Check List 2007: **3**(3)
ISSN: 1809-127X

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Reptilia, Squamata, Serpentes, Colubridae, *Urotheca decipiens*: Distribution extension.

Fernando Castro-Herrera[1]
Fernando Vargas-Salinas[2]

[1] *Grupo Laboratorio de Herpetología, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia.*
E-mail: fcastro@univalle.edu.co

[2] *Cra. 11d, no. 49-25, Cali, Colombia*.

Extensive field work and recent taxonomic studies have contributed to a general knowledge of the herpetofaunal diversity in Colombia (Acosta-Galvis 2000, Renjifo and Lundberg 1999, Sánchez-C et al. 2001). However, there are many areas in the country without adequate inventories, which reflects in the description of new species of amphibians and reptiles, and records of species previously unreported for Colombia or a given region. Here we increase the range distribution of *Urotheca decipiens* (Colubridae), a terrestrial dark brown snake of humid lowland and premontane forests (Savage 2002).

On 23 July 2006, one individual of *Urotheca decipiens* was found dead on the road by F. Vargas (Figure 1A) in the Reserva Forestal Bosque de Yotoco (03º52'62.0" N, 76º26'18.8" W; ca. 1,600 m). On 26 September 2006, another individual was collected by C. Giraldo and F. Castro in the Vereda Chicoral, Municipio La Cumbre (03º34' N, 76º36' W; 1,800 m) (Figure 1B). Reviews of the herpetological material in the Museo de Herpetología at the Universidad del Valle, Cali-Colombia produced an unreported individual of *U. decipiens* collected on 24 February 1997 by Taran Grant at the Hacienda San Pedro, Corregimiento Queremal, Municipio Dagua (03º29' N, 76º42' W; 1,650 m). Another specimen was collected by W. Bolivar at Serranía de los Paraguas, Cerro del Inglés (4º44' N, 76º18' W), but this record lacks a voucher. All those localities are sub Andean forests in the eastern slope of the western cordillera of the Andes in the department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Voucher specimens are housed in the Museo de Herpetología, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia (UVC 13548, UVC 15655, and UVC 15656).

Morphological characters of the specimens examined are shown in Table 1 and Figure 2. The color pattern in life of the head of all specimens lacks a nuchal collar crossing the parietal scales (Figure 1B), but they possess a black-bordered pale supralabial stripe, and at each side of the head a small white spot is present (Figure 1C, Figure 2). The midbody pattern is brown with a white line between the first and second dorsal scale rows; there was no line on row 5, as has been reported for some specimens in Central America. This color pattern in head and midbody is in accord with descriptions of Myers (1974) and Savage (2002) for *U. decipiens*. However, our specimens have a red-orange tone on the ventral scales (Figure 1), and one of them (UVC 15655) has some scattered brown spots in the midventer. This red-orange tone is an unreported variation of ventral coloration for *U. decipiens*.

We do not know species in the department of Valle del Cauca that can be easily confused with *Urotheca decipiens* (Castro-H. and Vargas-S., unpublished data). Just *Synophis plectoventralis* (Sheil & Grant, 2001) may be confused with *U. decipiens* because: 1) both species have been recorded in Hacienda San Pedro, Corregimiento Queremal, Municipio Dagua, western Andes; 2) both species are active in leaf litter; and 3) *S. plectoventralis* have a cream line stripe in supralabials. However, *S. plectoventralis* have a conspicuous nuchal collar, gray dorsum, ventral scales cream, prefrontals fused (divided in *U. decipiens*, see Figures 1B and 2), and a reduction in dorsal scale rows (19-19-17) (Sheil and Grant 2001), while *U. decipiens* is 17-17-17 (Myers 1974). In adjacent departments to the Valle del Cauca (Chocó and Cauca) there are two snake species (*Urotheca dumerilii* and *Saphenophis*

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

sneiderni, respectively) that could be confused with *U. decipiens*. A yellowish orange belly has been mentioned for the holotype of *Urotheca dumerilii*, but that species is easily differentiated from *U. decipiens* because it has a small pale spot (ocellus) above and behind the corner of the mouth, and a pale line that extends along the lower scale rows from the throat up to the neck (Myers 1974). Differences in hemipenial morphology also are evident under stereoscopy (Myers 1974). *Saphenophis sneiderni* (Myers 1973) also can be confused with *U. decipiens*.

