

RANGE EXTENSION OF THE LONG-NOSED SNAKE, *RHINOCHAILUS L. LECONTEI*, INTO EAST-CENTRAL UTAH

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ABSTRACT.— A review of the distribution of *Rhinocheilus l. lecontei*, in Utah, with a northward extension of its range in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

The long-nosed snake, *Rhinocheilus l. lecontei*, was previously thought to inhabit only the southwestern part of Utah (Tanner, 1935. Its range in Utah included only the Lower Sonoran life zone in the Virgin River Valley of Washington County. Tanner (1941) reported it for the Great Basin (Millard Co.), and Tanner and Heinrichs (1964) extended its range into southeastern Kane County. Stebbins (1966) reported a specimen from San Juan County, Utah (northeast of Page, Arizona), extending its range into the Colorado Plateau of southeastern Utah.

On 29 May 1970 at Dragerton, Carbon County, Utah, a specimen of *Rhinocheilus l. lecontei* was collected by William Ingram from under a rock. This specimen extends the range of *Rhinocheilus* well

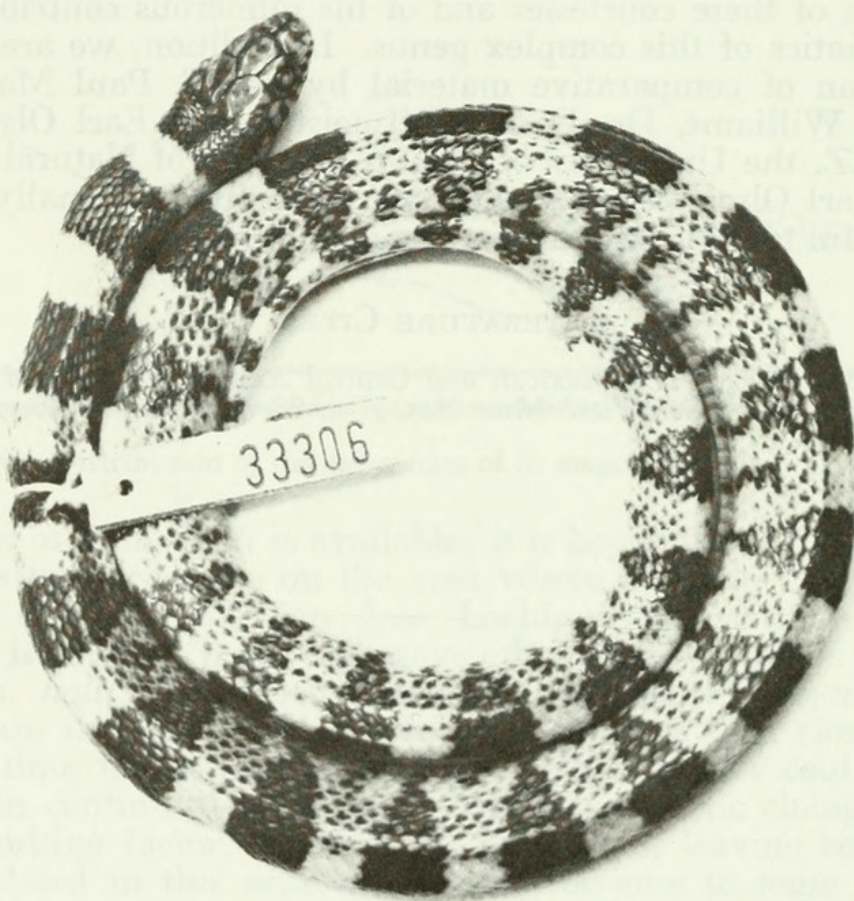


Fig. 1. Dorsal view of *Rhinocheilus l. lecontei* from Carbon County, Utah.

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into the Upper Colorado River Basin and is the first specimen taken in Utah east of the Wasatch mountains. It represents a range extension of approximately 175 miles north of previous records for southeastern Utah. Known locality records for Utah are plotted in Fig. 2.

The above specimen, a female, from Carbon County (Fig. 1), is now at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (BYU 33306). It is an example of the *lecontei* phase of this species as defined by Shannon and Humphery (1963) and Tanner and Jorgensen (1963). The pattern in alcohol is 35 dark slate-gray saddles and 35 cream-

