

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW *BASSARISCUS* FROM LOWER
CALIFORNIA, WITH REMARKS ON
'*BASSARIS RAPTOR*' BAIRD.

BY C. HART MERRIAM.

Among the mammals obtained on Espiritu Santo Island by Mr. J. E. McLellan, in August, 1895, are three specimens of *Bassariscus* belonging to an apparently undescribed species. The animal is decidedly smaller and grayer than *B. astutus flavus* Rhoads, its nearest known relative, and differs also in cranial and dental characters. It lives among the rocks near the beach, and is said to feed on crabs.

***Bassariscus saxicola* sp. nov.**

Type from Espiritu Santo Island, Lower California. No. 79031, ♀ old, U. S. Nat. Mus., Biological Survey Coll. Collected August 19, 1895, by J. Ellis McLellan. Original No. 1438.

General characters.—Similar to *B. astutus flavus*, but smaller and grayer; tail more slender, with the black rings relatively broader.

Color.—Type specimen in summer pelage: Upper parts drab-brown, abundantly mixed along the back with black-tipped hairs; under parts pale ochraceous buffy; tail with 8 or 9 black rings, incomplete on under side; under side with 8 white triangles (the uppermost not well defined); ear: basal, $\frac{2}{3}$ dark; apical, $\frac{1}{3}$ whitish; top of head grizzled; sides of face marked by a dark patch between eyes and nose (including whiskers), and a larger, grizzled patch between eye and ear; cheek below eye and patch over posterior $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{2}{3}$ of eye buffy.

Cranial and dental characters.—Skull similar to that of *B. astutus flavus*, but smaller; rostrum narrower; temporal impressions much nearer together; audital bullæ fuller anteriorly, their bases more abruptly rounded antero-externally; anterior nares reaching farther back superiorly; fron-

tals more abruptly elevated above rostrum; postorbital processes more strongly developed; last upper molar decidedly smaller; upper carnassial with inner lobe more rectangular.

Measurements (type specimen).—Total length, 737; tail vertebræ, 370; hind foot, 60.

REMARKS ON *BASSARISCUS RAPTOR* (BAIRD).

Baird's type specimen of *Bassariscus raptor* was killed in the city of Washington, D. C., where it was killing poultry. That it had recently escaped from confinement was shown by the conspicuous collar-mark around its neck, which is still prominent in the dry skin. The specimen is now preserved in the National Museum, and was evidently first kept in alcohol and afterward skinned, as shown by the yellow discoloration of the pelage and by the puckered and hardened condition of the footpads.

I have compared both the skin and skull of this specimen with specimens from northern California and Oregon, and find that they agree closely in all respects, except the interpterygoid fossa, which is abnormally broad in the type specimen. The number and breadth of the black bands on the tail correspond with specimens from Oregon and northern California. The skull is a little larger than that of any Oregon specimen in the Department collection, but is almost exactly matched by a specimen from Glen Ellen, California.

Mr. S. N. Rhoads has renamed *Bassariscus raptor* (Baird), calling it *B. oregonus* (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia, 1893, p. 416), but I cannot see any way by which Baird's earlier name can be displaced by a more modern one, unless it can be proved that Baird's animal is not the form from the northwest coast, with which it agrees in every particular. There is a curious inconsistency in Mr. Rhoads' treatment of the species. On page 414 he says that the form from the northwest coast "may require to be varietally distinguished under the name *raptor* Baird, this name doubtless referring to the Pacific coast form, as already explained." Two pages later (p. 416) he says, "the small dark coast form from northern California northward (not of central and southern California) should be made a subspecies of *flavus*. In that case it should be called *Bassariscus flavus oregonus*."

It is of course unfortunate that the type locality of Baird's specimen is not positively known, but Baird's repeated statement that it probably came from California was doubtless based on some information which he did not at the time care to pub-

lish; and the fact that the characters of the specimen, both external and cranial, agree with those of the northwest coast animal, leaves little doubt as to the general locality whence the animal came.

Skulls of *Bassariscus* from Oregon and the coast region of northern California differ from those of the Texas animal in several respects, but the differences are not absolutely constant.

The teeth average smaller, particularly the fourth upper premolar, the crown of which is of the same length as the transverse diameter of the crown of the first upper molar (measured from the notch on the outer side). In Texas specimens the carnassial is usually but not always considerably longer.

In the Oregon animal the postpalatal notch cuts the plane of the last molar, while in the Texas animal it falls short of this plane. The inferior lip of the infraorbital foramen is slightly cut away, so that the foramen may be seen when the skull is looked at from below at right angle to the eye. In the Texas animal the foramen cannot be seen from below, but is distinctly visible from above, while in the Oregon animal it cannot be seen at all from above. This seems like a trivial difference which no one would expect to be constant, but as a matter of fact it is consistently constant in the four skulls of *raptor* examined. In the Oregon animal the postorbital constriction is deeper and the interorbital breadth somewhat less than in *B. a. flavus*.



Merriam, C. Hart. 1897. "Description of a new *Bassariscus* from Lower California, with remarks on '*Bassariscus raptor*' Baird." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 11, 185–187.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/19431>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/211440>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Internet Archive

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.