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## First record of the coral snake *Micrurus margaritiferus* ROZE, 1967 in Ecuador

*Micrurus margaritiferus* ROZE, 1967 is known from lower montane wet forests and tropical rainforests on the Amazonian slopes of the Peruvian Andes near the confluence of the rivers Santiago and Marañón (CAMPBELL & LAMAR 2004, 1989; CARILLO DE ESPINOZA & ICOCHEA 1995). Until recently, speculations on the presence of this species in Ecuador (CAMPBELL & LAMAR 2004) remained unsubstantiated.

The first record of *M. margaritiferus* in the territory of Ecuador (Gustavo ORCÉS Herpetological Foundation reference collection – FHGO 4836) was made on 6 July, 2005, near the banks of Río Makuma (02° 08'6"S/77°42'25"W, 720 m a.s.l.) in the Shuar-Makuma community located in the Morona Santiago Province, northeastern



Fig. 1: *Micrurus margaritiferus* ROZE, 1967 (FHGO 4836), dorsal aspect. First record from Ecuador.

portion of the Cordillera de Cutucú (see BORGTOFT et al. 1998).

Morphological data: Total length 75.5 cm (snout-vent-length 63.3 cm, tail length 12.2 cm); 1+1 temporals, 201 ventrals, 52 subcaudals. Dorsally the specimen is tricolored (black-white-brown/reddish-white-black, Fig. 1), which seems to be rare in this species (CAMPBELL & LAMAR 2004). The white rings are irregularly and frequently interrupted in the different parts of the body. The dark (black plus brown/reddish) pattern

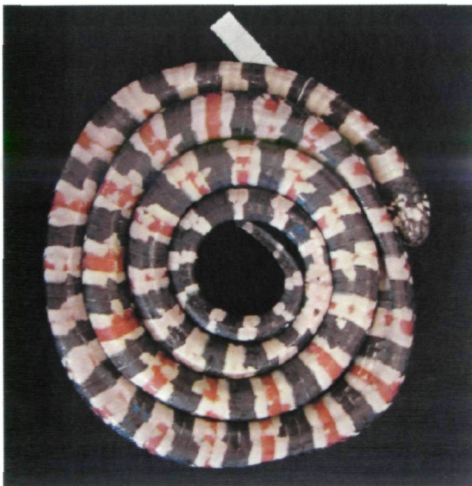


Fig. 2: *Micrurus margaritiferus* ROZE, 1967 (FHGO 4836), ventral aspect. First record from Ecuador.

is disposed in 111 rings across the trunk (each ring being on the average three scales wide middorsally), and 13 on the tail. The brown/reddish color is clearly visible in the anterior and becomes black in the posterior part of the body. The venter is tricolored with black, brown/reddish and white rings (Fig. 2). The head is black with irregular white dots on the posterior supra- and infra-labials, occipitals and temporals. Mentals, some supralabials and first and second ventrals are black.

The snake was found during the day, in a grassland area next to the evangelical mission. The habitat was relatively flat secondary forest, in an advanced stage of succession at the confluence of various small streams. At this site, the forest is not continuous due to the presence of clearing gaps and cultivated areas (VALENCIA et al. 2005).

Fieldwork has demonstrated that this area is a region of great importance for Amazonian Ecuador in terms of reptile diversity (VALENCIA et al. 2005).

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