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A new species of *Rhadinella* (Serpentes: Colubridae) from the Pacific versant of Oaxaca, Mexico

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Abstract

I describe a new species of *Rhadinella* from the Pacific versant of Oaxaca, Mexico, a region where the genus was previously unknown. This diminutive snake is a member of a group of snakes that have dark dorsal coloration, which mostly or completely obfuscates a pattern of longitudinal striping characteristic of most species of *Rhadinella*. The closest relative of the new species, on the basis of morphological similarities, appears to be *Rhadinella pilonaorum* which occurs to the east of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec about 800 km from the type-locality of the new species.

Key words: Sierra Madre del Sur, *Rhadinaea godmani* species group, external morphology, taxonomy

Resumen

Se describe una nueva especie de *Rhadinella* de la vertiente Pacífica de Oaxaca, México, una región donde el género era desconocido. Esta especie diminuta es miembro de un grupo de serpientes de coloración dorsal oscura en la que se oscurece parcial o completamente el patrón de rayas longitudinales característico de muchas especies de *Rhadinella*. El miembro más cercano a la nueva especie, en base a similitud morfológica, es *Rhadinella pilonaorum*, que ocurre al este del Istmo de Tehuantepec y como a 800 km de la localidad tipo de la especie nueva.

Palabras clave: Sierra Madre del Sur, especies perteneciente al grupo *Rhadinaea godmani*, morfología externa, taxonomía

Introduction

One of the most frustrating aspects for those conducting fieldwork in poorly known regions is the inadequacy of many of the samples obtained. Often only a single individual of an interesting species is encountered. Such is the case of a small snake of the genus *Rhadinella* that I collected some 40 years ago on the Pacific versant of Oaxaca. Since that misty morning in 1974, I have returned to the area some half dozen times in search of additional material, all without a favorable outcome. I have decided not to wait longer to see if success might be achieved. Although the specimen here designated as the type is the only available representative of its species known to me and its condition leaves much to be desired, by offering a description of this taxon and accompanying information, it will perhaps alert others to be vigilant for additional material.

The genus *Rhadinella* as heretofore recognized (Myers 2011) is composed of 16 species. With the exceptions of a single species ranging into Isthmian Central America and another species on the Atlantic versant of the Mexican highlands, all of these diminutive snakes occur in Nuclear Central America. They inhabit varied, but generally mesic, habitats ranging from rainforest to cloudforest and pine-oak forest.

Tehuantepec and the Nicaraguan Depression. One species, *Rhadinella serperaster*, occurs in Isthmian Central America, and two species, *Rhadinella schistosa* and *Rhadinella donaji* occur to the west of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

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