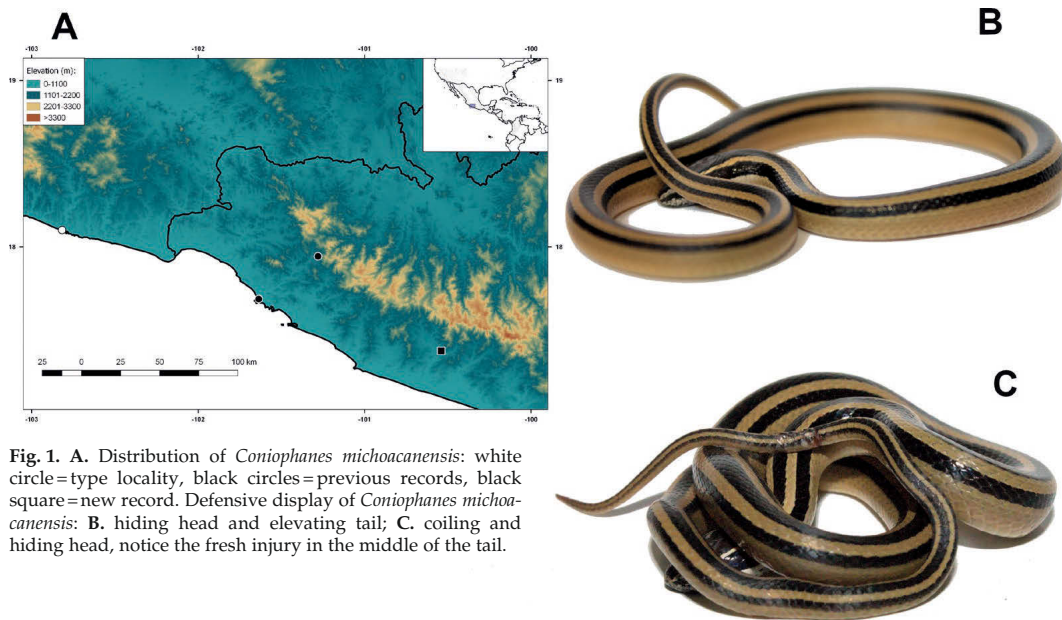


## Scientific note

Notes on defensive display, diet, and geographic distribution of the snake *Coniophanes michoacanensis*

(Squamata, Serpentes, Colubridae, Dipsadinae)

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**Fig. 1.** A. Distribution of *Coniophanes michoacanensis*: white circle = type locality, black circles = previous records, black square = new record. Defensive display of *Coniophanes michoacanensis*: B. hiding head and elevating tail; C. coiling and hiding head, notice the fresh injury in the middle of the tail.

On 26 December 2021 FSPR and FPH collected a juvenile female of *Coniophanes michoacanensis* (211 mm snout-vent length, 79 mm tail length, 163 ventral scales, 85 subcaudal scales) from near El Ocotal (17°22'31.8" N 100°32'26.3" W, 640 m a. s. l.), Municipality of Tecpan de Galeana, Guerrero, Mexico in a grassland surrounded by relicts of pine-oak forest. The specimen was deposited at the herpetological collection of the Museo de Zoología "Alfonso L. Herrera" Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (MZFC 35738). This represents the easternmost locality of the species, extending 103.3 kilometers ESE airline from the nearest published record at 7 km NE of Vallecitos, Zihuatanejo (Mertz et al. 2012) (Fig. 1A).

While handling the specimen we noticed a recurrent behaviour where the snake hid its head under its body, elevated its tail, and tended to coil (Fig. 1B). We continued handling the snake for taking photographs and it eventually formed a coil with its body, always covering its head (Fig. 1C). We noticed that the specimen had a recent injury at about the mid-length of its tail at the level of 47–50<sup>th</sup> subcaudals (Fig. 1C), suggesting a previous encounter with a predator in which it possibly used its tail as a decoy to avoid predation but did not result in tail loss. The occurrence of tail breakage in the related species *C. fissidens* is widespread,

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but the presence of injuries in the tail was very low in a previous study (only four out of 845 examined snakes, Mendelson 1992). There are different points of view of researchers that either support (Slowinski & Savage 1995) or detract (Mendelson 1992) from the hypothesis of multiple tail breaks in Neotropical snakes. However, in the case reported here, we cannot support one or the other since we cannot infer if after the injured part of the tail was lost, another break could be possible. While maintained in captivity the specimen defecated and upon examination of the fecal sample, we found inflorescences (apparently secondarily consumed) and scale remains of the feet and tail of a lizard. Comparisons made against lizard species found in the surroundings made us consider that the food item was a member of the Teiidae family based on paired toe lamellae and rectangular caudal scales with a keel. However, due to the presence of two genera in the region (*Aspidoscelis* and *Holcosus*) distinguished mainly by the presence of enlarged gular scales we are incapable of giving a more precise identification. This agrees with a report made by Harrison (1992) of an unidentifiable teiid found in the stomach content of a *C. piceivittis*.

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