

North American herpetology

Vol. 4

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1840

CROTALUS OREGANUS

Characters. Head very large, triangular, truncated anteriorly; covered above with plates, and with scales on the vertex and occiput, with a broad white bar between the orbits, and two others on the side of the head; one begins above the pit, the other below, and are confluent behind the angle of the mouth; body thick, and marked above with two zigzag white lines, that form a series of trapezoidal or triangular dusky spots, with white margins.

Description. The head is very large, triangular, broad behind, narrow and truncated, or slightly rounded in front, and is proportionably longer than in other Rattlesnakes; above it is covered with plates anteriorly, and with scales on the vertex and occiput; the rostral plate is large and triangular, with its apex slightly truncate and turned upwards; the nasal plates are two in number, the anterior is quadrilateral and very large; the posterior semilunar and smaller, with a concavity in front for the nostrils; the superior orbital plate is large, irregularly quadrilateral, and projects over the eye; there are two anterior orbitals, nearly quadrilateral, and two posterior orbitals, nearly of the same size and form, with three inferior orbital plates, oblong and narrow; in front of the anterior orbital plate, and above the labial range, are several small scales, making the posterior and inferior walls of the deep pit between the eye and the nostril, which is completed above and in front by two large plates; the nostrils are large and placed near the snout, but open laterally and a little upwards;* the margin of the upper jaw is covered with fifteen labial plates, those near the snout are quadrilateral, and those near the angle of the mouth are more elongated. The neck is much contracted, and covered with small carinated scales of less size than those on the vertex, which are smooth.

The body is elongated, but thick, and covered above with carinated hexagonal scales, and with large plates below. The tail is very short, and terminates in several large rattles.

Colour. The head above is ash colour, paler in front, darker behind, with a transverse white line between the orbits; this line is slightly arched forwards, and terminates on each side in the superior orbital plate, passing through its centre; two other white lines are seen to begin, one above, and the other below the nostrils; these lines unite behind the angle of the mouth; the margin of the upper jaw below these lines is dusky.

The body and tail is ash colour above, darker than the head, and marked with two interrupted zigzag white lines, beginning about three inches from the head and terminating at the tail; the lines of the opposite sides frequently run into each other, and thus mark out a series of dusky spots margined with white; these spots vary much, some are trapezoid, while others are rhomboidal, and others again nearly triangular; on the neck and tail, where the lines do not exist, there are only a few rounded dusky spots, bordered with white. The plates of the abdomen and tail are very dusky, with the posterior margin of each white.

Dimensions. Length of head, 9 lines; length of body, 12 ½ inches; length of tail, with rattles. If inches; total length, 15 inches. The specimen here described had 177 broad plates on the abdomen, and 22 under the tail, and 3 large rattles.

Habits. Nothing is known of the habits of the *Crotalus Oreganus*.

Geographical Distribution. This animal was found in the country west of the Rocky Mountains, on the banks of the Oregon or Columbia river.

General Remarks. I have never seen but one specimen of this serpent, and that was furnished me by the celebrated naturalist Mr. Nuttall, who procured it in the Oregon territory. There can be little doubt of its being a new species, as it differs from the *Crotalus horridus* in wanting the black lines along the neck; — from the *Crotalus durissus*, in not being banded; — from the *Crotalus adamanteus*, in having white lines about the head, in the form and arrangement of its vertebral spots and the number of its abdominal plates; — and from the *Crotalus tergeminus*, which of all its colour most resembles, in having scales and not plates on the vertex.

** Of the size of the eye and colour of the iris and pupil, and exact colour of the skin, I can say nothing, as the animal above described had been for a long time preserved in alcohol.*