

THE PRESENCE OF THE SCARLET
KINGSSNAKE, LAMPROPELTIS TRI-
ANGULUM ELAPSOIDES HOLBROOK
(REPTILIA, SERPENTES, COLU-
BRIDAE), IN THE FLORIDA KEYS

For the past 48 years, the presence of Lampropeltis triangulum in the Florida keys has rested upon one specimen (UMMZ 67741) collected on Key West before or during 1929. Duellman and Schwartz (1958:304) considered this record "doubtful" because, "despite intensive collecting" in the keys, no additional specimens were available. In a more recent listing of snakes inhabiting the Florida keys, Paulson (1966) omitted L. triangulum completely. Williams (1970) examined the specimen and included Key West on his distribution map but listed it as Dade rather than Monroe County. Conant (1975) is the most recent authority to include Key West in the distribution of the species.

On the evening of 29 November 1976, Brian Sharp and I collected an adult male L.t. elapsoides (USNM 204238) 21.3 km NE of Key Largo on Largo Key, Monroe Co., Florida. This locality lies within a Black Ironwood (Krugiodendron fereum) dominated tropical hardwood hammock with a substrate of coral-limestone and scattered loose rock.

Williams (1970) illustrates variation in ventral counts for L. triangulum in which a cline is demonstrated along the Atlantic coast. Ventral counts decrease in a southward direction from New Jersey to Florida with a mean of 170.7 (N=22) in south Florida males. USNM 204238 from Largo Key exhibits a very low ventral count (157) and probably represents the terminus of that cline. The relatively high number of ventrals (176) on UMMZ 67741 from Key West tends to relate it to populations farther north.

Coluber constrictor (Auffenberg, 1955) and Storeria dekayi (Paulson, 1966) occurring on the lower keys have also been shown to exhibit affinities closer to northern populations than to the less-distant southern mainland. Paulson (1966) discussed the possible significance of this character displacement.

Although the Key West specimen is probably valid, it is doubtful whether L. triangulum still occurs on the heavily developed island. It is possible that this small, secretive, and largely nocturnal snake has been overlooked on other keys by collectors. Keys which support extensive pineland and/or hammock vegetation, may provide sufficient habitat for the species.

In light of the above evidence, Lampropeltis triangulum should now

be included in all faunal lists of the upper Florida keys.

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