



*Crotalus adamanteus.*

*Sera pinx.*

*F. S. Duval, Lith. Phila.*



CROTALUS ADAMANTEUS.—*Beauvais*.*Plate II.*

CHARACTERS. Head very large, triangular, rounded in front, flattened above, covered with plates in front and with scales behind, and on the vertex; a deep pit between the eye and nostril; upper jaw furnished with fangs; body above dark brown or dusky, marked with a series of large, regularly rhomboidal spots, continuous, and extending from the head to the extremity of the tail; abdomen dirty yellowish-white. Pl. 172. Caud. Pl. 25. Rattles variable in number.

SYNONYMES. *Crotalus adamanteus*, *Beauvais*, Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc., vol. iv. p. 368.

*Crotalus rhombifer*, *Latreille*, Hist. Nat. Rept., tom. iii. p. 197.

*Crotalus rhombifer*, *Daudin*, Hist. Nat. des Rept., tom. v. p. 323, pl. lx. fig. 22.

*Crotalus durissus*, *Daudin*, Gen. Zool., vol. iii. p. 233, fig. 89, not the description.

*Crotalus rhombifer*, *Merrem*, Versuch eines Syst. der Amphib., p. 157.

*Crotalus horridus*, *Harlan*, Med. and Phys. Res., p. 133.

DESCRIPTION. The head is enormously large, triangular, but rounded in front; covered with plates anteriorly, and with scales posteriorly and on the vertex. The rostral plate is small, triangular, larger below, narrowed above; the frontal plates are small and quadrilateral. There are two nasal plates; the anterior large, quadrilateral, and concave on its posterior margin; the posterior irregularly triangular, lunated in front to complete the nostril. The superior orbital plates are oval and large, the greatest extent being in the antero-posterior direction, with their outer margins greatly projecting. There are two anterior orbital plates; the upper larger and quadrilateral, the lower smaller. The inferior and posterior walls of the orbit are made up with small plates.



The nostrils are large, lateral, and near the snout; the pit between the orbit and nostrils is remarkably large. The eyes are large, the pupil elliptical, vertical and dark; the iris light gray, with a tinge of yellow.

The mouth is large, the upper jaw furnished with poisonous fangs, and covered externally with twelve labial plates, all of which are quadrilateral, the largest in front. The neck is remarkably small and contracted; the body elongated, very thick, even to the tail; above it is covered with scales, approaching an hexagonal form, and strongly carinated on the vertebral line, less so near the abdomen, which is covered with very large plates. The tail is short and thick, with scales and plates below, and sustains a greater or less number of rattles.

COLOUR. The head is very dark brown above, with a light coloured line descending from near the snout to the angle of the mouth; above this is a broad black vitta, reaching from the orbit of the eye nearly to the neck; and above this again is a white line of the same extent and direction. The neck and body are a dusky-brown, sometimes tinged with a dusky-green—indeed the whole colour of this animal is singularly dingy—the body is marked with a series of regular rhombs, of the darkest brown, lighter towards the middle; each rhomb is bordered with a margin of dirty white; these gradually disappear towards the tail, and their place is supplied by dusky bars, which in the end also disappear, so that the tail is dusky near the rattles.

DIMENSIONS. Length of head,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches; greatest breadth of head,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches; circumference of the neck, 4 inches; length of body, 60 inches; length of tail,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches; length of rattles, 3 inches. In the individual here described, there were 172 abdominal plates, and 25 sub-caudal.

HABITS. The *Crotalus adamanteus* chooses for its abode damp and shady places, keeping constantly near the water, from which circumstance it is commonly called the "Water-rattle," though there is no evidence of its taking to the water in search of prey.



**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.** Its range seems very limited; as hitherto it has never been found north of Carolina, where it is common on the sea-board; it abounds too in East Florida, but westward beyond that I have no evidence of its existence.

**GENERAL REMARKS.** The *Crotalus adamanteus* is the largest of our Rattlesnakes, reaching even to the length of eight feet. The individual from which the accompanying plate was taken, had reached the length of nearly six feet, and I have seen others over seven feet long; a more disgusting and terrific animal cannot be imagined than this; its dusky colour, bloated body, and sinister eyes of sparkling grey and yellow, with the projecting orbital plates, combine to form an expression of sullen ferocity unsurpassed in the brute creation.

Palisot de Beauvais was the first who distinguished this serpent from the *Crotalus durissus*, and gave it the name, which has here been retained.

Latreille next speaks of a skin of this animal, procured in Carolina, and given him by Bosc. At first he seems to consider it a new species, under the name *Crotalus rhombifer*, but he ends by saying it is identical with the *Crotalus horridus*.

To Daudin belongs the merit of having first fully and accurately described the animal now under consideration. Beauvais's description, though separating this species from the Banded Rattlesnake, must amount to no more than "indications for the establishment of a new species." Daudin's account of the animal is very accurate, and was taken from the skin of one four feet six inches in length, found by Bosc in the United States.

It is not a little remarkable, that after so correct a description and such judicious remarks as those of Daudin, this animal should still have been overlooked, not only by European, but by American naturalists. This can only be accounted for by supposing they confounded it with the *Crotalus horridus*, to which

its colour, on a superficial examination, appears similar; but, observed attentively, there will be found enough, even in this, to distinguish the two animals. The *Crotalus horridus* has a black band across the forehead, embracing the anterior part of the superior orbital plates; behind this, and reaching through the centre of these plates, is a white bar across the vertex. Another black band runs from the eye to the angle of the mouth; two large bands, of similar colour, begin behind the occiput, and run along the neck and back to the distance of about one-fifth of the whole animal; these latter bands are of the breadth of two scales and a half; two other narrower bands, and of the same length and colour, depart from the temples; while the *Crotalus adamanteus* is dusky-brown, without any black marks on the head, and has the rhomboidal spots, beginning at the back of the occiput, and continuing along the whole extent of the animal to near the extremity of the tail, which is banded. Besides the difference in colour between these two animals, there is a difference in the plates about the head. In the *Crotalus horridus* the nasal plates are very small; the frontals are triangular and also very small, while the vertex between the orbits is covered with plates or scales much larger than in the *Crotalus adamanteus* or *Crotalus durissus*. It is highly probable that the figure of the *Crotalus durissus* of Shaw represents our animal, but the description refers certainly to the *Crotalus durissus*, and it is mostly taken from Catesby.





Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Crotalus adamanteus – Beauvais." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 3, 17–20. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326793>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/24893>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326793>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/326793>

**Holding Institution**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Sponsored by**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.