Figure 1. A: Specimen of *Urotheca decipiens* dead on a road that crosses the Reserva Forestal Bosque de Yotoco, UVC 15656, photo by F. Vargas-S.; B: Specimen collected in Vereda Chicoral, Municipio La Cumbre, UVC 15655; C: Lateral view of *U. decipiens*, note white line in the first and second row of dorsal scale which is absent in *S. sneiderni*; photos B and C by F. Castro-H.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Both species have a brown dorsum and a white line stripe in supralabials, but they can be differentiated in field because *S. sneiderni* have a continuous lateral black stripe from the sides of head to the tail (becoming darker and broader before tail) (Myers 1973) while *U. decipiens* has a white line in the first and second row of dorsal scale (Figure 1C). Further, the number of dorsal scale rows in *S. sneiderni* varies along the body (two females with 19-17-15 and 17-17-15; Myers 1973) while in *U. decipiens* the number is constant (17 scales) along the body (Myers 1974).

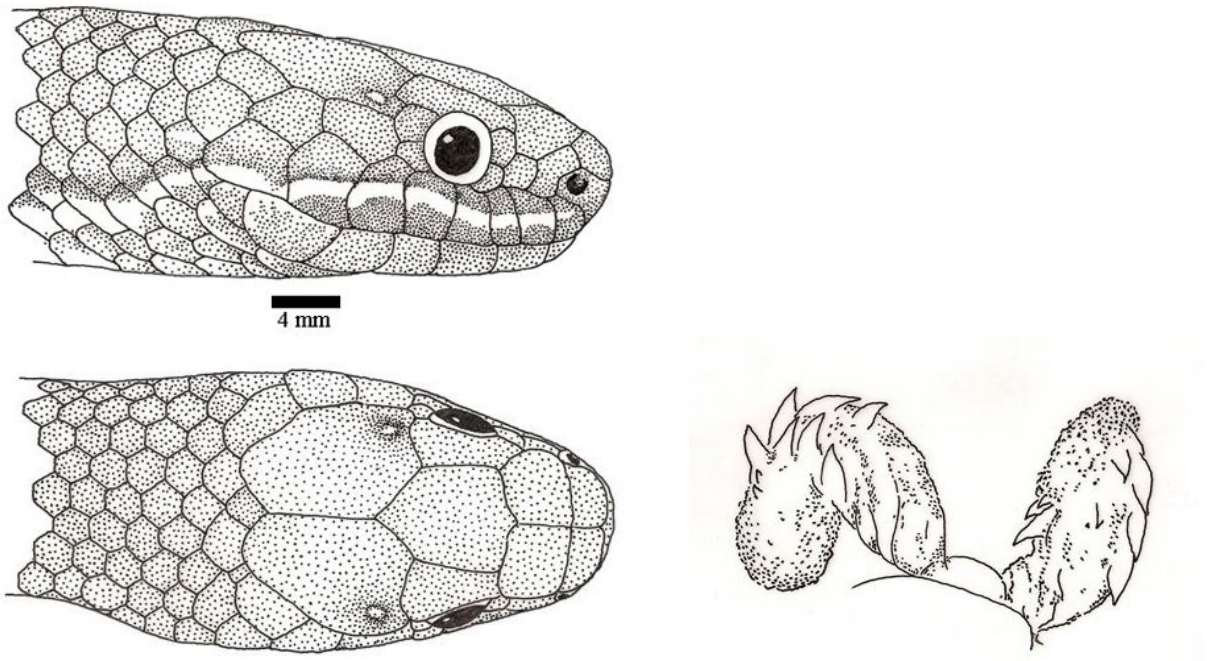

Figure 2. Head scalation and hemipenes of *Urotheca decipiens*. Drawing from specimen UVC 15655.

