

A New King Snake from Trans-Pecos Texas

By ALVIN FLURY

A SNAKE of the genus *Lampropeltis* which appears to be distinct from other described forms was found on a trip through Trans-Pecos Texas with Homer Phillips. Two subsequent short trips through the area and five weeks of field work 40 miles north of the point of capture by a University of Texas group have failed to supply any further specimens of the snake. This specimen is so different from any described form that I feel justified in naming a new species, based on the single specimen, which I wish to call

Lampropeltis blairi, sp. nov.

TYPE.—University of Texas Natural History Collection No. T4772, an adult male collected 8.8 miles west of Dryden, Terrell County, Texas, on June 3, 1948, by Homer Phillips and Alvin Flury. The specimen was found DOR on U. S. Highway 90.

DIAGNOSIS.—Dorsal scale rows 25 anteriorly; infralabials 11; subcaudals 63; annuli on body 14, the anteriormost red one about three times as wide as the others; gray annuli separated from black ones by narrow bands of white; red annuli in form of saddles completely enclosed ventrally by black; red scales not black tipped.

DESCRIPTION OF TYPE.—Head distinct from neck; general proportions of *doliatus* (Klauber, 1948) group; total length 885 mm.; tail length 138 mm.; tail divided by total length 0.156. Dorsal scale formula (Clark and Inger, 1942) as follows:

	141		154		—	
	(5-6)		(5-6)		(-)	
25	—	23	—	21	—	19
	(5-6)		(5-6)		(5-6)	
	144		155		211	

An old scar and a new cut on the left side opposite ventrals 214-224 obliterate the fusion of scale rows in that area. Ventrals 229; anal entire; subcaudals 63, in 2 rows. Dorsal scales with 2 apical pits.

Snout rounded; rostral about twice as wide as high with a low, wide notch below; internasals and prefrontals paired, symmetrical; nasals divided, nares lying equally in each scale; loreal single, small, twice as long as high; preoculars and supraoculars single; postoculars 3/3, lower one extending forward to median ventral point of orbit; temporals 3/3 in first row, lower more than twice as large as other two, 3/4 in second row and 4/5 in third; supralabials 8, 3rd and 4th entering orbit, 6th much smaller than 5th or 7th. Eye 4.3 mm. long. Mental small, triangular; infralabials 11, anterior pair meeting on midventral line and separating anterior one-third of first pair of chin shields; a very small scale on midventral line between posterior ends of anterior chin shields; 3 scale lengths between posterior end of chin shields and first ventral plate; 8 scale rows separate posterior chin shields from infralabials.

Dorsal pattern of alternating black-bordered red saddles and white-bordered gray saddles. Head shields black, mottled with gray; anterior 4 supralabials white, flecked with gray; a broad black band from eye to angle of

mouth; temporals, posterior part of head and sides of neck covered by first gray dorsal saddle.

Dark gray dorsal saddles 14 on body, one above anus and 3 on tail; range (including white border) 6-9 scale lengths (middorsal), average 7. Anterior-most saddle covering posterior part of head (7 scale lengths behind parietals); extending obliquely to 2nd scale row opposite 9th ventral. White borders narrow, irregular, about one-half scale wide middorsally; widening (at expense of black borders) to 2-3 scales on 1st to 3rd scale rows; white usually extending along 1st scale row and lateral edges of ventrals to enclose gray saddles.

Black bordered red saddles 14 on body and 3 on tail; posteriormost one completely black; next anterior one only flecked with red; average width of red saddles on body 6.7 scale lengths (middorsally), range 4-19 (4-9, aver. 5.8 if anteriormost saddle is discounted); red narrowing laterally, usually reaching 1st scale row for 1-4 scale lengths; red scales with irregular black flecks along edges; color of the apparently typical 7th red saddle seems to agree with Maerz and Paul's (1930) Plate 3, color A-11. Black borders 1-2 scales wide middorsally; narrowing to 1 scale on 1st and 2nd scale rows; uniting with black on ventrals to enclose red saddles.

Ventral surface with black borders of red saddles uniting laterally and forming a band 4-8 ventrals wide across belly; bands interrupted or mixed with white midventrally on anterior half of body. Irregular blotches of black and white opposite gray saddles; 2nd and 3rd of these blotches with lateral extensions of black invading gray saddles up to 5th scale row; 8th and 9th blotches with similar extensions reaching 1st scale row; blotches restricted to midventral region on tail. White borders of gray saddles usually 1-2 ventrals wide across belly but often mixed with black from irregular blotches.

COMPARISONS.—*Lampropeltis blairi* apparently belongs in the *mexicana* subgroup of Smith (1942) with *L. mexicana*, *leonis* and *alterna*. The enlarged nuchal saddle occurs in *mexicana* and *blairi* and the white border of the gray saddles is known for *alterna* (Jameson and Flury, 1948, and Mecham and Milstead, 1949) and is apparently present in *mexicana* (Blanchard, 1921, fig. 77). The high number of dorsal scales (25) and infralabials (11) occurs in *blairi* and *alterna*. The close relation of *blairi* to the *doliata* subgroup is shown by its similarity to *L. d. micropholis* of South America, which has the reduced number of rings, the red and gray ones of about the same width, the red rings sometimes closed by black on the belly and the reduced head pattern with the postocular black spot. From other species of the *mexicana* subgroup and from all forms of *L. doliata* except *micropholis*, *nelsoni* and *oligozona*, this new species may be distinguished by the low number of annuli on the body (14). The marked difference in width of the red and gray annuli separates *nelsoni* and *oligozona* from *blairi* while *micropholis* has fewer dorsal scales, caudals, labials and temporals. The four-color dorsal pattern, low number of annuli and the enlarged nuchal blotch are distinguishing characters of *Lampropeltis blairi*.

This species is named in honor of W. Frank Blair of the University of Texas, to whom I wish to express my thanks for his help, encouragement and patience during the past several years. Thanks are due also to Karl P. Schmidt for examining the type specimen and encouraging its description.

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