

First record of *Macropholidus ruthveni* Noble 1921 (Squamata: Gymnophthalmidae) from Ecuador

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The gymnophthalmid lizard clade *Macropholidus*, traditionally ranked as a genus, was recently defined by Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara (2013) as the largest crown clade containing *Macropholidus ruthveni* Noble 1921, but not *Pholidobolus montium* Peters 1863. This phylogenetic definition (de Queiroz and Gauthier, 1994) is based on a phylogenetic tree obtained from analyses of mitochondrial DNA nucleotide sequence data (Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara, 2013), and is in conflict with previous non-phylogenetic definitions of both *Pholidobolus* and *Macropholidus* (Montanucci, 1973; Reeder, 1996) based on morphological data. In contrast to *Pholidobolus*, members of *Macropholidus* have a single transparent palpebral disc in the lower eyelid and lack a lateral fold between fore and hind limbs (Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara, 2013).

Macropholidus lizards occur between 800 and 3000 m within a region of relatively low-elevation mountains in the Andes of southern Ecuador and northern Peru, known as the Huancabamba Depression (Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara, 2013). As defined by Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara (2013), *Macropholidus* contains four species (*M. annectens*, *M. ataktolepis*, *M. huancabambae*, *M. ruthveni*) of which only *M. annectens* has been reported for Ecuador. *Macropholidus ruthveni* is currently known from both humid and dry Andean

montane forests in northern Peru at elevations between 800-2500 m (Cadle and Chuna, 1995; P. Venegas pers. comm.).

Herein, we present the first record of *M. ruthveni* for Ecuador, based on a male collected at Reserva Natural Tumbesia - La Ceiba, Zapotillo, Province of Loja in southwestern Ecuador (Fig. 1; S 4.2746, W 80.3158; WGS84; 477 m). This specimen (QCAZ 13095) was collected in September 2014 in a pitfall trap, and is housed at the herpetological collection of Museo de Zoología, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Quito. It was identified as *M. ruthveni* by having a paired series of enlarged middorsal scale rows continuous to the base of the tail, small temporals, and by lacking prefrontal scales (Cadle and Chuna, 1995).

In addition to morphological diagnosability as *M. ruthveni*, the new specimen from Ecuador (GenBank accession number KP874950) has a genetic distance of 0.096 when compared with a specimen from Peru (GenBank accession number KC894382) for the mitochondrial gene ND4. This value is lower than the lowest interspecific distance value (0.153) among species of *Macropholidus* (Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara, 2013).

Reserva Natural Tumbesia - La Ceiba is part of the program “Socio Bosque” started by the Ecuadorian government seven years ago, and includes 57 hectares of protected forest in an area that used to be disturbed by goats. This locality lies approximately 210 km NW from the nearest record (CORBIDI 4281, Región Lambayeque, Perú) of *M. ruthveni* reported in the literature (Torres-Carvajal and Mafla-Endara, 2013).

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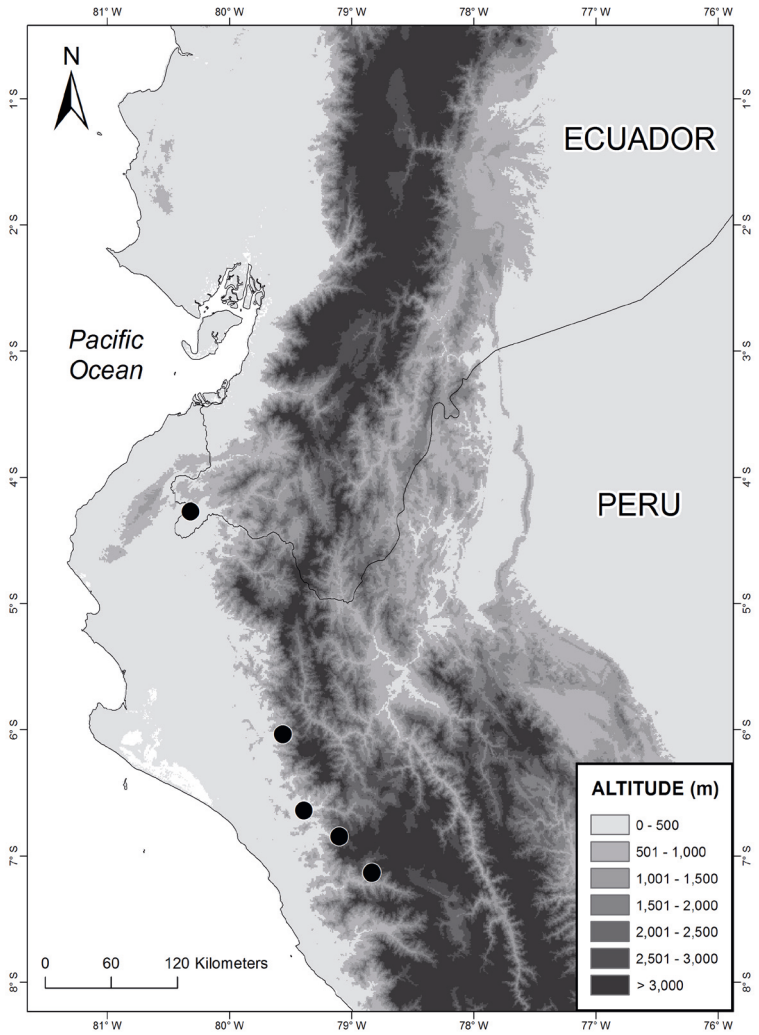


Figure 1. Distribution of *Macropholidus ruthveni* in Ecuador and Peru, South America.

of the specimen reported herein. Paul Székely received funding from Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación del Ecuador (SENESCYT) through the Prometeo Project.

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