REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

New Records of the Yucatecan Dwarf Short-tailed Snake, *Tantillita canula* (Cope 1875) (Squamata: Colubridae), in Southern Mexico

Daniel Jesús-Espinosa[1], Pedro E. Náhuat-Cervera[2,3], and Fernando M. Contreras-Moreno[4,5]

[1]Grupo de Monitoreo Socioambiental (GMSA), Calle 27 de Febrero #127, Col. San Joaquín, C.P. 86930, Balancán, Tabasco, México (danieljesus_esp@outlook.com)
[2]Departamento de Ecología. Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia, Campus de Ciencias Biológicas y Agropecuarias, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, km 15.5 carretera Mérida-Xmatkuil, Mérida, C. P. 97135, Yucatán, México (pedro.nahuat4@gmail.com [corresponding author])
[3]Ekuneil Península de Yucatán, Calle 52 x 89 y 93, Col. Centro, C.P. 97000, Mérida, Yucatán, México
[4]Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza (WWF México), Calle Puerto Rico S/N, Col. Fundadores, C.P. 24640, Xpujil, Calakmul, Campeche, México (fernandom28@hotmail.com)
[5]Universidad Tecnológica de Calakmul, Km. 2.2 Carretera Xpujil-Dzibalchen, C.P. 24640, Xpujil, Calakmul, Campeche, México

The Yucatán Dwarf Short-tailed Snake (*Tantillita canula*) is a diminutive and uncommon snake (SVL 145 mm, TL 180 mm). The head is slightly distinct from the neck in dorsal view, the eyes are small with round pupils, and the tail is short. Dorsal scales are smooth, and the cloacal plate is divided. Dorsal coloration is brown to tan, with a light vertebral stripe in most individuals. The head is darker with irregular light spots on the snout and parietal scales, and the venter is cream or yellowish (Lee 1996; Heimes 2016).

The ecology and natural history of *T. canula* is poorly understood. It inhabits tropical thorn forests, tropical deciduous forests, and seasonal evergreen forests (Lee 1996; Heimes 2016), is known to be oviparous, have secretive terrestrial and fossorial habits, and probably is nocturnal or crepuscular (Lee 1996; Calderón-Mandujano et al. 2010; Díaz-Gamboa et al. 2020). It feeds on small invertebrates and has been reported as prey for birds (e.g., *Momotus lessonii*) and snakes (e.g., *Micrurus apiatus*) (Lee 1996; Nahuat-Cervera et al. 2020; Blanco-Campos et al. 2023).

This species is endemic to the Yucatán Peninsula Biogeographic Province, where it occurs in the Mexican states of Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo, the central region of Petén in northern Guatemala, and Belize, at elevations of 0–300 m asl (Lee 1996; Murillo and Matías 2003; Heimes 2016). In Mexico, most records are from Yucatán and Quintana Roo, with a few records from Campeche. It has not been reported from the neighboring states of Tabasco and Chiapas, which also are part of the biogeographic province (Lee 1996). Herein we report two new records of *T. canula* in Mexico, the first record from the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve and another from the state of Tabasco (Fig. 1).

During a night time herpetofaunal survey at 1949 h on 5 April 2022, we found an adult *T. canula* (TL 140 mm) (Fig. 2) crossing a small dusty trail surrounded by semideciduous forest in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, Municipality of Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico (18.36558; -89.89074; WGS 84; elev. 236 m asl). The snake was photographed and released. A photographic voucher (CH-CIB-158) was deposited in the zoological collection of the Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, Mexico. This

