Notas de História Natural

Taxonomic contributions and first record of the poorly known species *Apostolepis tenuis* Ruthven, 1927 in Brazil (Serpentes, Dipsadidae)

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Apostolepis tenuis Ruthven, 1927 was described based on a specimen from Buena Vista, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. It is very similar to *A. nigroterminata* and *A. dorbignyi* (Orejas-Miranda, 1962), and has often been confused with *A. ambiniger* and *A. vittata* by previous authors, but it can easily be distinguished by its coloration and pholidosis (Orejas-Miranda, 1962; Harvey, 1999).

The confused taxonomic history of *Apostolepis tenuis* could be related to its rarity, since the species is known from only two records. Harvey (1999) redescribed the species, defined diagnostic features, presented a synonym list, and compared *A. tenuis* with other sympatric *Apostolepis*. Before that, this species was only illustrated in its brief original description, lacking any comparison with its congeners. Here, we provide the third record of *Apostolepis tenuis*, the first out of Bolivia, and the first image of a live specimen.

The specimen was found (by ECF) on June 29th, 2017 in an urban area (11°29′58.2″ S, 62°23′36.4″ W) in the municipality of Alvorada D'Oeste, state of Rondônia, Brazil. The specimen was photographed (Figure 1) and released in a forested area outside the city (11°32′5.7″ S, 62°25′18.4″ W). The forested area is in the Amazonian Equatorial Domain, with a warm and humid climate and average annual temperature of 26°C (Kottek et al., 2006; Alvares et al. 2014).

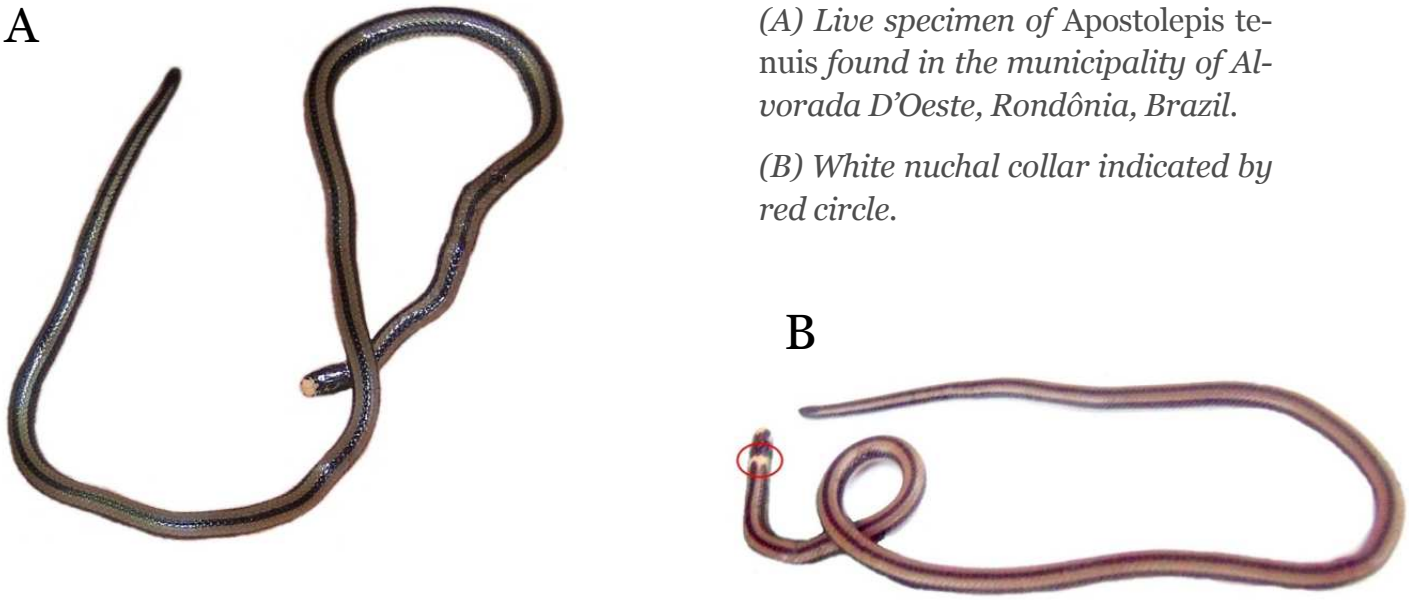


Figure 1.
(A) Live specimen of Apostolepis tenuis *found in the municipality of Alvorada D'Oeste, Rondônia, Brazil.*

(B) White nuchal collar indicated by red circle.

No data were collected other than the photograph of the specimen. However, its identification was possible after examination and comparisons of the photographs with the data and photographs of the holotype (Figure 2).

The new specimen closely matches the definition of *A. tenuis* (*sensu* Harvey, 1999): a medium-sized species, differing from all other congeners by the snout round in dorsal view and in profile; temporals absent; cream band across dorsal surface of snout; cream supralabial blotch of moderate size; narrow white nuchal collar present; black nuchal collar absent; dorsum light brown with three broad black stripes. Other diagnostic characters defined by Harvey (1999) for the species cannot be observed from the photographs: the



Figure 2. Holotype of Apostolepis tenuis *UMMZ 64436. Photo by Arnold Kluge.*

length of rostral visible dorsally less than one-half its distance from frontal; supralabials, six; infralabials contacting first pair of chinshields, three; nasal separated from preocular by prefrontal; number of ventrals (245–265) and subcaudals (37–46); terminal scale mostly white; chin and gular region immaculate or nearly so.

