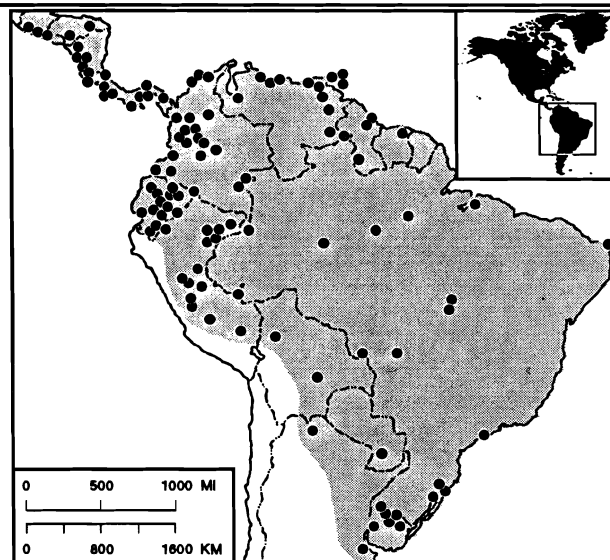


Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wilson, L.D. 1992. *Tantilla melanocephala*.***Tantilla melanocephala* (Linnaeus)***Coleber melanocephalus* Linnaeus, 1758:218. Type-locality, "America." Holotype not designated.*Natrix melanocephalus*: Merrem, 1820:110.*Elaps melanocephalus*: Wagler, 1824:8.*Duberria melanocephala*: Fitzinger, 1826:55.*Lycodon melanocephalum*: Boie, 1827:526.*Cloelia melanocephala*: Wagler, 1830:187.*Calamaria melanocephala*: Schlegel, 1837:38.*Homalocranium melanocephalum*: Duméril, Bibron, and Duméril, 1854:855.*Tantilla melanocephala*: Cope, 1861:74.*Elapomorphus mexicanus* Günther, 1862:57. Type-locality, "Mexico," in error. Holotype, British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) 1946.1.8.58, an adult (?) female purchased in January, 1862 from August Salle (examined by author).*Homalocranium melanocephalum*: Müller, 1865:606.*Tantilla armillata* Cope, 1875:143. Type-locality, "middle Costa Rica." Holotype, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP) 3363, an adult male, collected by Dr. Van Patten, date

Map. Distribution of *Tantilla melanocephala*. The type-locality is too imprecise to plot. Solid circles indicate other localities.

