

THE PETERSON FIELD GUIDE SERIES

A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America

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SECOND EDITION

Sponsored by the National Audubon Society
and National Wildlife Federation

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON

1975

SOME TEXAS SNAKE SPECIALTIES

TRANS-PECOS RAT SNAKE, *Elaphe subocularis*

Head unicolored; black stripes on neck; dark blotches posteriorly. (Western Texas)

Map Text
151 197

GRAY-BANDED KINGSNAKE,

Lampropeltis mexicana alterna

Gray crossbands; varying amounts of red or orange (these colors sometimes absent). (Western Texas)

Dark phase: Gray crossbands very dark.

154 210

TEXAS LYRE SNAKE,

Trimorphodon biscutatus wilkinsoni

Dark brown saddles on a light brown (or gray) ground color. Pupil elliptical in daylight. (Chihuahuan Desert)

171 218

NORTHERN CAT-EYED SNAKE,

Leptodeira septentrionalis septentrionalis

Body crossed by bold black (or dark brown) saddles; ground color often yellow, but variable from cream to reddish tan. Pupil elliptical in daylight. (Extreme southern Texas)

172 218

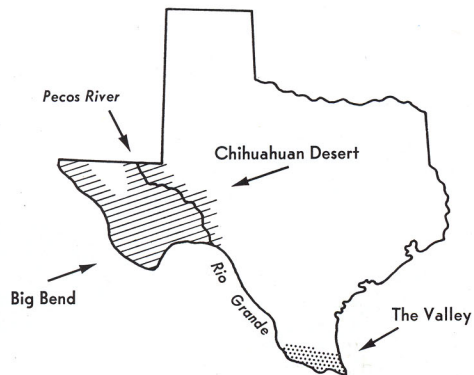
SPECKLED RACER,

Drymobius margaritiferus margaritiferus

Scales with light centers; dark stripe behind eye; a few middorsal rows of scales with faint keels. (Extreme southern Texas)

142 186

Fig. 59. Several Mexican snakes enter Texas in the Chihuahuan Desert of the Pecos River and Big Bend regions, and in The Valley of the Rio Grande in the extreme south.



TRANS-PECOS
RAT SNAKE



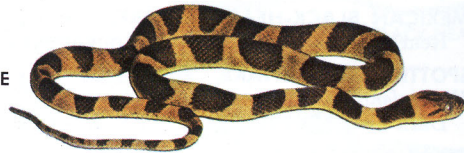
3 pattern variations

GRAY-BANDED
KINGSNAKE



TEXAS LYRE SNAKE

NORTHERN
CAT-EYED SNAKE



SPECKLED RACER

longitudinal dusky stripes. Belly yellowish with squarish brown blotches. Scales *smooth*; anal *single*. *Young*: Strongly spotted; about 9–11 in. (23–28 cm) at hatching.

A resident of grassland prairies, open woodlands, and (farther east) patches of prairie and savanna in the midst of essentially forested country.

Similar species: (1) Great Plains Rat Snake bears a strong superficial resemblance to Prairie Kingsnake, but Rat Snakes have *keeled* scales and *divided* anals. (2) Glossy Snakes have plain white bellies. (3) In Milk Snakes the reddish blotches or rings are boldly surrounded by black, and there are *black* markings on belly.

Range: W. Indiana, cen. Kentucky, nw. Mississippi, and Louisiana west through most of Kansas, Oklahoma, and e. Texas.

Map 155

MOLE SNAKE

Pls. 29, 31

Lampropeltis calligaster rhombomaculata

Identification: 30–40 in. (76–102 cm); record 47 in. (119.4 cm).

A shiny, *smooth*-scaled serpent that may be patterned or not! Typical specimens have about 55 rather small, *well-separated*, reddish-brown, dark-edged spots down back and tail, and smaller and fainter spots on sides of body. The ground color is light to dark brown, sometimes with a greenish tinge, but changing to a more yellowish hue on sides of body. Older specimens may lose virtually all their markings, resulting in a plain “brown kingsnake.” Dusky lengthwise stripes may also develop, as in Prairie Kingsnake. Belly white or yellowish and checked, spotted, or clouded with brown. Scales *smooth*; anal *single*. *Young*: Boldly marked with well-separated brown or red spots (see Plate 31); 2 lengthwise dark streaks on neck; about 8 or 9 in. (20–23 cm) at hatching.

An accomplished burrower often turned up by the plow or during excavations. Occasionally appears on the surface, especially after heavy spring or summer rains. Ranges from Coastal Plain to at least the lower parts of Appalachians. Habitats include thickets, woodlots, cultivated fields, and even back yards in some suburban areas.

Similar species: (1) Corn Snake has *divided* anal, *keeled* scales, and underside of tail is usually striped (Fig. 43, p. 190). (2) In Milk Snakes the dorsal blotches are large and close together, and belly is boldly marked with black.

Range: Vicinity of Baltimore, Maryland, to the Florida panhandle; west to cen. Tennessee and s. Mississippi. Map 155

GRAY-BANDED KINGSLAKE

Pl. 32

Lampropeltis mexicana alterna

Identification: 20–36 in. (51–91 cm); record 47½ in. (120.7 cm).

The gray crossbands on the body are the most constant feature

of this highly variable snake. Other markings may consist solely of narrow black crossbands, or the black may be expanded, sometimes greatly, and it may include varying amounts of red or orange pigment. The narrow white lines bordering the black areas may be strikingly evident. Some specimens tend toward melanism like the darkest of the three varieties shown on Plate 32. Belly with black blotches that may fuse together. Eyes slightly protuberant; head noticeably wider than neck. Scales *smooth*; anal *single*. *Young*: Similar to adults, about 10 in. (25 cm) at hatching.

This resident of the Chihuahuan Desert region lives in arid to semihumid habitats ranging from desert flats and canyons into mountains. Once considered rare, it is now known to be abundant, but is seldom seen because of its secretive and nocturnal habits. Food includes lizards, snakes, frogs, and small rodents. This handsome serpent has a foul-smelling musk and a tendency to jerk spasmodically when handled.

Similar species: (1) In Texas Lyre Snake pupil of eye is vertically elliptical in daylight, and anal plate is *divided*. (2) Milk Snakes have black-bordered red rings separated by areas of white or yellow (not gray).

Range: Trans-Pecos region east to Edwards Co., Texas; south to Durango and extr. n. Zacatecas. Mexican subspecies.

Map 154

Scarlet, Long-nosed, and Short-tailed Snakes: Genera *Cemophora*, *Rhinocheilus*, and *Stilosoma*

THESE serpents are allied to the members of the genus *Lampropeltis*, and the resemblance of the scarlet snakes in coloration and pattern to the ringed milk snakes is strikingly evident. Even the long-nosed snakes are similar, despite their speckled markings. The ranges of two of the genera are mutually exclusive (except in southern Texas), with *Cemophora* in the Southeast and *Rhinocheilus* in the West. The races of the latter extend, collectively, to California and Baja California and south to San Luis Potosí and Nayarit. The curiously attenuated *Stilosoma* is endemic to Florida.

SCARLET SNAKE *Cemophora coccinea* **Pls. 30, 31**

Identification: 14–20 in. (36–51 cm); record 32¼ in. (81.9 cm).

The Coral Snake “mimic” with the plain whitish (or yellowish) belly. Snout *red* and pointed. The pattern is clean-cut in younger specimens; in adults, dark pigment may appear as small