

Ophiodes intermedius Boulenger, 1894 (Squamata: Anguillidae): Uruguay distribution extension with conservation comments

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ABSTRACT: A new locality for *Ophiodes intermedius* is reported for Uruguay. The new record at Punta Gorda, Departamento Colonia, is the first departmental record, and extends the known distribution in Uruguay approximately 150 km to the south. This taxon is restricted to the fast developing western littoral of Uruguay, and a frequent assessment of its regional conservation status is recommended.

Ophiodes intermedius Boulenger, 1894 is present in Argentina in provincias Buenos Aires, Chaco, Chubut, Córdoba, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Formosa, Jujuy, La Pampa, Mendoza, Misiones, Río Negro, Salta, San Luis, Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero and Tucumán (Ceí 1993; Herrera *et al.* 2001; Cabrera 2009). It is found also in southwestern Paraguay and in the wet plains of southeastern Bolivia (Ceí 1993; Langstroth 2005; Cabrera 2009). In Uruguay it is recorded in Departamentos Paysandú, Río Negro and Salto (Achaval 2001; Carreira *et al.* 2005).

On February 2010, during a research project “Conservación de fauna en el encuentro de los ríos Paraná, Uruguay y de la Plata”, three *O. intermedius* were collected on a pitfall trap array in the banks of the Río Uruguay at Punta Gorda, Departamento Colonia (33°55'5.24" S, 58°24'37.08" W). The vegetation consists of woodland and shrublands (both hydrophilous and psammophilous), coastal grasslands and sandy plains (Fagúndez and Lezama 2005), with some areas urbanized or in pine plantations (Colina and Arrieta pers. obs.). The *Ophiodes* specimens are deposited in the herpetological collection of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, Montevideo (MNHN). Selected data of the specimens were recorded: MNHN 9393: female, SVL 172 mm, TL 88 mm (tail regenerated) – 6 scales on posterior limbs, 25 scales around mid-body, 150 dorsal scales; MNHN 9394: female, SVL 170 mm, TL 244 mm – 6 scales on posterior limbs, 25 scales around mid-body, 151 dorsal scales; MNHN 9395: male, SVL 171 mm, TL 171 mm – 7 scales on posterior limbs, 25 scales around mid-body, 144 dorsal scales. All specimens showed the typical coloration and pattern of *Ophiodes intermedius*; however MNHN 9395 is poorly preserved, and has lost scales, leaving the color pattern not clearly visible on the posterior third of the body.

This is the first record south of the Río Negro and the first for the coastal zone on the Río de la Plata, which starts at the Punta Gorda parallel (Law N° 14.145 from 01/25/1974 - “Tratado de límites del Río de la Plata y su

frente Marítimo”). The range of the species is extended about 150 km south of the previously known southernmost locality (Departamento Río Negro, Figure 1). It is possible that the specimens arrived from the river on floating vegetation (from northern Uruguay or Argentina), but we consider this unlikely because previous examinations of floating vegetation have never reported *Ophiodes* (e.g. Ihering 1911; Devincenzi 1925; Achaval *et al.* 1979; Skuk 1980; Carreira *et al.* 2005).

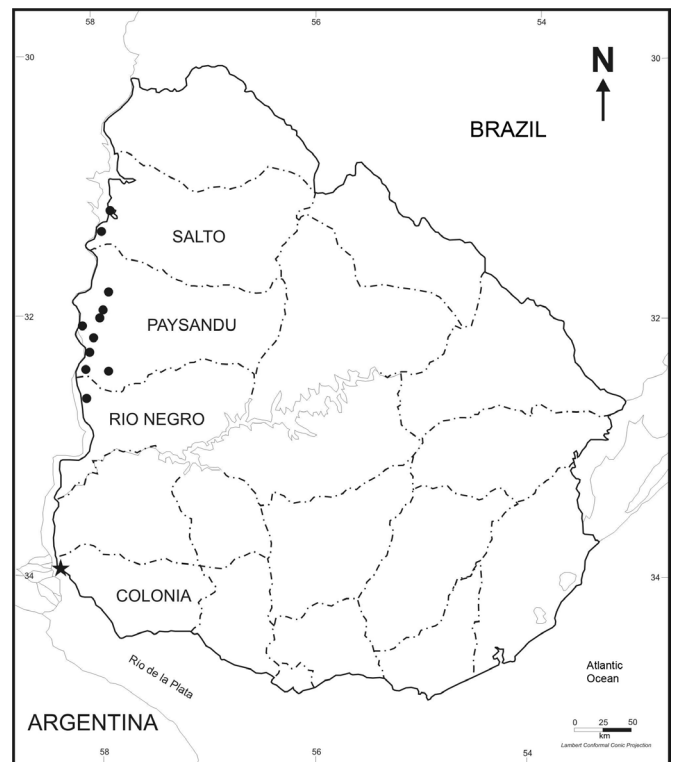


FIGURE 1. Circles represent the historic distribution of *Ophiodes intermedius* in Uruguay (Carreira *et al.* 2005). The star represents the new report (33°55'5.24" S, 58°24'37.08" W) for Punta Gorda, Departamento Colonia, Uruguay.

Habitat destruction and fragmentation as a consequence of urbanization and the development of agricultural macro-industries (forestry, soy and rice) have been identified as the main negative impacts on reptiles and amphibians in Uruguay (Canavero *et al.* 2010). In their study, *O. intermedius* was recognized as a species of Least Concern (LC), and the new record reported here supports this status because of the extension of its known regional distribution. However, we consider that this taxon needs to be frequently evaluated, because the distribution in Uruguay is restricted to the west coast, and development there can rapidly negatively impact reptile populations. *Crotalus durissus terrificus* (Crotalidae) is presently restricted to the north of Uruguay (Carreira *et al.* 2005), *Cnemidophorus charrua* (Teiidae) is probably extinct (Cabrera and Carreira 2009), and *Liolaemus wiegmannii* (Liolaemidae) has had local extinctions reported as a result of fragmentation (Maneyro and Carreira 2006). This report clearly demonstrates the lack of information on these vertebrates in Uruguay, and underscores the need for medium and long term surveys in the whole country.

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