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A NEW SPECIES OF BLIND SNAKE, *TYPHLOPS*,
FROM TRINIDAD

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In the American Museum Collection of Neotropical *Typhlops* there is one specimen from Trinidad that is distinctively different from any now known from the New World. I wish to express my appreciation to Charles M. Bogert and Richard G. Zweifel of the American Museum of Natural History for the loan of specimens in their care and for their permission to study and report on this new form. I also want to thank Albert Schwartz for the opportunity to study a specimen of *T. caymanensis* Sackett and Ernest E. Williams of the Museum of Comparative Zoology for the loan of two specimens of *T. lehneri* Roux.

***Typhlops trinitatus*, new species**

Holotype: AMNH 89820, from Trinidad, "in log beside Arima Road, 3 miles above Simla." Collected by James A. Oliver and John Tee-Van, 1 April 1956.

Diagnosis: A distinctively patterned species of *Typhlops* with rows of brown dots on a yellow background, yellow snout and tail, scales in 20 rows around the body and 389 in the mid-dorsal series. The preocular is in contact with upper labials two and three. The combination of high number of mid-dorsals, 20 scale rows and preocular in contact with two labials is shared by only two other *Typhlops* in the New World: *T. caymanensis* and the recently described *T. costaricensis* Jiménez and Savage. From these it differs in color and in the following details of head scutellation. The fourth upper labial is very large in *costaricensis*, much higher than long and extends up the posterior margin of the ocular; in *caymanensis* the fourth supralabial is longer than high and is more than twice as long as the third supralabial; in *trinitatus* the third and fourth supralabial are similar in size and shape and are both higher than long. Of these forms *trinitatus* is the only one with the eye situated under the ocular-preocular suture.

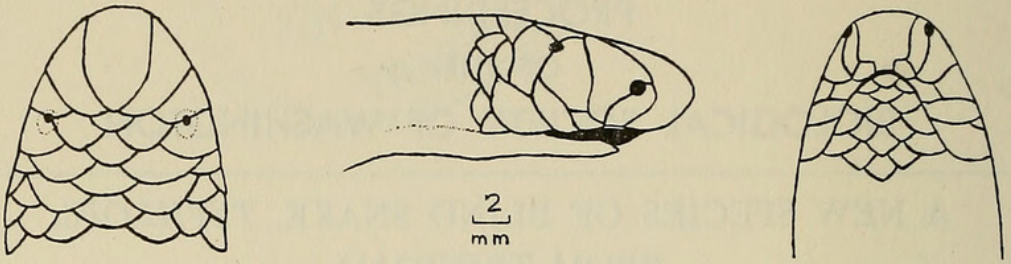


FIG. 1. *Typhlops trinitatus*, AMNH 89820, Trinidad, dorsal, lateral, and ventral views of head.

T. trinitatus is most closely related to *lehneri* of Venezuela. Both have strongly depressed muzzles and a similar color pattern except that the dorsal color continues to the tip of the tail in *lehneri*, the entire head from behind the eyes is unpigmented in *lehneri* while just the rostral and nasals are unpigmented in *trinitatus*. Details of head scutellation and position of eye appear to be the same. The important difference between the two forms is the high number of mid-dorsal scales in *trinitatus*. In a series of 19 *lehneri*, Shreve (1947, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Harvard, 99 (5): 512-517) found the number of mid-dorsals to range from 289-332. He also gave lengths of the largest specimen; 185 mm and the longest gravid female; 170 mm so it is apparent that *trinitatus* is a much larger species as the one specimen available is approximately 240 mm long.

From *T. reticulatus* (Linn.) it differs in having a complete nasal suture and in much higher number of mid-dorsal scales, *reticulatus* has less than 300, average 235.

Description: Head not tapering but broadly rounded with muzzle strongly depressed. Rostral wide, its width almost half that of head, does not extend posteriorly to a line connecting the anterior margin of the eyes; nasals completely divided by a suture that extends from the upper labials through the nostril to the rostral. The suture is a continuation of the suture between labials one and two. The preocular is almost triangular in shape with the apex directed upward. At the level of the eye it is narrower than the posterior nasal, at its base it is broadly in contact with upper labials two and three. Ocular higher than wide, the ocular-preocular suture almost straight, the eye is visible, on dorso-lateral surface of head and is located under the ocular-preocular suture near the upper end of these scales; one pair of enlarged parietals each approximately as wide as two body scales; one postocular; four upper labials, third and fourth largest with the fourth only slightly larger than the third. 389 mid-dorsal scales. Scales around body are in 20-20-20 rows. The three counts are anterior, midbody, and preanal respectively.

Color: Snout and tail yellow, as are 9 ventral rows of scales. Dorsum

same color as venter except that the center of each scale has a dark brown round to squarish spot giving an appearance of 11 lines of dots.

Remarks: Most of the Antillean species of *Typhlops* have the preocular in contact with only the third upper labial, the two exceptions are *caymanensis* and *biminiensis* Richmond in which the preocular is in contact with upper labials two and three. In this respect these two species resemble most of the South and Central American forms.

The only other *Typhlops* known from Trinidad is *reticulatus* which has an incomplete nasal suture and less than 300 mid-dorsal scales.

The genus *Typhlops* is represented in South America and its detached fragment, Trinidad, by five species. These and their ranges as currently known are: *lehneri*, Venezuela; *unilineatus* (Dumeril and Bibron), Surinam (Dutch Guiana); *lumbricalis* (Linn.), British Guiana; *reticulatus*, Tropical South America, east of the Andes; and the present species, *trinitatus* from Trinidad.

Two species, *lehneri* and *unilineatus*, have limited ranges, *lumbricalis* may be an introduction from the West Indies as it is widespread in the Caribbean Islands but known only from British Guiana on the continent. The range of *reticulatus* extends from northern Argentina to Trinidad and from eastern Brazil to Peru.

Although Emsley (1963, Copeia: 576-577) questions the presence of *reticulatus* on Trinidad, there are two specimens; AMNH 64467 (2) labeled "Trinidad, Tucker Valley." These appear to be the only specimens of this species known from the island. In number of mid-dorsal scales (210 and 216) they are lower than the average (235) for *reticulatus*. Both of these specimens are uniform dark brown above gradually fading on the sides to white below (yellow in life?), the light ventral color occupies seven rows of scales. The scale rows around the body are 20-20-20, the nasals are incompletely divided and the head scutellation agrees with that of *reticulatus*.

KEY TO SPECIES OF *Typhlops* CURRENTLY KNOWN FROM SOUTH AMERICA

1. No preocular; 26-28 scale rows *unilineatus* (Dutch Guiana)
Preocular present; 20 scale rows at midbody 2
2. Preocular in contact with upper labial three only
..... *lumbricalis* (British Guiana)
Preocular in contact with upper labials two and three 3
3. Nasal suture incomplete, does not contact rostral
..... *reticulatus* (South America E of Andes)
Nasal suture complete, contacts rostral 4
4. Mid-dorsal scales 389, tail yellow *trinitatus* (Trinidad)
Mid-dorsal scales 289-332, tail same color as dorsum
..... *lehneri* (Venezuela)



Richmond, Neil D. 1965. "A new species of blind snake, *Typhlops*, from Trinidad." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 78, 121–124.

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