

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

CHARLES J. COLE AND LAURENCE M. HARDY. 1983. *Tantilla atriceps*.

***Tantilla atriceps* (Günther)
Mexican black-headed snake**

Homalocranium atriceps Günther, 1895:146–147. Type-locality, "MEXICO, Nuevo Leon" (Günther, 1895:146). The syntypes, British Museum (Natural History) 1946.1.8-81 and 1946.1.8-82, two males (examined by authors), were obtained from W. Taylor in 1889 (date of collection unknown).

Tantilla atriceps: Amaral, "1929" [1930]:219.

Tantilla planiceps atriceps: Tanner, 1966:134–152.

• CONTENT. The species is monotypic.

• DEFINITION AND DIAGNOSIS. "Top of head strikingly darker (brown, black) than dorsal body color (beige to light brown); dark head cap not extending ventrolaterally below angle (corner) of mouth; dark head cap extending on middorsal line 1–2 scales beyond posterior end of suture between parietals; posterior edge of dark head cap usually convex or straight, followed by light (white, cream) collar 1 scale wide; no dark band or dark spots along posterior edge of collar; origin of m. retractor penis magnus at level of subcaudals 25–32; retracted hemipenis extending to subcaudals 9–14; hemipenis subcylindrical when everted, not capitate, with two medium to large basal spines; no spinules on hemipenis proximal to large basal spines; 26–40 spines in 2–3 rows (minimum) approximately encircling spinose midsection of hemipenis, except at sulcus; supralabials 7; infralabials 6; naris in upper half of nasal; postoculars 1 (sometimes 2); temporals 1 + 1; mental usually separated from anterior pair of genials by midventral contact of anterior pair of infralabials. Most similar to *T. hobartsmithi*; differing strikingly in hemipenis" (Cole and Hardy, 1981:217–218).

• DESCRIPTIONS. See Cole and Hardy (1981) for a redescription of the syntypes (including descriptions of their hemipenes); and general descriptions of size, coloration (including a quote from Taylor, "1936" [1937]), hemipenes, scutellation, and maxillae.

• ILLUSTRATIONS. Cole and Hardy (1981) illustrated scutellation and color pattern of the head and neck, geographic distribution, and a hemipenis. The only other illustrations known with certainty to be based on specimens of this species are in the original description (Günther, 1895, pl. 52, fig. B). Other illustrations in the literature that are labeled as *T. atriceps* or *T. p.*

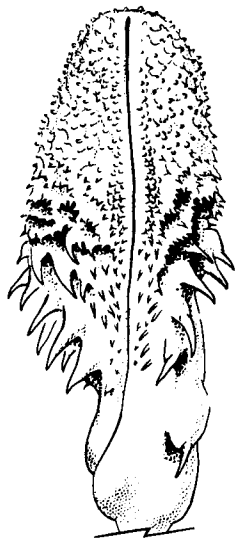


FIGURE 1. Sulcate view of left hemipenis of *T. atriceps*, based on University of Arizona 23763 (from Cole and Hardy, 1981:226).

