

First record of the Fitzinger's False Coral Snake, *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri* (Tschudi, 1845) (Reptilia: Dipsadidae) in Atiquipa, southwestern Peru

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Abstract: *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri* is distributed in Ecuador and Peru. In this study we present an extension of the geographical distribution for Peru, the first record of the species in the department of Arequipa. This new report was made in the Lomas de Atiquipa Private Conservation Area.

Key words: Peruvian desert; snake; coastal hills; range extension

The genus *Oxyrhopus*, in the Dipsadidae family, contains 14 species described for Central and South America, of which Peru has 11 (WALLACH et al. 2014). Fitzinger's False Coral Snake, *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri* (Tschudi, 1845), is a species which is poorly known. This species has two subspecies, *O. fitzingeri fitzingeri* distributed on the central coast of Peru and *O. f. frizzelli* Schmidt & Walker, 1943 distributed in northern coastal Peru and southern Ecuador (VENEGAS 2005; WALLACH et al. 2014). In the GBIF database (GBIF 2016), there are 26 records with locality data, most of which are records of the northern part of Peru, between Tumbes, Piura, Lambayeque, La Libertad and Lima departments and just one record for Ecuador in Loja. Its conservation status is Lower Concern (IUCN 2017). It is a terrestrial species of nocturnal habits, inhabitant of the scrub forest of dry desert savannah and cold desert (PÉREZ & QUIROZ 2016).

The Atiquipa Lomas Private Conservation Area is located on the coast of the province of Caravelí, Arequipa department (15°45'21.64" S, 074°22'34.65" W) and supports a unique vegetation which is dependent on fogs. Four species of snakes have been reported from the area: *Phylodryas simonsii*, *Pseudoalsophis elegans*, *Bothrops pictus*, and *Epictia* sp. There are three reports of *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri* from the area (Figure 1). One individual was collected by Luis Villegas in the vicinity of Huayahuani (15°45'39.89" S, 074°22'14.60" W, 788 m), on 15 October 2011. It is a female, total length 100 cm. The specimen was collected and was deposited in the scientific collection of the Natural

History Museum of the San Agustín National University of Arequipa (3220-Area of Herpetology-MUSA) under permit number 12950-2017-SERFOR (in the process of adapting to new environmental laws). The second record is an observation of an individual in the lower part of Atiquipa village (15°47'53.63" S, 074°21'54.99" W, 308 m), on 22 May 2013.

The sex of this individual was not determined; it measured 110 cm. It was photographed and released (Figure 2). The third record is also from Atiquipa, on 26 September 2016. The sex of this individual could not be determined; it measured 45 cm in length. It was also photographed and released. It had a mid body bulge, suggesting that it had recently ingested prey (Figure 3).

The snakes were identified by comparison with available information and descriptions (SCHMIDT & WALKER 1943; VENEGAS 2005; GUZMÁN & FLORES 2009). The individuals had the characteristic coloration: a reddish-brown head, black eyes, dorsal scales a mix of dark brown and cream, the venter cream. The smallest individual was somewhat lighter in color than the other two.

Oxyrhopus fitzingeri has been reported previously from the northern coast of Peru and southern Ecuador, as well as farther south in Lima and Ica, although the last record lacks precise location. Locations have been from sea level up to 1829 m (CARRILLO & ICOCHEA 1995; SCHMIDT & WALKER 1943; VENEGAS 2005; AGUILAR et al. 2007; GUZMÁN & FLORES 2009; WALLACH et al. 2014). ZEBALLOS et al. (2000) did not include the species in their survey of the vertebrate fauna of hills of Atiquipa, although ZEBALLOS et al. (2002) mentioned an individual of *O. fitzingeri* collected on the outskirts of Arequipa city without details of the location or date. This record extends the distribution south to Arequipa, at least 220 km from Ica. The new records suggest that *O. fitzingeri* may occur elsewhere in southern coastal Peru. This record represents an addition to the herpetofauna of the Arequipa department and also raises the importance of the Atiquipa Lomas Private Conservation Area.

