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OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF THE MUSEUM OF  
ZOOLOGY

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

A NEW DIPSADINE SNAKE OF THE GENUS *SIBYNOMORPHUS*  
FROM PERUBy DOUGLAS A. ROSSMAN AND RICHARD THOMAS<sup>1</sup>

Incidental to his ornithological studies in northwestern Peru during the summer of 1975, John P. O'Neill made a small collection of herpetological specimens. As luck would have it, the one snake he collected represents a previously undescribed species of the dipsadine genus *Sibynomorphus*. We are pleased to name this new taxon in honor of Dr. O'Neill as an expression of appreciation for the time and effort he has devoted over the past decade to acquiring Peruvian amphibians and reptiles for the Louisiana State University Museum of Zoology.

*SIBYNOMORPHUS ONEILLI* new species

*Holotype*.—LSUMZ 33736, a juvenile male from semiarid brushland (ca. 1645 m) NNE Balsas on the road to Abra Chanchillo, Departamento de Amazonas, Perú, collected 8 August 1975 by J. P. O'Neill; original no. 5224.

*Definition*.—A species of *Sibynomorphus* characterized by having: a moderately large number of ventrals (168 in only known specimen); a large number of subcaudals (77); a large number of supralabials (8 on each side); a moderate number of infralabials (9/8); 2 preoculars; a single

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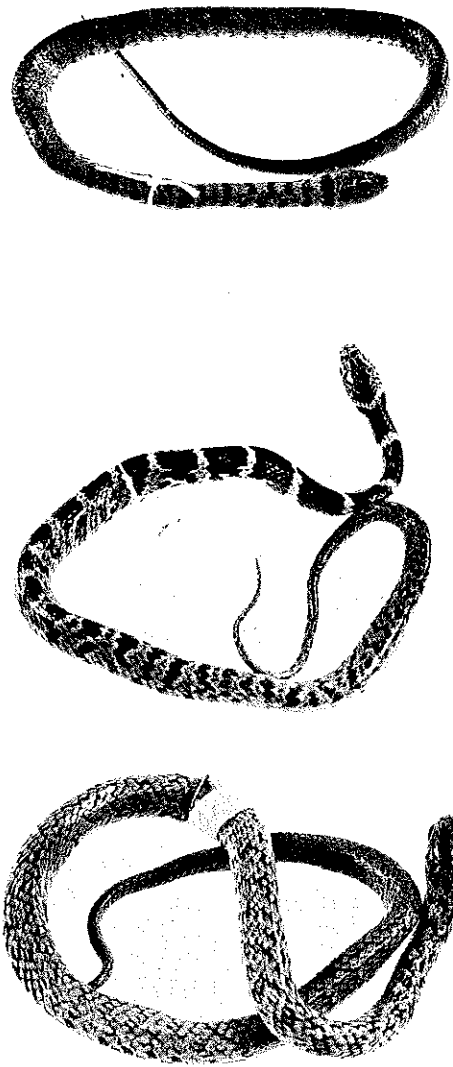


FIGURE 1. Dorsal views of *Sibynomorphus* from northwestern Peru. Upper: *S. oneilli* (LSUMZ 33736), 175 mm S-V. Middle: *S. vagrans* (MCZ 17442), 229 mm S-V. Lower: *S. vagus* (MCZ 17422), 290 mm S-V.