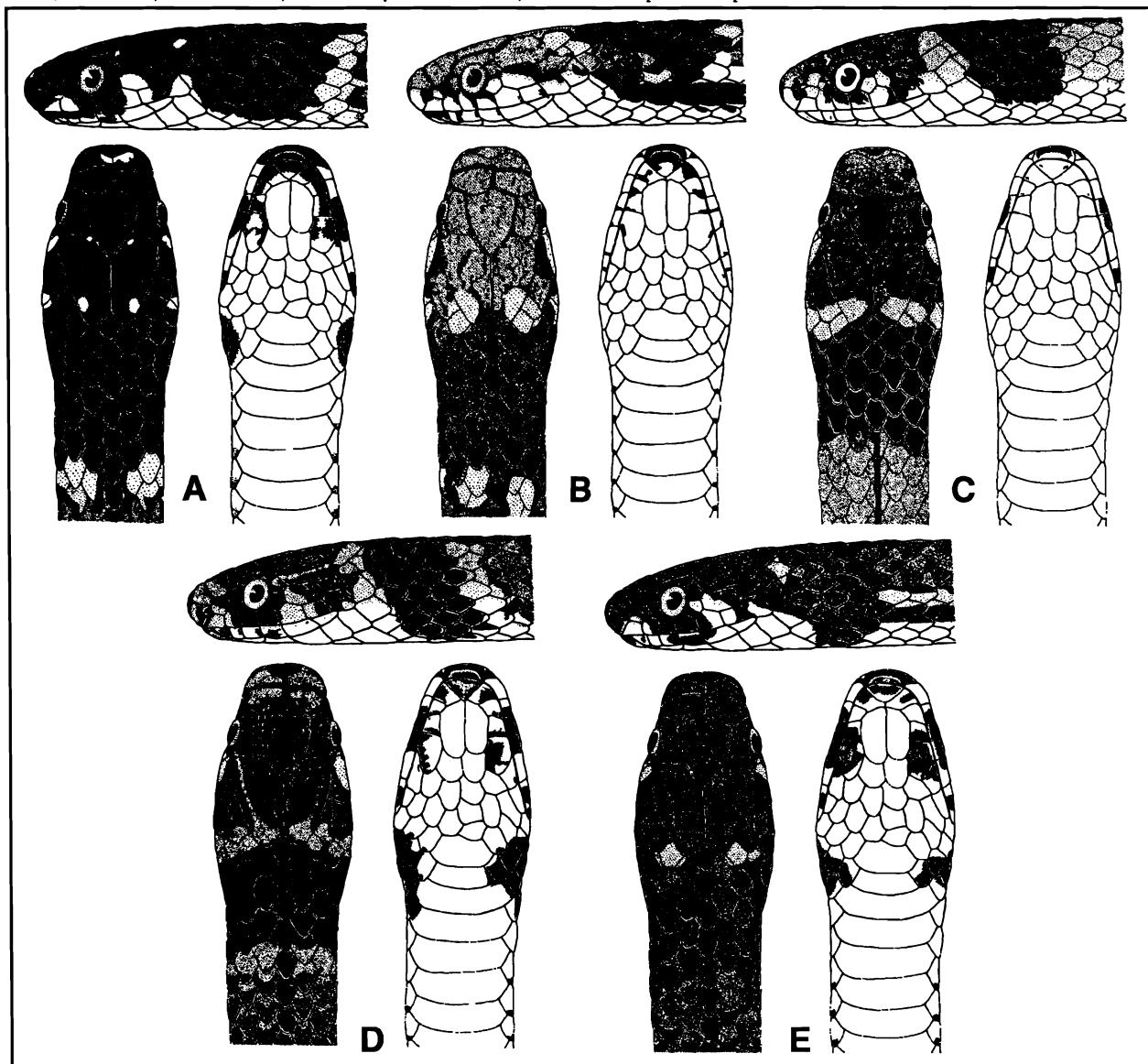


Figure 1. Variation in *Tantilla melanocephala*: A) pattern A; B) pattern B; C) pattern D; D) pattern E; E) pattern F (from Wilson and Mena, 1980).

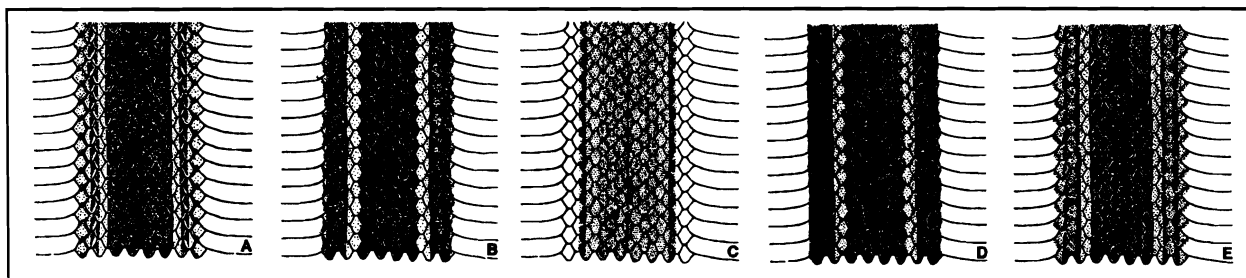


Figure 2. Variations of dorsal patterns in *Tantilla melanocephala*: A) pattern A; B) pattern B; C) pattern D; D) pattern E; E) pattern F (from Wilson and Mena, 1980).

of collection unknown (examined by author).