The only previously published record of *Urotheca decipiens* for Colombia is a juvenile collected in Santa Rita, North Medellín, Central Andes, department of Antioquia, at 2,740 m. (Myers 1974; Perez-Santos and Moreno 1988). Thus, these records of *Urotheca decipiens* extend the range of the species more than 100 km south, and confirm its presence in the western Andes in Colombia (Figure 3).

The type locality of this species is Ecuador, but it is in doubt. Indeed, Myers (1974) pointed out that the specimen from Ecuador differs in some aspects with specimens of *U. decipiens*, so it was excluded from his analyses and distribution data. With our records, the representation of the genus *Urotheca* in the department of Valle del Cauca was increased to three species: *U. decipiens* in the mountains, and *U. fulviceps* and *U. lateristriga* in the Pacific lowlands (Castro-H and Vargas-S, unpublished data).

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Cesar Giraldo, student of the herpetology course, for his help in fieldwork, and to P. D. Gutierrez for his help with the map illustration of Colombia. Also, thanks to Wilmar Bolivar for sharing information about specimens collected at Cerro del Inglés. Commentaries by William W. Lamar and anonymous reviewer improved the content of manuscript. Equipment for fieldwork of F. Vargas-Salinas has been donated by IdeaWild; specimen registered in Bosque de Yotoco was during Convenio 086-2005 Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca CVC - Asociación para la Conservación de los Ríos de Mediacanoa y Yotoco ASOYOTOCO.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

