



Coluber 4-vittatus.

On Stone by S. Cichowski.

P. S. Duvul, Lith. Phil^a.

COLUBER QUADRIVITTATUS.—*Holbrook.**Plate XX.*

CHARACTERS. Body very long, above greenish clay-colour, with four longitudinal brown bands; beneath yellowish; head distinct; scales on the back carinated, on the flanks smooth; tail one-fifth of total length. Pl. 233. Sc. 90.

SYNONYME. Chicken Snake, *Bartram*, Travels in Florida, &c., p. 275.

DESCRIPTION. The head is elongated and oval, with the vertical plate pentagonal, short and broad; the superior orbital plates are large; the frontal large, irregularly pentagonal, broadest internally, and extending externally between the anterior orbital and posterior nasal to the loreal plate, which is of trapezoid form, and small. The anterior frontal are small and rhomboidal in shape; the two nasal are also large and somewhat trapezoidal, the one lunate before and the other behind for the nostrils; the rostral above is triangular, rounded in front and broad; the posterior orbital are two in number; the anterior orbital is single, very large and sub-quadrilateral; the inferior wall of the orbit is completed by the fourth and fifth superior labial plates, of which there are eight.

The nostrils are large, lateral near the snout, and open a little backwards. The eyes are large, the pupil dusky, and the iris greyish-yellow. The neck is contracted and covered with smaller scales.

The body is elongated, fusiform, and covered above with hexagonal scales; the superior rows carinated, the inferior smooth. The tail is moderately long and round.

COLOUR. In its colours, however, this snake differs widely from the *Coluber Alleghaniensis*, and the pattern is invariable so far as my observation extends. The whole superior surface in the young animal is of a greenish clay-colour, marked with four longitudinal dark brown stripes, the two superior ones reaching from the occiput to the extremity of the tail. In old individuals, the general colour is brown, and the dark longitudinal bands are less obvious. The inferior surface is yellowish throughout, sometimes a little clouded towards the sides. The scales of the back and sides are frequently sprinkled with minute blackish dots, and many have marginal dashes of white, which become visible when the skin is extended, and give the animal a reticulated appearance. The skin between the scales is blackish.

DIMENSIONS. Length of head, 14 lines; length of body, 3 feet 6 inches; of tail, 10 inches: total length, 4 feet 5 inches. In the above specimen there were 233 abdominal plates, and 90 sub-caudal scutella. It grows, however, to the length of six or seven feet.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. It is found from North Carolina to Florida, and westward as far as the Mississippi; being entirely unknown in the northern and middle states.

HABITS. This animal is by no means rare in South Carolina; frequenting the vicinity of houses, and sometimes making its way into the cabins of the negroes. It is, however, perfectly innoxious, though in bad repute with respect to young chickens. Bartram suggests that it might be rendered useful in destroying rats, as it is easily tamed and soon becomes familiar.

GENERAL REMARKS. This animal, though described by Bartram so long ago as 1791, has not since been noticed by any systematic writer. It is closely allied to the last animal in its general form, but its colour and markings, as well as its geographical distribution, are entirely different.

Schlegel thinks this snake may prove identical with the *Coluber Alleghaniensis*, to which, indeed, it bears considerable resemblance in form; but its colours are entirely different and are constant; its habits and geographical distribution are not the same: the *Coluber Alleghaniensis* lives constantly on the ground, but the *Coluber quadrivittatus* I have often met with on trees; the one belongs to the mountains, the other lives on the plains.

CORONELLA.—*Laurenti*.

GENUS CORONELLA.—CHARACTERS. Head moderate, much less distinct from the neck than in *Coluber*, but covered with the same number of plates; snout short, rounded; rostral plate very concave below; loral plate single; superior orbital plate not projecting over the eye; nostrils lateral; teeth small, numerous, curved; posterior ones rather larger; body sub-cylindrical, larger in the middle; scales smooth; tail short.

REMARKS. This genus, as established by *Laurenti*, embraced a great many serpents, widely different in their characters. *Boié* limited it to such as resemble in their forms the *Coronella lævis*, the type of *Laurenti*'s genus. I would still further restrict it to such serpents as differ from the true *Colubers* in having the head shorter, and but slightly larger than the neck; where the plates of the head and face, though precisely the same in number, differ much in proportional development of certain parts. Thus they are all generally shorter, and the superior orbital projects so slightly over the eye, that it can be but partially seen from above, which approximates this to the next genus, *Helicops*, where the eyes are superior. The loral plate is single, as well as the anterior orbital. The body is elongated, sub-cylindrical, larger in the middle, tolerably robust, and always covered with smooth scales; the tail is rather short, never more than one-third the length of the body. The animals of this genus seldom equal the *Colubers* in size, though some of them are of considerable dimensions. They are also much less lively and active, and are never seen on trees.



Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Coluber quadrivittatus – Holbrook." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 3, 89–93. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326811>.

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