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A new species of *Tantilla* of the *taeniata* species group (Reptilia, Squamata, Colubridae, Colubrinae) from northeastern Honduras

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Abstract

A new species of *Tantilla*, previously considered conspecific with *T. taeniata*, is described from northeastern Honduras. The new species differs from all populations previously assigned to that nominal form by the combination of having a high number of ventral scales and a red venter in life. A discussion of other populations from El Salvador and Honduras, now assigned to *T. taeniata*, is also included. Several evolutionary species are likely represented among these populations.

Key words: *Tantilla***,** *Tantilla taeniata*, *Tantilla psittaca* **sp. nov.,** Honduras, El Salvador

Resumen

Una nueva especie de *Tantilla*, previamente considerada como conspecífica con *T. taeniata*, se describe del noreste de Honduras. La nueva especie difiere de todas las poblaciones previamente asignada a dicha forma nominal por tener la combinación de un alto número de escamas ventrales y el vientre rojo en vida. Una discusión sobre otras poblaciones de El Salvador y Honduras, ahora asignadas a *T. taeniata*, también se incluye. Varias especies evolutivas están probablemente representadas en estas poblaciones.

Introduction

The *Tantilla taeniata* species group has undergone substantial revision since the study of that group by Wilson & Meyer (1971). Publications by Campbell (1998), Wilson & McCranie (1999), and Stafford (2004) have radically changed both the species concept of *T. taeniata* and that of the group as envisioned by Wilson & Meyer (1971; see Discussion below). It is the purpose of this publication to show that the population from low elevations of The Mosquitia in northeastern Honduras, previously assigned to *T. taeniata*, represents an undescribed evolutionary species.

Methods

Dowling's (1951) method was used in counting ventral scales. Head and scale measurements were made to the nearest 0.1 mm with dial calipers held under a dissecting microscope. Snout-vent length and tail length measurements were made to the nearest mm alongside a ruler. Measurements of bilateral head scales were made on the right side of the head. Measurements are abbreviated to: snout-vent length (SVL); tail length (TAL); total length (TL); head length (HL); and head width (HW). Scale dimensions were made at the longest or widest points along the longitudinal or breathwise (transverse) dimensions of the body, respectively. Comparative statements about color and scale characters are taken from Campbell (1998), McCranie (2011), Savage (2002), and Stafford (2004). The color names and numeric codes used in the color in life of the holotype are from Smithe (1975–1981). Comparative specimens examined are listed in Appendix I, with the museum acronyms as those listed in Leviton *et al.* (1985). See Köhler *et al*. (2005) for the *T. taeniata* localities in El Salvador and McCranie (2011) for those of *T. taeniata* in Honduras (the five easternmost localities in the latter represent the new species described herein).

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