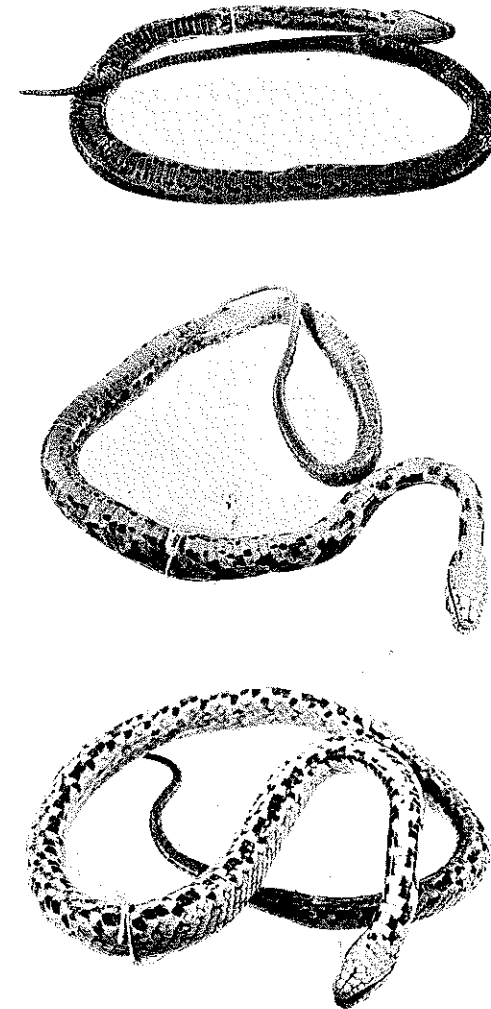


FIGURE 2. Ventral views of *Sibynomorphus* from northwestern Peru. Upper: *S. oneilli* (LSUMZ 33736), 175 mm S-V. Middle: *S. vagrans* (MCZ 17442), 229 mm S-V. Lower: *S. vagus* (MCZ 17422), 290 mm S-V.

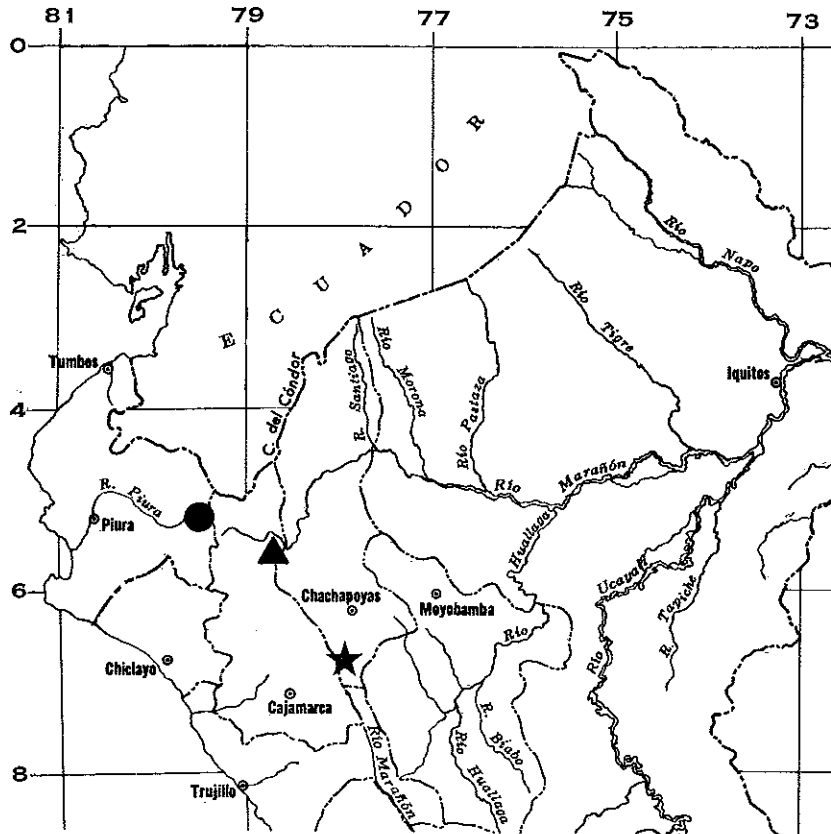


FIGURE 3. Map of northwestern Peru showing the known localities for *Sibynomorphus oneilli* (star), *S. vagrans* (triangle), and *S. vagus* (circle).

anterior temporal; 3 pairs of genials; a dorsal pattern consisting of very narrow dark bands on a gray-brown background, the bands becoming less distinct posteriorly.