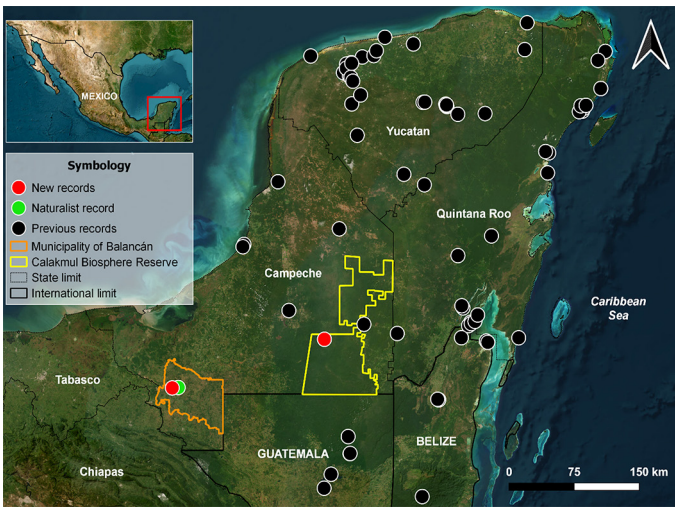

Figure 1. Map of the Yucatán Peninsula Biogeographic Province depicting the new (red dots) and previous (black dots) records of the Yucatan Dwarf Short-tailed Snake (*Tantillita canula*).

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Figure 2. Yucatan Dwarf Short-tailed Snakes (*Tantillita canula*) from the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico (left) and from the Municipality of Balancán, Tabasco, Mexico (right). Photographs by Pedro E. Nahuat-Cervera (left) and Daniel Jesús-Espinosa (right).

record, ~48 km northeast (straight-line distance) of the nearest previous recorded locality at Becán, Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico (Calderón-Mandujano et al. 2010), is the first report of the species in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, as previous herpetofaunal surveys (Colston et al. 2015; Barão-Nóbrega et al. 2022) in this protected natural area failed to document the species. The discovery of *T. canula* in the reserve increases the species richness of amphibians and reptiles to 105 and the number of species of snakes to 47.

At 1145 h on 21 April 2023, we encountered an adult *T. canula* (SVL 131 mm, TL 159 mm) (Fig. 2) actively foraging in leaf litter in an area of secondary vegetation (scrubland) dominated by Black Olive (*Bucida buceras*), West Indian Elm (*Guazama ulmifolia*), and Sea Grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*). The privately owned property, dedicated to agricultural and livestock activities, is in the Municipality of Balancán, Tabasco, Mexico (17.88052, -91.53522; WGS 84; elev. 17 m asl). The snake was captured, photographed, and released at the site. A photographic voucher (CH-CIB-153) was deposited in the zoological collection of the Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, Mexico. This record extends the known distribution of the species 158.3 km southwest (straight-line distance) from the nearest locality (Centenario, Municipality of Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico; Lee 1996), and represents the first formal record of the species from Tabasco, increasing the herpetofaunal species richness of the state to 171 and the number of species of snakes to 67 (Barragán-Vázquez et al. 2022; Gutiérrez-Suárez et al. 2022; Charruau et al. 2023). It also raises the total number of documented reptile and amphibian species in the Municipality of Balancán to 44 (Jesús-Espinosa et al. 2024).

An iNaturalist report of *T. canula* (Juml 2020) from the Municipality of Balancán (17.88471, -91.47052; WGS 84), 6.8 km east (straight-line distance) of our record, was observed at 1704 h on 24 August 2020. We verified the identity of the species in what is considered a "research-grade observation." Based on recommendations of Reyes-Velasco and Ramírez-Chaparro (2019), this observation can be considered valid.

In Mexico, *T. canula* is not listed in any risk category of the Official Mexican Standard NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010 (SEMARNAT 2010), and it is listed as being of Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List (Lee and Calderón-Mandujano 2013). However, Wilson et al. (2013) described it as moderately vulnerable based on an Environmental Vulnerability Score (EVS = 12 pts).

These records from the state of Tabasco indicate that the distribution of *T. canula* is more extensive than previously thought, and the locations where snakes were found suggest that the species utilizes both natural and disturbed areas. We recommend additional studies focusing on its ecology and population trends to determine its conservation status and identify any threats it might face.

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