

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
NEW
ENGLAND ZOÖLOGICAL
CLUB. VOLUME VII**

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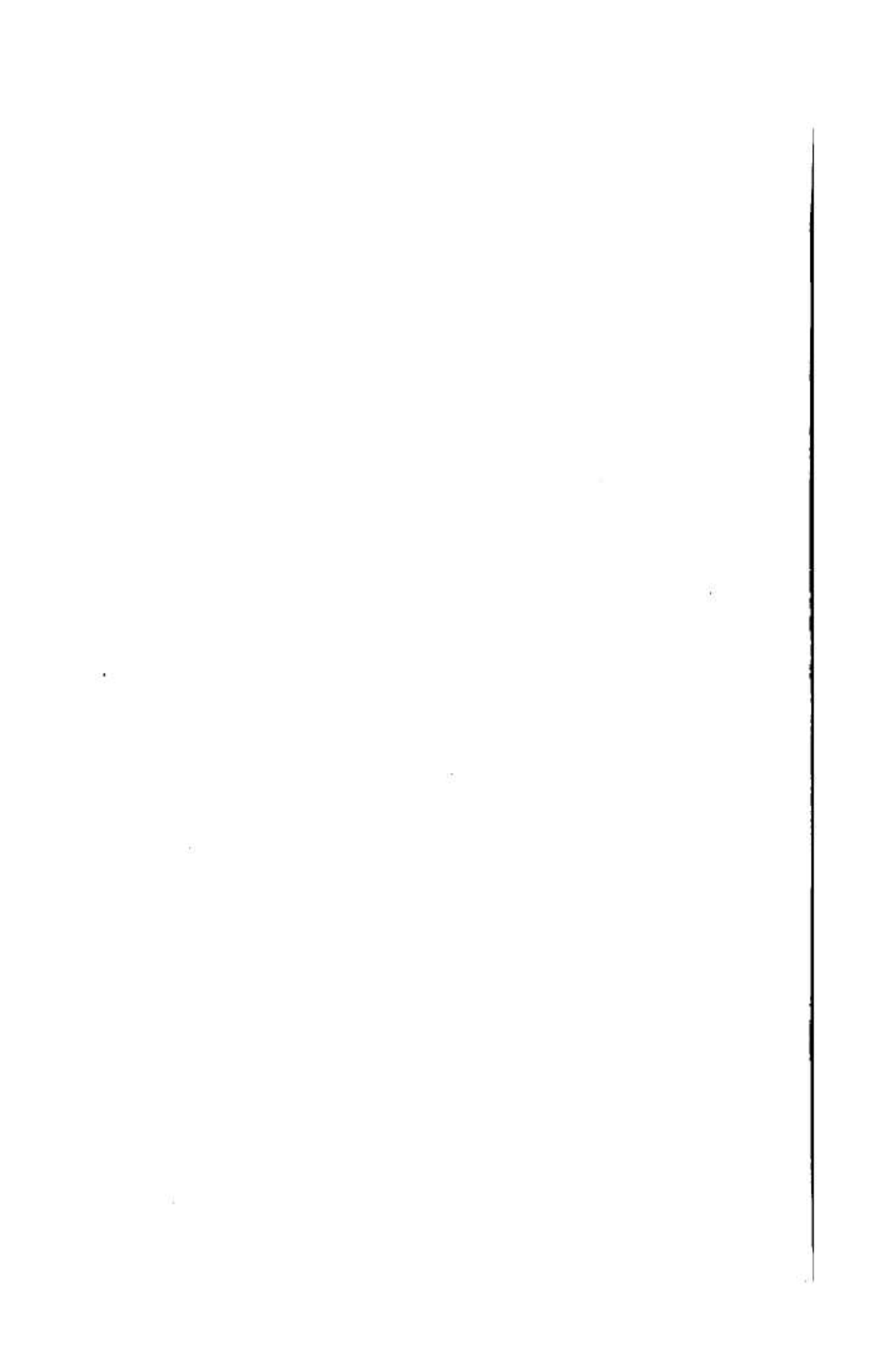
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CONTENTS OF VOLUME VII