Homalocranium melanocephalum var. *fuscum* Bocourt, 1883:589. Type-locality, "Guatemala," in error. Holotype, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (MNHN) 6059, date of collection and collector unknown (examined by author).

Tantilla pallida Cope, 1887:56. Type-locality, "village of Chupada [=Chapada dos Guimarães], thirty miles north-east of Cuyabá [Cuiabá]," Est. Mato Grosso, Brazil, Holotype, Academy of Natural Sciences Philadelphia (ANSP)11215, an adult male collected by H. H. Smith, date of collection unknown (examined by author).

Homalocranium melanocephalum: Velasco, 1891:51 (in error).

Pogonaspis ruficeps Cope, 1894:204. Type-locality, "Jimenez," Prov. Limón, Costa Rica, Holotype, American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) 17272, an adult male collected by A. Alfaro, date of collection unknown (examined by author).

Homalocranium melanocephalum [var. *melanocephalum*]: Günther, 1895:147.

Homalocranium melanocephalum var. *fraseri* Günther, 1895:148. Type-localities, "western Ecuador, Quito." Syntypes, British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) 1946.18.77, 1946.1.8.80, 1946.1.9.43-44, 1946.1.9.84, all adults, received by museum in June, 1860 and February, 1872 (examined by author).

Homalocranium melanocephalum var. *armillatum*: Günther, 1895:148.

Homalocranium melanocephalum var. *pernambucense* Günther, 1895:148. Type-locality, "Pernambuco, Brazil." Syntype, British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) 80.11.25.5 (location of remaining syntypes unknown, fide A.F. Stimson), a female presented to the museum (and, presumably, collected, fide A.F. Stimson) in 1880 by W.A. Forbes (not examined by author).

Homalocranium mexicanum: Günther, 1895:153.

Homalocranium melanocephalum: Boulenger, 1896a:215.

Homalocranium fuscum: Boulenger, 1896a:220 (part).

Homalocranium longifrontale Boulenger, 1896b:17. Type-locality, "Cali, Colombia." Holotype, British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) 1946.1.8.84, a subadult (?) male purchased in November, 1895 from collector, W.F.H. Rosenberg (examined by author).

Homalocranium ruficeps: Boulenger, 1896a:223.

Homalocranium hoffmanni Werner, 1909:239. Type-locality, "Guatemala," in error. Holotype, presumably originally in the Naturhistorischen Museums in Hamburg (type and catalogues were destroyed during WWII).

Elapomorphus nuchalis Barbour, 1914:199. Type-locality, "Villa Bella [= Parintins] on the Amazon River, above Santarem, [Amazonas near the Pará border], Brazil." Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 1164, an adult female collected in 1863 by Rev. J.C. Fletcher (examined by author).

Tantilla longifrontale: Ruthven, 1922:68.

Tantilla longifrontalis: Amaral, 1929:220.

Tantilla fusca: Amaral, 1929:220 (part).

Tantilla ruficeps: Amaral, 1929:221.

Tantilla mexicana: Smith, 1942:37.

Tantilla melanocephalus: Shreve, 1947:315.

Tantilla melanocephalum: Wehkind, 1955:12.

Tantilla fraseri: Peters, 1960:539.

Tantilla melanocephala melanocephala: Peters, 1960:539.

Tantilla melanocephala longifrontale: Dugand, 1975:71.

• **Content.** No subspecies are recognized (Wilson and Mena, 1980), although some workers have tacitly continued to utilize subspecific designations (Boos, 1984; Chippaux, 1986; Dixon and Soini, 1986; Pérez-Santos and Moreno, 1988, 1992).