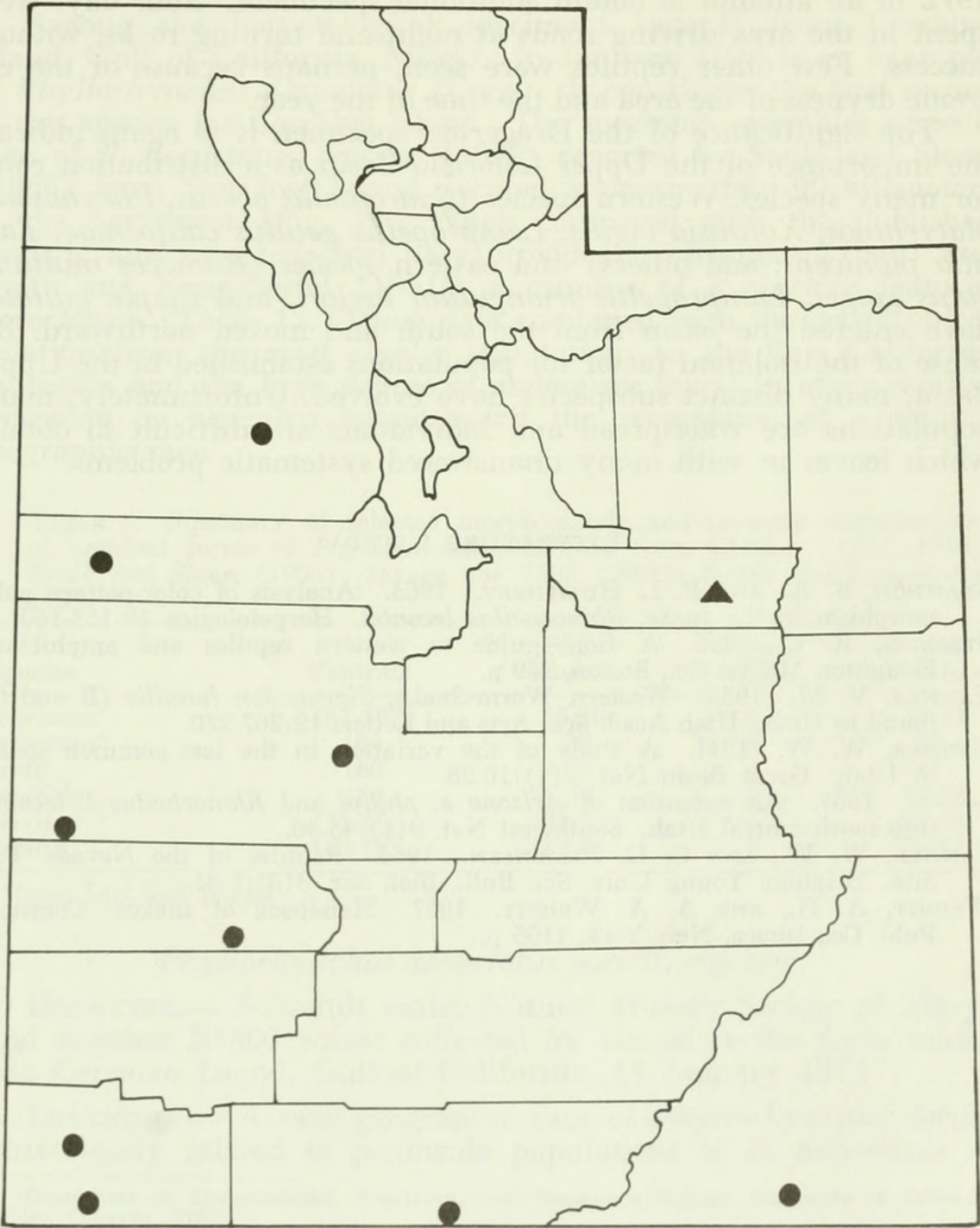


Fig. 2. Locality records of *Rhinocheilus l. lecontei* in Utah (solid circles). The Carbon County specimen is represented by the solid triangle.

colored saddles. The following scale counts were noted: ventrals 205; caudals 34; scales in 25-23-19 rows; upper labials 8; lower labials 9; preoculars 1; postoculars 2; loreals 1; prefrontals 1; internasals 1; right temporals 1+3+2; left temporals 2+3+2. The caudal number of 34 is apparently the lowest ever recorded for this species: Wright and Wright (1957) record a low of 41, and the lowest number reported by Tanner (1941) in specimens from Utah was 43. Additional specimens are needed from eastern Utah to determine the significance of this low ventral count.

The senior author visited the Dragerton locality during August 1972 in an attempt to obtain additional specimens. Four days were spent in the area driving roads at night and turning rocks, without success. Few other reptiles were seen, perhaps because of the extreme dryness of the area and the time of the year.

The significance of the Dragerton specimen is to again indicate the importance of the Upper Colorado Basin as a distribution route for many species. Western species (*Sauromalus obesus*, *Phrynosoma platyrhinos*, *Xantusia vigilis*, *Lampropeltis getulus californiae*, *Tantilla planiceps*, and others) and eastern species (*Eumeces multivirgatus gagei*, *Lampropeltis triangulum taylori*, and *Elaple guttata*) have entered the basin from the south and moved northward. Because of the isolation factor for populations established in the Upper Basin, many distinct subspecies have evolved. Unfortunately, many populations are widespread and individuals are difficult to obtain, which leaves us with many unanswered systematic problems.

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