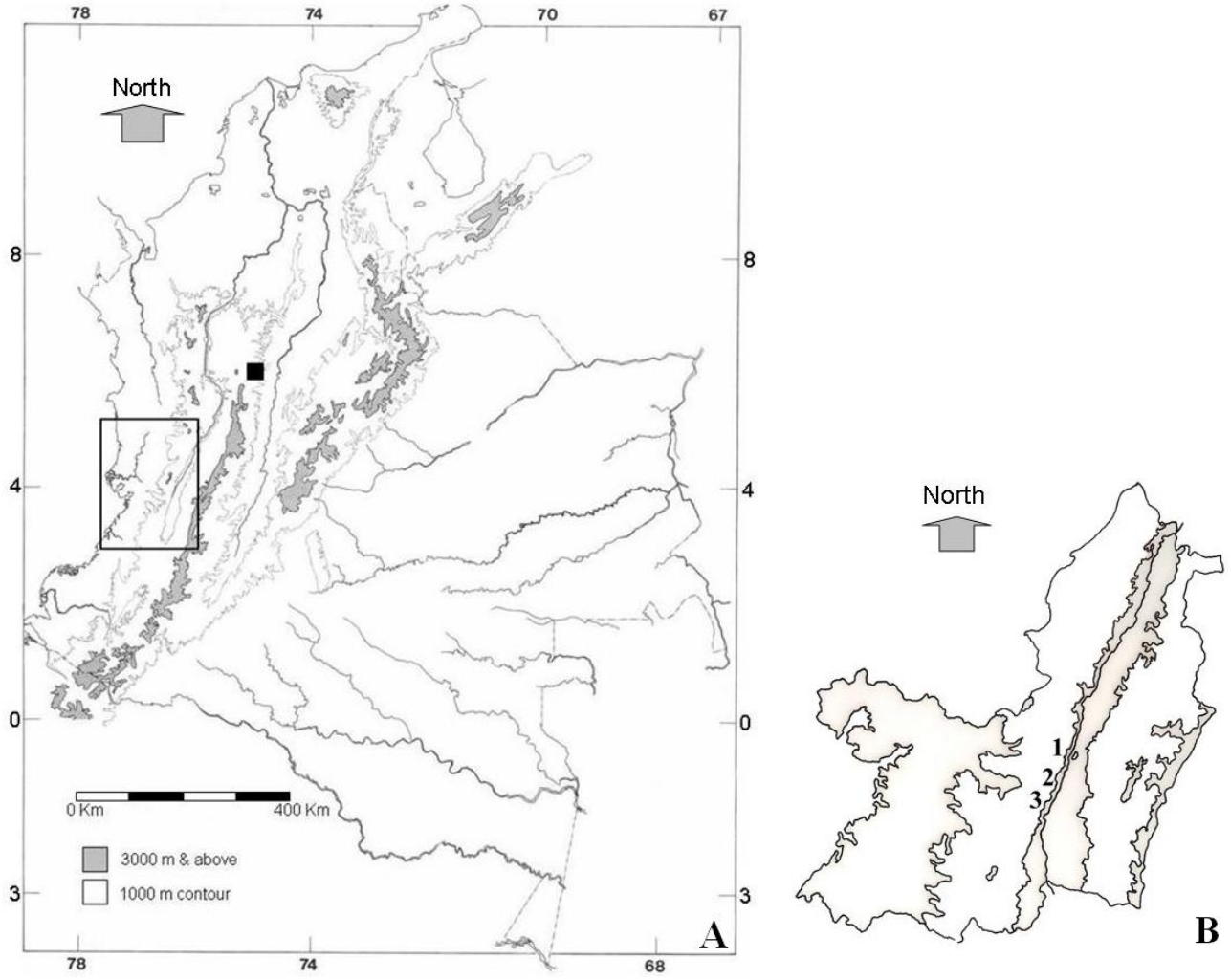

Figure 3. A: Map of Colombia showing the proximate location of the first record of *Urotheca decipiens* for Colombia (black square). B: Department of Valle del Cauca (unfilled square in Figure 3A) showing localities where *U. decipiens* has been recorded: 1. Reserva Forestal Bosque de Yotoco; 2. Vereda Chicoral, Municipio La Cumbre; 3. Hacienda San Pedro, Corregimiento Queremal, Municipio Dagua

Table 1. Morphological characters in specimens analyzed of *Urotheca decipiens*.

	UVC 15656*	**UVC 13548**	**UVC 15655**
Sex	---	♂	♂
Total length	~370 mm	290 mm	520 mm
Tail length	---	160 mm	190 mm
Dorsal scale rows	17	17	17
Ventral scales	>154	147	148
Subcaudal scales	---	83	88
Supralabial scales	---	7	7
Infralabial scales	---	7	7
Preocular/subpreocular	---	2/1	2/1
Postocular scales	---	2	2

* Specimen damaged crushed on the road.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Literature cited

Acosta-Galvis, A. R. 2000. Ranas, Salamandras y Caecilias (Tetrapoda: Amphibia) de Colombia. Biota Colombiana 1(3): 289-319.

Myers, C. W. 1973. A new genus for Andean snakes related to *Lygophis boursieri* and a new species (Colubridae). American Museum Novitates 2522: 1-37.

Myers, C. W. 1974. Systematics of *Rhadinaea* (Colubridae), a genus of new world snakes. Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History 153 (1): 1-262.

Sánchez-C. H., O. Castaño, and G. Cárdenas-A. 1987. Diversidad de los reptiles en Colombia. Pp. 277-325. In J. O. Rangel (ed.), Colombia Diversidad Biótica I. Bogotá. Editorial Guadalupe Ltda.

Pérez-Santos, C. and A. G. Moreno. 1988. Ofidios de Colombia. Monografía IV. Torino. Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali. 520 p.

Renjifo, J. M. and M. Lundberg. 1999. Anfibios y Reptiles de Urrá. Guía de Campo. Medellin-Colombia. Skanska y Editorial Colina.

Savage, J. M. 2002. The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica. A herpetofauna between two continents, between two seas. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Sheil, C. A. and T. Grant. 2001. A new species of colubrid snake (*Synophis*) from western Colombia. Journal of Herpetology 35(2): 204-209.

Received January 2007
Accepted June 2007
Published online August 2007