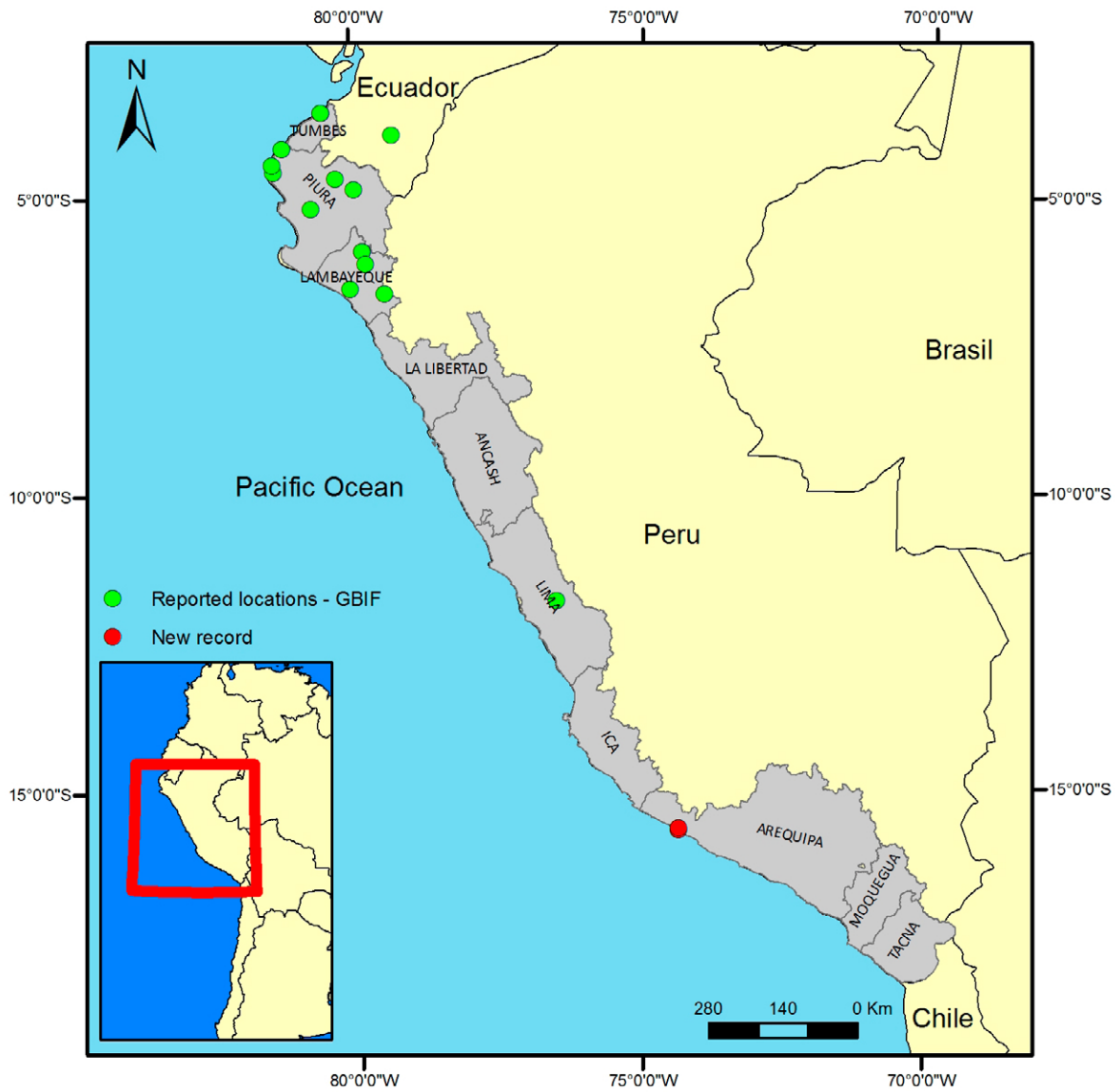


Figure 1. Location of the new record of *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri* in Atiquipa, Peru (red dot), and previous records (green dots).



Figures 2, 3. *Oxyrhopus fitzingeri*. **2.** Sex undetermined, length 110 cm. Record of 22 May 2013 (CL-F photo). **3.** Sex undetermined length 45 cm. Record of 26 September 2016 (CL-F photo).

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