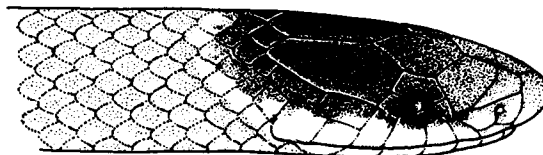


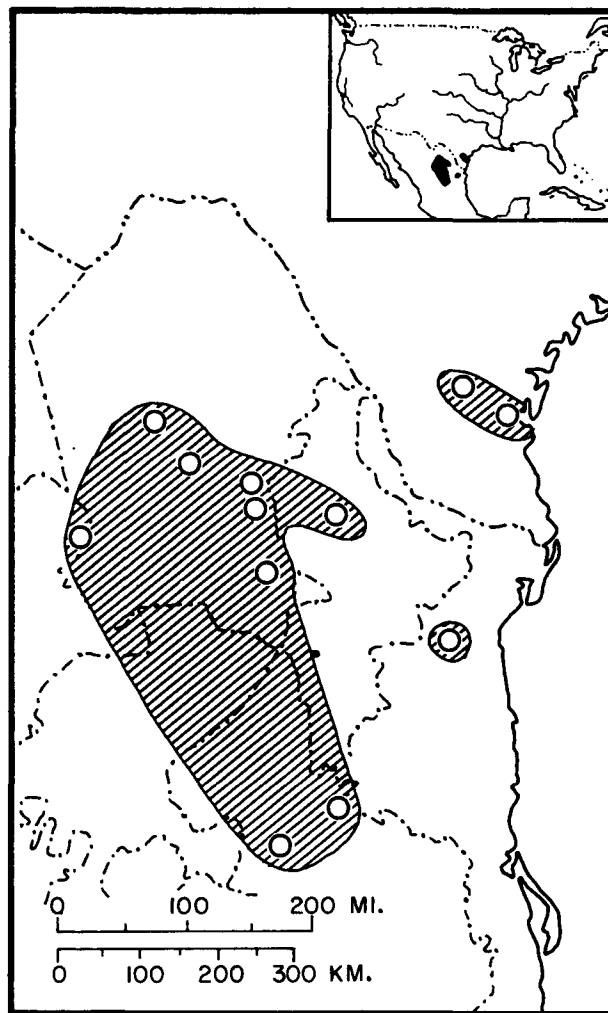
FIGURE 2. Color pattern of head and neck of *Tantilla atriceps*, based on Carnegie Museum 42823 (from Cole and Hardy, 1981:210).

atriceps usually are actually based on *Tantilla hobartsmithi* (see COMMENT).

• DISTRIBUTION. Southern Texas in the United States, and the Mexican states of Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, and Zacatecas (Cole and Hardy, 1981:218). Nothing has been published on habitats.

• FOSSIL RECORD. None.

• PERTINENT LITERATURE. The most recent taxonomic revision, including a review of the meager biological literature known for this species, was presented by Cole and Hardy (1981); see COMMENT.



MAP. Open circles indicate localities from which we examined specimens (Cole and Hardy, 1981:275). Type-locality is too indefinite to plot.

• **ETYMOLOGY.** Presumably the specific epithet (*atriceps*) was derived from the Latin *ater* (black) and *caput* (head); see Brown (1956).

COMMENT

Prior to the most recent taxonomic revision (Cole and Hardy, 1981), *T. atriceps* had been considered as conspecific with several other species (*T. planiceps*, *T. hobartsmithi*, and *T. yaquia*; e.g., see Tanner, 1966). Indeed, the name *T. atriceps* (or *T. planiceps atriceps*) long has been applied to specimens of *T. hobartsmithi*, which has a broad distribution in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Consequently, many references contain the name *T. atriceps* (or *T. p. atriceps*), but few of them actually refer to this species. Cole and Hardy (1981) provide additional details.

Although historically *T. atriceps* long has been confused with *T. hobartsmithi*, a problem currently exists concerning the specific relationship between *T. atriceps* and *Tantilla nigriceps* (see Cole and Hardy, 1981:270–272).

LITERATURE CITED

Amaral, Afrânio do. "1929" (1930). Estudos sobre ophidios neotropicos. XVIII. Lista remissiva dos ophidios da região neotropica. Mem. Inst. Butantan 4:i–viii + 129–271.
Brown, Roland Wilbur. 1956. Composition of scientific words.

Revised edition, reprinted 1979. Smithsonian Inst. Press, Washington, D.C. 882 p.

Cole, Charles J., and Laurence M. Hardy. 1981. Systematics of North American colubrid snakes related to *Tantilla planiceps* (Blainville). Bull. Amer. Mus. Natur. Hist. 171(3):199–284.

Günther, Albert C. L. G. 1885–1902. Reptilia and Batrachia, p. xx + 326. In F. D. Godman and O. Salvin, *Biologia Centrali-Americana*. Dulau and Co., London.

Tanner, Wilmer W. 1966. A re-evaluation of the genus *Tantilla* in the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. *Herpetologica* 22(2):134–152.

Taylor, Edward H. "1936" (1937). Notes and comments on certain American and Mexican snakes of the genus *Tantilla*, with descriptions of new species. Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci. 39:335–348.

CHARLES J. COLE, AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10024, AND LAURENCE M. HARDY, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY IN SHREVEPORT, SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA 71115.

Primary editor for this account, Larry David Wilson.

Published 17 March 1983 and Copyright 1983 by the SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES.