



Trigonocephalus atrofuscus.

J. H. Richard, del.

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TRIGONOCEPHALUS ATRO-FUSCUS.—*Troost*.*Plate IX.*

CHARACTERS. Head large, sub-triangular, broad behind, smaller and truncated in front, covered with plates to the occiput, behind which are small, smooth, hexagonal scales; a deep pit between the eye and nostril; upper jaw armed with fangs; body above dusky, variegated with dark brown spots. Pl. 133. Caud. Pl. at basis, 25. Sc. 18 at apex.

SYNONYMES. *Toxicophis atro-fuscus*, *Troost*, Ann. Lyc. Nat. Hist. N. Y., vol. iii. p. 181.

DESCRIPTION. The head is large, broad behind, narrow and truncated anteriorly. The vertical plate is irregularly pentagonal, with curvated sides, and an acute angle behind; the superior orbital are large, and project over the eye, and are irregularly hexagonal, rounded externally; there are four occipital plates, the two anterior large, pentagonal, with rounded sides and very acute angles forward; the posterior smaller, quadrilateral, and irregularly rounded; the frontal plates are more or less pentagonal, approaching the hexagonal form; the anterior frontal are smaller, and somewhat trapezoidal, with curved margins; the rostral is irregularly hexagonal, with curved margins, broader below, narrower above. There are two nasal plates, trapezoidal, one most incurvated before, and the other most so behind, for the nostrils. Of the two anterior orbital plates, the upper is oblong-quadrilateral, the posterior part concave; the inferior is triangular, its apex to the orbit, and its base forming part of the pit between the eye and nostril, which is completed by the second and third labial, and a small plate that rests on the third labial; the inferior orbital plate is single, long, narrow; there are three posterior

orbital plates, rhomboidal, of which the superior is largest, and forms most of the orbit behind. The upper jaw is covered with eight quadrilateral, labial plates.

The nostrils are large, lateral, and near the snout. The eye is rather large, the pupil elliptical, black, and the iris grey, tinged with yellow. The posterior part of the head is covered with small hexagonal and not carinated scales, in which it differs from the *Trigonocephalus piscivorus*. The neck is greatly contracted, and the body, though elongated, is thick to the tail, which is short, cylindrical, slender, and terminates in a horny tip. The superior surface of the back and tail is covered by elongated, oval, and deeply carinated scales, with small points at their base; the abdominal plates are large.

COLOUR. The upper part of the head is dark brown, bordered with grey, which becomes lighter behind the eyes, with a dark longitudinal spot reaching from the orbit to the tympanal bones; the upper lip is white, terminating near the tip in grey. The colour of the body is dusky, variegated with brown spots of smoky-grey, broadest on the back, and disappear entirely near the tail, which is black. The throat is marked with black and white, the latter colour predominating; the belly is also irregularly spotted with black and white, darkest towards the tail, and in all parts the white is minutely dotted with black.

DIMENSIONS. Length of head, $1\frac{2}{3}$ inches; breadth of head, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches; length of body, 20 inches; length of tail, $3\frac{2}{3}$ inches: total length, 25 inches. In the specimen here described, there were 133 abdominal plates, and 25 sub-caudal, near the base of the tail, and 18 bifid plates near its apex.

HABITS. The *Trigonocephalus atro-fuscus* is always found on dry land, in the pine barrens and similar places, and never in water or swamps. "It is a vicious animal, and its bite is very dangerous."

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. This reptile has as yet only been observed in Tennessee.

GENERAL REMARKS. I have never seen the *Trigonocephalus atro-fuscus*, and have therefore given the above description of the animal entirely from notes furnished me by my friend Dr. Troost, of Nashville. It seems, however, closely allied to the *Trigonocephalus contortrix* in its habits, and in the arrangement of scales not carinated on the neck, and is in fact called in Tennessee Highland Moccassin.

II.—*Venomous Serpents, with fangs fixed, and permanently erect.*

FAMILY. ELAPSOIDEA.

CHARACTERS.

1. The head is not distinct from the body, and the jaws are not dilatable, in consequence of the shortness of the tympanal bones.
2. There are teeth both in the upper maxillary and palatine bones, besides which the former is armed on each side and near its anterior extremity with a single, strong, conical, perforated, fixed, and permanently erect fang.
3. The deep pits between the eye and nostril, so conspicuous in the last family, are wanting in this.
4. The body is cylindrical and very long, with broad plates on the abdomen; the tail is short, thick, conical, and covered below with bifid plates or scales. One genus of this family only inhabits the United States.



Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Trigonocephalus atro-fuscus – Troost." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 3, 43–47. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326800>.

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