Pages 1-3	Another new race of the king snake, by THOMAS BARBOUR. 1 plate.....
5-6	A new striated grass warbler from the Philippines, by OUTRAM BANGS.....
7-13	Herpetological notes, by THOMAS BARBOUR.....
15-19	Two new Chinese Japaluras, by THOMAS BARBOUR and EMMETT REID DUNN.....
21-22	Some untenable names in ornithology, by THOMAS EDWARD PENARD.....
23-25	The name of the common jungle fowl, by OUTRAM BANGS and THOMAS EDWARD PENARD.....
27	An undescribed song sparrow from Alaska, by WINTHROP SPRAGUE BROOKS.....
29-31	Two new birds from Roraima, by THOMAS EDWARD PENARD
33-34	A new lizard from Haiti, by EMMETT REID DUNN.....
35	A new red-shouldered hawk from the Florida keys, by OUTRAM BANGS.....
37-44	On the Haitian snakes of the genera <i>Leimadophis</i> and <i>Uromacer</i> , by EMMETT REID DUNN.....
45-47	Two new American hawks, by OUTRAM BANGS and THOMAS EDWARD PENARD.....
49-50	A new jay from Anticosti Island, by WINTHROP SPRAGUE BROOKS.....
51-52	A new jay from Alberta, by JAMES LEE PETERS.....
53-54	A new clapper rail from the Florida Keys, by WINTHROP SPRAGUE BROOKS.....
55-59	Notes on two Pacific coast Ambystomidae, by EMMETT REID DUNN.....
61-63	A note on <i>Xiphocercus</i> , by THOMAS BARBOUR.....
65-78	Sixteen new Sphingidae, by BENJAMIN PRESTON CLARK...
79-80	A new lizard from Guaymas, Mexico, by THOMAS BARBOUR
81-85	Some reptiles from Old Providence Island, by THOMAS BARBOUR.....
87-89	A new Bornean lizard, by THOMAS BARBOUR.....
91-112	Reptiles and Amphibians from the British Solomon Islands, by THOMAS BARBOUR. 5 plates.....
113-115	A new <i>Phrynosoma</i> from Cerros Island, by THOMAS BARBOUR
117-118	The Florida pine snake, by THOMAS BARBOUR.....



JUN 7 1919

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JUNE 5, 1919

VOL. VII, PP. 1-8

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ANOTHER NEW RACE OF THE KING SNAKE

BY THOMAS BARBOUR

I HAVE long known that king snakes from the peninsula of Florida differ regularly and fundamentally in color from those found further north. The contrast was especially evident to me, since, until this winter, the last king snake I had taken myself was found at Lakehurst, New Jersey, while in the past winter I collected several others near Palm Beach. I wrote Dr. A. G. Ruthven, telling him of my decision to describe this form, and he replied that Mr. Blanchard was about to do the same thing. Since then I have seen Blanchard's material, and have read his description¹ with keen interest. Mr. Blanchard's race is found over peninsular Florida, from about Lake County in the north probably to the Miami River in the southeast.

The limestone area of extreme southern Florida is inhabited by still another race, as distinct in coloration from *floridana* as this is from true *getulus*; but it is like its neighbor in the high number of scale rows. It is perhaps not surprising that a tendency to vary in coloration, that has become sufficiently well marked to separate king snakes from central Florida so sharply from all their more northern conspecific representatives, should

¹ Occ. Papers Mus. Zool. Univ. Michigan, no. 70, May 5, 1919, p. 1-8.

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be more highly accentuated under the peculiar environmental conditions of extreme southeastern Florida. Here the sand is replaced by limestone, supporting a far more meagre growth of scrub palmetto and other sheltering plants, and becoming extremely hot, baked as it is by the almost tropical sun. The hammocks also are far more tropical in appearance, and offer but little similarity in character of vegetation or in identity of species with those of fifty miles further north.

I should have been loath to describe this race, having but a single example, had it not been that I found another killed in the highway near Homestead, Florida, which although badly crushed showed the same color characters as the one I shall name, and I take this fact to indicate that probably the coloration is fixed in this area. Ditmars' and A. E. Brown's remarks as to the inadvisability of naming the southern king snake, on account of the connecting variations, is quite typical of zoölogical park experience. Specimens received from dealers usually are at least of uncertain origin. King snakes taken at the same place, in so far as my somewhat limited experience goes, are singularly unvarying in coloration.

The new form is named for Mr. Winthrop S. Brooks, my companion on many excursions.

Lampropeltis getulus brooksi subsp. nov.

Plate I

Type, an adult, 1350 mm. long, M. C. Z. no. 12,456, from 14 miles southwest of Florida City, Dade Co., Florida (near the Royal Palm State Park, formerly called Paradise Key). W. S. Brooks and C. A. Mosier, collectors.

Similar to *L. getulus floridana* Blanchard, in squamation, but differing widely in coloration. Pattern so reduced as to be almost everywhere undiscernible. Each scale dull chrome yellow with a conspicuous very dark brown apical spot.

I have followed Mr. Blanchard in using a trinomial, although I have not yet observed real intergradation between any of these

racés. Nevertheless Mr. Blanchard has at the U. S. National Museum a king snake from Florida, with no more definite data, which is rather intermediate between *brooksi* and *floridana*. I have seen true *L. getulus getulus* from northern Florida, and typical *floridana* from but little further south; so it is not improbable, in spite of the certainty of all these snakes being derived from the same stock, that a binomial designation would not be more fitting. It is a current custom among systematists to assume that intergradation between closely similar forms must exist, when in reality it is not often definitely demonstrated.