• **Definition and Diagnosis.** A species of *Tantilla* with a dark middorsal stripe confined to the middorsal row or not. A pale lateral stripe is present or not; if present, it is located on from as little as the upper portion of dorsal scale row 3 to as much as the upper portion of row 3 through the lower half of row 5 and is bounded above and/or below by dark pigment or not. The dorsal ground color is tan to brown. The venter is immaculate cream, except for dark pigment at the lateral edges of the ventrals in some populations. The head pattern consists of a dark head cap usually pale to dark brown in color followed by a complete, middorsally divided, or both middorsally and laterally divided pale nuchal collar or two pale nuchal spots centered on the parietals. A dark nape band is present, brown to dark brown in color, followed by a pale neck band, 1/2 to 2 dorsal scales in length, sometimes reduced to a series of spots on either side of the dark middorsal stripe. Pale pre- and postocular spots are present and may be separated by a dark subocular blotch or confluent below it. A lateral extension of the dark head cap is usually present and touches the lip. Ventrals and subcaudals range from 125 to 177 and 41 to 92, respectively. *Tantilla melanocephala* is a highly variable member of the genus. Possession of a dark middorsal stripe and a dark head cap, pale nuchal band or spots, and dark nape band will distinguish most members of *T. melanocephala* from all but other members of the *melanocephala* group. Members of Wilson and Mena's (1980) color pattern group C have no dark middorsal stripe and, thus, resemble a number of *Tantilla* in this respect. Members of this group may be distinguished from other congeners lacking a dark middorsal stripe but having a dark head cap, pale nuchal band, and dark nape band by the combination of no pale lateral band; dark head cap brown to dark brown, not extending laterally below the angle of the mouth; pale nuchal band complete, medially-divided or medially and laterally divided but always crossing the parietals; dark nape band 3 to 7 dorsal scales long; a tan to brown, usually tan, ground color; and no prominent cream colored marking on snout.

• **Descriptions.** Wilson and Mena (1980) provided detailed descriptions of six color pattern groups recognized by them within *Tantilla melanocephala*. Use of other descriptions published prior (and, in some cases, subsequent) to this work should be used with reference to Wilson and Mena's (1980) study; descriptive information published subsequently appears in Vanzolini et al. (1980), Wilson and Meyer (1985), Chippaux (1986), Dixon and Soini (1986), Pérez-Santos and Moreno (1988, 1992), and Lancini and Kornacker (1989).

• **Illustrations.** Wilson and Mena (1980) provided pen-and-ink drawings of lateral, dorsal, and ventral views of the head and anterior body, as well as the dorsal color pattern of five of the six color pattern groups within this species. Vanzolini et al. (1980) and Chippaux (1986) published line drawings, and Lancini and Kornacker (1989) provided a stippled pen and ink drawing, in all cases of the head and anterior portion of the body.

• **Distribution.** *Tantilla melanocephala* ranges from "near sea level to intermediate elevations along both versants from Guatemala throughout the length of Central America into South America as far south as southern Perú, Bolivia, northern Argentina, and Uruguay; also on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago" (Wilson and Mena, 1980).

• **Fossil Record.** None

• **Pertinent Literature.** The systematics of this species are discussed by Wilson and Mena (1980), who also examined ecological distribution. Data on additional specimens not examined by Wilson and Mena (1980) are in Niceforo María (1933), Achaval and Vaz-Ferreira (1974), Dugand (1975), Emsley (1977), de Lema (1978),

Cunha and Nascimento (1978), Duellman (1978), Gudynas and Achaval (1979), Vanzolini, et al. (1980), Boos (1984), Wilson and Meyer (1985), Chippaux (1986), Dixon and Soini (1986), Pérez-Santos and Moreno (1988, 1992), and Lancini and Kornacker (1989).

• **Etymology.** The name *melanocephala* is derived from the Greek *melanos*, meaning "black" and *kephale*, meaning "the head," in reference to the dark head cap and nape band of this species.

• **Acknowledgments.** I would like to extend my gratitude to William M. Lamar, who provided substantial information on recent South American literature, and to James R. McCranie, who made available copies of pertinent literature.

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