and-ink illustration of the underside of the head of the holotype of *T. l. rozellae*.

• **Distribution.** *Tantillita lintoni* is definitely known to occur at low and moderate elevations (near sea level to 900m) of the Caribbean versant from southern Veracruz to the Honduran department of Atlántida (known from Colonia El Bastonal, Sierra de Santa Marta, and from the top of Cerro Egega, Acuyal, both in the municipality of Catemaco in Veracruz, México [Pérez-Higareda, 1985], Piedras Negras, Tikal, and Uaxactún in Guatemala [Smith, 1940, 1943; Stuart, 1958; Wilson, 1982] and Lancetilla, Colorado District, and near Corozal in Honduras [Wilson and Meyer, 1985]). Smith and Smith (1976) indicated occurrence in the Mexican state of Chiapas, but I know of no definite record for the State and Alvarez del Toro (1982) did not include the species in his state list.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Smith (1940, 1941), Stuart (1958), Neill and Allen (1961), VanDevender and Cole (1977), Wilson (1982), Wilson and Meyer (1985), and Pérez-Higareda (1985) deal with descriptions, taxonomy, distribution, and status.

• **Etymology.** The name *lintoni* is a patronym honoring Linton P. Satterthwaite, then connected with the archeological station at Piedras Negras. The name *rozellae* honors the late Rozella B. Smith.

1. *Tantillita lintoni lintoni* (Smith)

Tantilla lintoni Smith, 1940:61. See species account.
Tantillita lintoni lintoni: Pérez-Higareda, 1985:38.

• **Definition.** A subspecies of *Tantillita lintoni* with a brown to dark brown dorsum ending on the upper edge of the first dorsal scale row. The venter is immaculate white to yellowish-cream.

2. *Tantillita lintoni rozellae* Pérez-Higareda

Tantillita lintoni rozellae Pérez-Higareda, 1985:38. Type-locality, "Colonia El Bastonal, Sierra de Santa Marta, 900 m above sea level, municipality of Catemaco, Veracruz, Mexico." Holotype, Estación de Biología Tropical "Los Tuxtles", Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 2336, adult male collected 17 August 1984, by Gonzalo Pérez-Higareda (not examined by author).

• **Definition.** A subspecies of *Tantillita lintoni* with a uniform reddish-brown dorsum extending to the edges of the ventrals. The venter is orange, grading to yellow on the subcaudals.

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