*Description of holotype.*—Dorsal scales smooth, in 15-15-13 rows with irregular fusions of the vertebral and paravertebral rows posteriorly, those in the vertebral row somewhat enlarged; ventrals 168; subcaudals 77; anal entire. Supralabials 8, fourth and fifth entering orbit; infralabials 9 on left, 8 on right; 3 pairs of genials; nasal divided; preoculars 2; postoculars 2; temporals 1+2+2; frontal 58.5% of parietal length; internasal suture 50.0% of prefrontal suture length. Snout-vent length 175 mm, tail length 58 (24.9% of total length).

TABLE 1. MERISTIC AND PROPORTIONAL VARIATION IN THREE SPECIES OF *Sibynomorphus* FROM NORTHWESTERN PERU.

Character	<i>S. oneilli</i>	<i>S. vagrans</i>	<i>S. vagus</i>
Ventrals	♂♂ 168 ♀♀ ...	151.2(149-155)12 <sup>2</sup> 157.8(155-160)5	148.5(145-151)4 153.5(151-156)2
Subcaudals	♂♂ 77 ♀♀ ...	83.9(80-89)12 74.4(72-79)5	62.7(60-65)3 56.0(56)1
Preoculars	2	1 or 2	1
Temporals	1+2	usually 2+3	1+2
Infralabials	9,8	10-12	8-10
Genials (pairs)	3	3 (rarely 3½ or 4)	4 (rarely 3½)
Tail as % of total length	♂♂ 24.9 ♀♀ ...	27.6(25.7-29.2)11 24.5(23.3-26.5)5	23.6(22.9-24.1)3 20.0(20.0)1
Frontal/parietal (%)	58.5	68.6(63.9-78.8)16	63.1(57.9-67.9)6
Internasal/prefrontal (%)	50.0	27.1(15.8-42.9)16	48.0(44.4-56.0)6

<sup>2</sup> Mean (range of variation) number of specimens.

The dorsum is gray brown with dark brown markings. There is an indistinct blotch on the frontal, an irregular blotch in the center of each parietal, a large blotch immediately posterior to the parietals, and a series of 55 very narrow bands on the body, which become progressively less distinct posteriorly (Fig. 1). The nuchal band is 1½-2 scales long; succeeding bands are one scale long or less. Interspaces between the bands are 2½-3 scales long. The chin is white; the venter is gray with a pair of moderately small dark blotches on each ventral scute (Fig. 2).

*Relationships.*—In possessing preocular scales and more than 7 pairs of supralabials, *Sibynomorphus oneilli* shows affinities to its geographically nearest congeners, *S. vagrans* (Dunn) and *S. vagus* (Jan), rather than to the other Peruvian species, *S. williamsi* (Carrillo de Espinoza, 1974), or to the Brazilian section of the genus (see Peters, 1960). *Sibynomorphus vagrans* is known only from Bellavista, Depto. Cajamarca, Perú; *S. vagus* only from Huancabamba, Depto. Piura, Perú (Fig. 3). Neither species has been collected since its type series was acquired. Both *S. oneilli* and *S. vagrans* occur

within the Río Marañón valley; their respective localities lie approximately 145 airline km apart. The habitat around Bellavista (ca. 915 m) is dry forest or cactus-acacia scrub. Huancabamba, on the other hand, lies on the Pacific slope of the Andes at about 1980 m; the habitat there is more mesic than at Bellavista, or the type locality of *S. oneilli*.

*Sibynomorphus oneilli* is similar to *S. vagrans* in numbers of preoculars and genials; is similar to *S. vagus* in head scale proportions and numbers of temporals and infralabials; is intermediate between the two species in ventral pattern, relative tail length, and number of subcaudals; and possesses far more ventrals than either of them (Table 1). The dorsal pattern of *S. oneilli*, consisting of very narrow bands, is unique within the genus. Despite the geographic proximity of the three species, the data currently available persuade us that each is a valid taxon.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to Ernest E. Williams of the Museum of Comparative Zoology for loaning us the series of *Sibynomorphus vagrans* (MCZ 17428, 17436-52) and *S. vagus* (MCZ 17420-23, 17425-26). The photographs are the work of H. Michael Turner.

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