In addition to the definition of *A. tenuis*, this new specimen also matches the description of the holotype and a second specimen from Beni, Bolivia. Notably the new specimen has the gular collar present only laterally, as in the holotype. It is also the first time the color in life of *A. tenuis* is described, with three broad dark brown dorsal stripes, the lateral stripes much wider than the vertebral; dorsal background coloration light brown/beige, disagreeing with Harvey's (1999) hypothesis of being probably red; venter uniformly cream.

The combination of morphological characteristics cited above is quite sufficient for identification since these characters (rostral projection; presence of posterior temporal scales; background dorsal and ventral coloration; presence/absence of white and black nucal collars; presence and color of the snout and supralabial blotches) show little or no intraspecific variation among *Apostolepis* species. Thus, the presence of a broad vertebral stripe and even broader lateral stripes, forming two bands on the sides of the body, together with the presence of a white collar rather than a black collar, are also diagnostic traits for this species, and are present in the live specimen recorded by us.

The new record extends the distribution of *A. tenuis* more than 300 km from its closest record in Bolivia (Figure 3). The lack of any additional records for the species in the Brazilian state of Rondônia, a region that has recently been the focus of several herpetological studies (Vanzolini, 1986; Nascimento et al., 1988; Yuki, 1999; Brandão, 2002; Bernarde & Abe, 2006; França et al., 2006; Turci and Bernarde, 2008, 2009), including wildlife rescues during hydroelectric dam filling (Jorge-da-Silva-Júnior, 1993; Marçal & Coragem, 2011), suggests that *A. tenuis* is naturally rarer than most of its congeners.

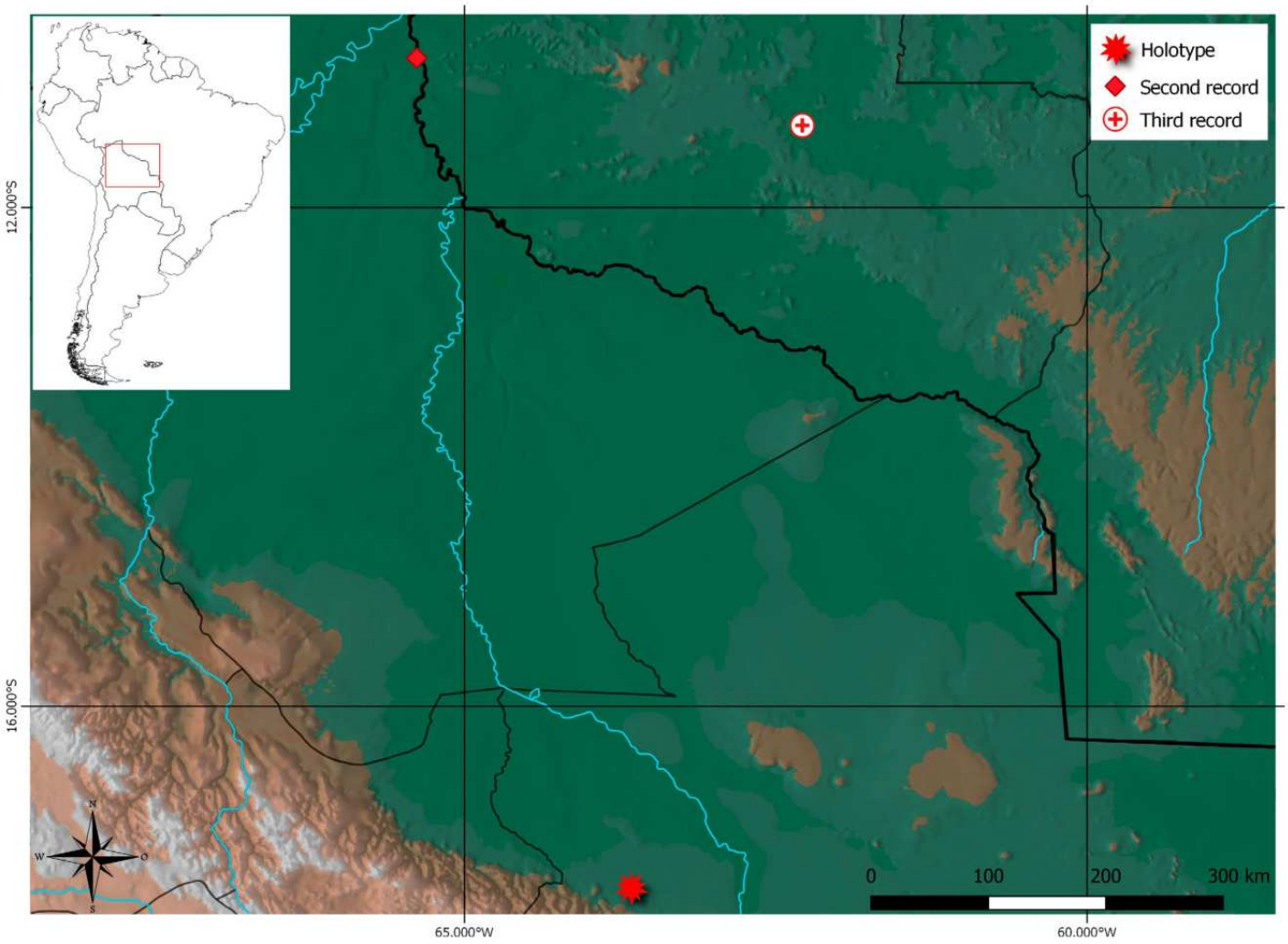


Figure 3. Known records of Apostolepis tenuis. *Holotype (UMMZ 64436): Bolivia, Santa Cruz Department, Ichilo Province, Buena Vista; second record (USNM 123973): Bolivia, Beni Department, Vaca Diez Province, Guayaramerin (Harvey, 1999); third record (not collected): Brazil, state of Rondônia, municipality of Alvorada D'Oeste.*

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