

NORTHERN-MOST RECORD OF THE COLLARED ANTEATER (*Tamandua mexicana*) FROM THE PACIFIC SLOPE OF MEXICO

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Abstract: We report the first record for the collared anteater (*Tamandua mexicana*) from Colima, Mexico. This record represents a northern range expansion along the Pacific slope. The presence of *T. mexicana* in Colima can be explained by two different mutually exclusive hypotheses; the first is that the species has been historically present and was not recorded earlier; the second one is that the collared anteater has just recently dispersed into the state. We strongly support the second hypothesis.

Key words: *Tamandua mexicana*, Colima, record.

Palabras clave: *Tamandua mexicana*, Colima, nuevo registro.

The current known distribution of the Collared Anteater or Northern Tamandua (*Tamandua mexicana*) on the Pacific Slope of Mexico is from Chiapas to Michoacan, with the limit of the northern range of the species being the Coahuayana River. This river forms the border between the states of Michoacan and Colima. Here we report a range expansion for the Collared Anteater following the discovery of a road kill on the Colima to Tecoman highway at La Salada (N 19°05' 19.5"; W 103°46' 33.4") within the Mexican State of Colima, on the 19th June 2006 (Figure 1). This is the first record of the species for Colima.

Distinctive characters for the identification of the specimen were: head shape, the strong forearms ending in 3-strong curved claws, and fur coloration (Figure 2). Although the specimen was found to be in an advanced state of decomposition, it was apparently an adult female.

The locality where the animal was found is a large intact tract of tropical deciduous thorn forest. It is a concession to a lime plant which has resulted in preservation of the area. This forest is more or less continuous with the forests of the Sierra Madre del Sur, Michoacan. However, for mammals inhabiting this area, the construction of the 4-lane Colima to Tecoman highway has been disastrous, as even if animals are initially able to avoid collisions with vehicles, the center concrete barrier prohibits animals from crossing the highway (Figure 3).

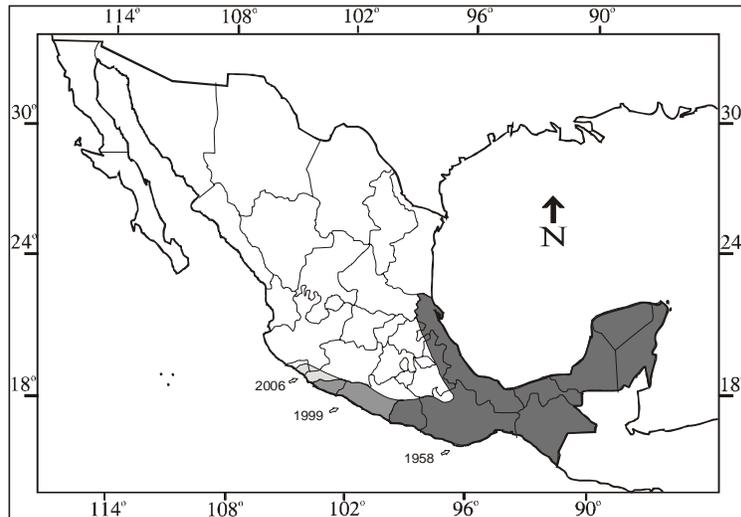


Figure 1. Distribution of the Collared Anteater (*Tamandua mexicana*) in Mexico, showing the dates of the first record of the species in Guerrero, Michoacan, and Colima (Modified from Leopold, 1959; Ceballos and Oliva, 2005).

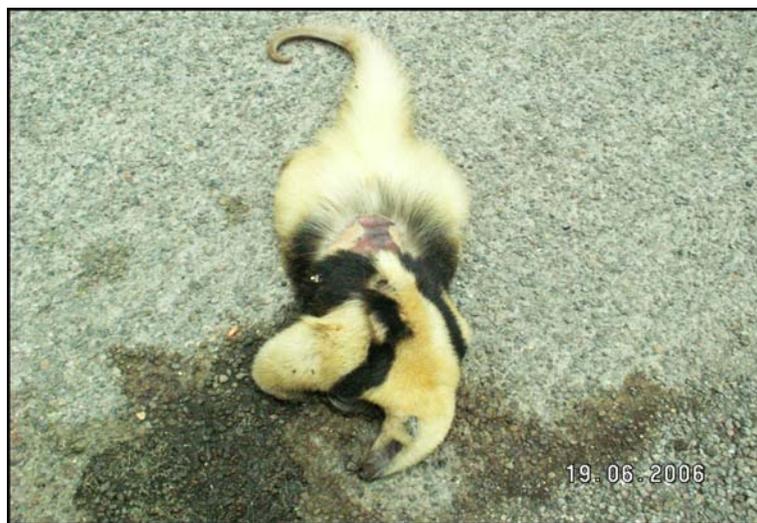


Figure 2. Collared anteater (*T. mexicana*) killed on the Colima – Tecoman highway (Photo: Andrew Burton).



Figure 3. The Colima - Tecoman highway represents a formidable barrier for small and medium size mammals. Many individuals are killed every year along this highway (Photo: Andrew Burton).

The presence of *T. mexicana* in Colima is interesting and intriguing. It can best be explained by two different mutually exclusive hypotheses: The first is that the species has been historically present in Colima and was not recorded earlier; the second hypothesis is that the Collared Anteater has just recently dispersed into the state. We strongly support the idea that this is a new record for the species in Colima because the mammals of Colima are relatively well known, and the lack of records for such a relatively large and conspicuous species is unexpected, especially in such a populated area as the Colima – Tecoman highway (e.g. Baker and Phillips, 1965; Ceballos and Oliva, 2005; Nuñez Garduño, 2002). Additionally, *T. mexicana* was first recorded on the Pacific Slope of Mexico five decades ago in the Sierra Madre del Sur of Guerrero (Davis and Lukens, 1958; Leopold, 1959), where it is now apparently common. The species was unknown in Michoacan (Hall y Villa, 1949) until recently, when it was first recorded on the coast, relatively close to Colima (Sánchez H., *et al.*, 1999). Because there are no major barriers we expect that *T. mexicana* will continue dispersing north in the coming years.

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