COLUBER GUTTATUS.—Linnaeus.

Plate XIV.

Characters. Head moderate, narrow, elongated; snout obtuse; colour above reddish-brown, marked with oblong transverse spots of brick-dust colour, with darker borders; abdomen white, marked with alternate quadrilateral black spots. Pl. 126. Sc. 64.

Coluber pantherinus, Merrem, Beyträg. ii. s. 49, tab. xxi.
Natrix pantherinus, Merrem, Versuch eines Syst. der Amphib., p. 102.
Corn-snake, Vulgo.

Description. The head is narrow and elongated, the snout obtuse. The vertical plate is pentagonal, with its largest border forwards, and an acute angle.

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behind. The superior orbital is elongated, quadrilateral, with its outer margin but slightly projecting. The occipital plates are irregularly triangular, with their apices rounded and their bases directed forwards, and joined to the vertical and superior orbital. The frontal plates are pentagonal, and broadest internally and narrow externally, where they join a small rhomboidal loral plate. The anterior frontal are sub-round; the temporal are small and variable. The rostral is pentagonal, large, projecting and obtuse. There is one large anterior orbital and two small posterior orbital plates. The upper jaw is covered with eight quadrilateral plates, two of which (the fifth and sixth) form the lower margin of the orbit.

The nostrils are lateral, large, near the snout, and open between two nasal plates, of which the anterior is quadrilateral, and the posterior pentagonal. The eyes also are lateral and rather small; the pupil black, the iris reddish. The neck is cylindrical, contracted, smaller than the head. The body is greatly elongated. The tail is small, and tapers to a point.

Colour. The head is of a brick-dust colour above, with two bands of a much darker shade bordered with brown; the larger of these lines forms a semicircle, the convexity of which is near the snout, and the two ends passing across the eyes terminate at the occiput. The other forms an oval on the top of the head, following the figure of the anterior; in the midst of this is an oval spot of the same colour as the circles. The whole superior surface of the body is light brown, in which appears a reddish tinge; along the back is a row of large sub-quadrate spots of a deep brick-dust colour, bordered with the darkest brown. The sides are of a lighter shade than the back, with small spots; these also are lighter than the spots on the superior surface. The abdomen is silver-white, with black squares irregularly dispersed and of unequal size; two or three close together occur on one side, and then on the other. Below the vent is a longitudinal line on each side, formed by a black spot on each scale; these become irregular, and meet across as they arrive at the tip.

Dimensions. Length of head, 1 inch 2 lines; breadth of head, 7 lines; length of
COLUBER GUTTATUS.  

body, 39 inches; length of tail, 7 inches; greatest circumference of body, 3 inches 
i1 lines: total length, 47 inches 9 lines. They sometimes grow to a greater size 
than this—I have seen one nearly six feet in length.

HABITS. The Coluber guttatus is very commonly observed about the road side 
early in the morning or at the dusk of evening; unlike most snakes, concealing 
itself during the day. It is very gentle and familiar, frequenting the neighbour-
hood of settlements, and at times entering houses; and is, according to Catesby, 
"a great robber of hen-roosts."

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. At present I can only give North Carolina as the 
northern boundary of the Coluber guttatus; beyond this its place is supplied by 
the Coluber eximius of Dekay, which it much resembles.

GENERAL REMARKS. The Coluber guttatus seems to have been a great stum-
bling-block to herpetologists, as may be seen by the great number of its 
synonymes. It is clearly described in the twelfth edition of the Systema Naturæ, 
and no mention is made of it in any of the previous editions. Linnaeus described 
it from a specimen furnished him by Dr. Garden, and at the same time refers to 
Plate Ix. of Catesby, though with doubt. What he did doubtingly, others have 
done boldly. Plate Ix. of Catesby is the Bead-snake, and not the Coluber 
guttatus of Linnaeus; but his Plate Iv. is the Corn-snake, and agrees with the 
Coluber guttatus in every respect.

We next find this animal described by Lacépède, under the name la Mouchetée; 
his description is good, and there can be no doubt of his meaning, for he refers 
to the Coluber guttatus of Linnaeus; but he again errs in supposing the Bead- 
snake of Catesby to be identical with it. Lacépède again describes the same 
animal under the name Coluber maculatus, (la Tachetée,) from a specimen 
procured in Louisiana; the description of the colours agree perfectly well with 
the Coluber guttatus, but its abdominal plates are less numerous. Lacépède
himself supposes he is describing the Corn-snake, as he refers to Plate iv. of Catesby, and says they are common in Carolina and Virginia.

Latreille, at the end of his description of the Coluber molossus, gives an account of a serpent brought from Carolina by Bosc, which he thinks is closely allied to the Coluber guttatus; with which it is indeed identical, as may easily be seen by referring to his description; but to increase the stock of names, he calls it “la Couleuvre cannelleée.”

It is not a little singular that Bosc, who says he furnished this animal for Latreille, should have confounded it with the Hog Nose, to which it bears not the slightest resemblance. It can only be accounted for by supposing that some other serpent fell by accident into Latreille’s hands instead of the one intended; for there cannot be the least doubt that his description refers to the Coluber guttatus—a more correct one cannot be given; nor does it contain the slightest hint by which we can suppose that any Heterodon is meant.

There can be no doubt that the Coluber molossus of Daudin is the Coluber guttatus of Linnaeus, from the number of its plates, disposition of its colours, &c.; especially as he says Bosc found it in Carolina, adding that it resembles the Boa constrictor.

Merrem, generally very accurate, overlooked the Coluber guttatus of Linnaeus, and described the same animal as a new species, under the name Coluber pantherinus. Of this, one may easily be satisfied by a reference to his description, which is full and minute, but especially by looking at the figure accompanying it, which is excellent; the colour only is faulty, being evidently taken from an animal preserved in alcohol. The Coluber Floridanus is only another name for the same animal, as Dr. Pickering pointed out to me, in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences, the specimen which has added this synonyme, and though much bleached, it is clearly identical with the Coluber guttatus.

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