

**DISTRIBUTION EXTENSION AND NEW STATE  
RECORD FOR *MICRURUS LEMNISCATUS DIUTIUS*  
BURGER, 1955 (REPTILIA: ELAPIDAE) IN  
VENEZUELA**

- Taxonomy / *Taxonomía*  
 Biogeography / *Biogeografía*  
 Ecology / *Ecología*  
 Natural History / *Historia Natural*

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In spite of the taxonomy and species richness of snakes in Venezuela, it is relatively well known that many aspects like autoecology, systematics and biogeography still are at their initial stages. All these elements are fundamental to plan and execute effective and long-time conservation plans, with distribution range extensions of the species being perhaps the aspect of more rapid growing, thanks to the diverse inventory programs at a national level.

In Venezuela, the snakes of the genus *Micrurus* are represented by twelve species; namely, *M. circinalis* (Duméril et Bibron, 1854), *M. dissololeucus* (Cope, 1860), *M. dumerillii* (Jan, 1858), *M. hemprichii* (Jan, 1858), *M. isozonus* (Cope, 1860), *M. lemniscatus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *M. meridensis* Roze, 1989, *M. mipartitus* (Duméril, Bibron et Duméril, 1854), *M. nattereri* Schmidt, 1952, *M. psyches* (Daudin, 1803), *M. remotus* Roze, 1987 and *M. spixi* Wagler, 1824). Those inhabit a great variety of ecosystems from semiarid environments and savannas, to cloud mountain forests, from sea level to nearly 2500 meters of elevation (Roze 1966, 1996; Lancini 1979, 1982; Campbell y Lamar 1989, 2004; La Marca and Soriano 2004).

*Micrurus lemniscatus* has a wide distribution in South America East of the Andes in Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam (without collected samples, according to Campbell and Lamar 2004), French Guyana, Ecuador, Brazil, Perú, Bolivia and Paraguay (report for the later country requires confirmation, according to Campbell and Lamar 2004) and the Trinidad Island. In Venezuela it has been reported for Amazonas, Barinas, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro and Monagas States (Roze 1966, 1996; Campbell and Lamar 1989, 2004; Gorzula and Señaris 1999; Barrio and Calcaño 2003).

On December 5th 2006, coming from Parcelamiento El Cují, Parroquia Miguel Peña, on road from La Mariposa to El Socorro, near the village of Tocuyito, Municipio Libertador, Carabobo State (Ca. 10°04'N, 68°05'W), to the Serpentary at the Aquarium of Valencia arrived a juvenile specimen of *M. lemniscatus* (Fig. 1) that represents the first State record and the northernmost locality in the general and regional area. Other species of the genus *Micrurus* known for Carabobo State include *M. d. dissololeucus*, *M. dumerillii venezuelensis*, *M. isozonus* and *M. mipartitus rozei* (Roze 1966, 1996; Lancini 1979; Campbell and Lamar 1989, 2004; per. obs.).

Our specimen, a non-sexed juvenile, had 11 body triads, and one and one third on the tail. All the scale counts correspond to this species, with 239 ventrals and 38 subcaudals. The specimen had white rings on the body that vary from 2 to 3 dorsal scales on the vertebral line and from 2 to 4 in the basal region (at the margin of ventral scales). All these characters correspond to the subspecies *Micrurus lemniscatus diutius* (cf. Roze 1996, Campbell and Lamar 2004).

The new locality expands the known range of distribution for this species approximately 294 Km to the northeast of the geographically closest locality, Barinitas (Barrio and Calcaño 2003), in Barinas State. Besides our specimen from Carabobo State, it is worth noting that two adult specimens were observed by us, but neither photographed nor preserved, coming from Tinaquillo, Cojedes State (9°56'N and 68°19'W), a locality that is 29.7 Km southeast to the locality of our specimen; this locality also represents a new (although unvouchered) record for Cojedes State (Fig. 1). These new records document that this species could be more widely distributed north of the Orinoco River than previously known, as it was expected by Campbell and Lamar (2004). The finding of these specimens in the central region of Venezuela fills the existing gap between the Delta Amacuro and Bolívar States to the East and the Andean piedmont to the West (see Roze 1996, Barrio-Amorós and Calcaño 2003, Campbell and Lamar 2004).



FIG. 1. Juvenile of *Micrurus lemniscatus diutius* from La Mariposa, Tocuyito, Carabobo State. Specimen not preserved. Photo by M. Natera-Mumaw.

Juvenil de *Micrurus lemniscatus diutius* de La Mariposa, Tocuyito, Estado Carabobo. Ejemplar no preservado. Foto por M. Natera-Mumaw.

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