Distribution Record of *Tantilla alticola* Boulenger, 1903 (Squamata: Colubridae) in Coclé Province, Republic of Panama

Edward A. Myers\textsuperscript{1,2,*}, Sara Ruane\textsuperscript{1,2}, Karin Knight\textsuperscript{3}, James L. Knight\textsuperscript{4,5} and Julie M. Ray\textsuperscript{6}

1 The College of Staten Island, Department of Biology. 2800 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, NY 10314, USA.
2 The City University of New York, The Graduate School and University Center, Department of Biology. 365 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10016, USA.
3 3018 Old Powderhouse Rd., Aiken, SC, 29803, USA.
4 South Carolina State Museum. 301 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC, 29202, USA.
5 Savannah River Ecology Laboratory. PO Drawer E, Aiken, SC, 29802, USA.
6 La MICA Biological Station, El Copé de La Pintada, Coclé Province, Republic of Panama

* Corresponding author. E-mail: emyers@gc.cuny.edu

**ABSTRACT:** A single specimen of *Tantilla alticola* was collected from Parque Nacional G. D. Omar Torrijos Herrera of Coclé Province, Republic of Panama. This record fills in a gap in the distribution for this species within the cloud forests of Central America.

The genus *Tantilla* is among the most species-rich genera of New World snakes (~63 species; Uetz 2012), yet little is known about the natural history of this taxon. Member species are small, secretive, harmless colubrids (subfamily Colubrinae), which can be found under rocks, logs, and within leaf litter in forests, meadows, or coffee plantations (Köhler 2008). *Tantilla alticola* Boulenger, 1903 (Boulenger’s Centipede Snake) is a rarely collected species (Savage 2002) with a non-contiguous distribution that is known to include the rain and cloud forests of north central Nicaragua, northern Costa Rica, near the border of Costa Rica and Panama, and also in northwestern Colombia (Köhler 2008; Figure 1). Here we report a new record of this species from central Panama.

While conducting an on-going herpetological monitoring survey of Parque Nacional G. D. Omar Torrijos...
Herrera of Coclé Province, Republic of Panama (08°40' N, 80°37'17" W: Fig. 1) on 13 January, 2012 at 19:34 h a single male individual of Tantilla alticola was found crossing a trail transecting an old logging road (Myers et al. 2007). The individual had a snout-vent length of 25.6 cm, a truncated tail with a remaining length of 5.9 cm, and a total weight of 6.8 grams. The specimen was identified based on the following characteristics: 150 ventral scales, 43+ subcaudals, the absence of a loreal scale, and smooth dorsal scales. In life the individual had an orange-red venter that darkened towards the tail, an indistinct light mid-dorsal stripe, an indistinct light colored lateral stripe on the fourth scale row, a dark brown overall body color, an indistinct light colored nuchal band with a slightly darker posterior border. Additionally, this specimen possessed a light spot on the supralabials anterior to the eye, while directly under the eye was dark with a small light area behind the eye. Species identification was based on the taxonomic keys of both Solorzano (2004) and Köhler (2008). Only Tantilla armillata and T. supracincta are known from Coclé, Panama. This specimen was discriminated from T. supracincta based on the obvious differences in color pattern; T. supracincta has a red dorsum with yellow centered, black cross-bands (Savage 2002). The specimen was discriminated from T. armillata by the presence of the red venter, a complete nuchal band and by possessing only 150 ventral scales; T. armillata has a whitish venter, lacks a nuchal band and male specimens of this species have 155 to 174 ventral scales (Savage 2002; Köhler 2008). The specimen was collected, preserved, and has been deposited in the collection at La MICA Biological Station (accession number: TSP 2012-30) under permit number SE/A-22-12. Although this new distribution record is not unexpected given what is known about the range of this species, our finding fills the distributional gap from northern Colombia to northwestern Panama. Parque Nacional G. D. Omar Torrijos Herrera has been well studied in terms of its herpetofauna (e.g. Crawford et al. 2010; Lips et al. 2006; Montgomery et al. 2011; Ray 2011a,b, 2012; Ray et al. 2012), but this finding underscores the importance of taxonomic surveys that will act as future baseline datasets for conservation management and species monitoring. Thus we recommend a through survey of the understudied leaf-litter snake fauna of Parque Nacional G. D. Omar Torrijos Herrera, as well as other cloud forest regions of Central America.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Thanks to the American Philosophical Society Lewis and Clark Fund for Exploration and Field Research (EAM) and the Graduate Women in Science Vessa Notchev Fellowship (SR) for providing funding that contributed to this collection. We would also like to thank the staff of La MICA Biological Station and Parque Nacional G. D. Omar Torrijos National Park for assistance in and out of the field and Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente for permits (SE/A-22-12).

LITERATURE CITED

RECEIVED: April 2012
ACCEPTED: November 2012
PUBLISHED ONLINE: March 2013
EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Pedro M. S. Nunes