

REQUEST

The Ratsnake Foundation is trying to collect data of scale counts of any and all types of 'ratsnake', so that a database may be built up for people to reference. The data can be used not only for sex determination (primary objective) but also help build a picture up of the upper and lower limits of the various scale counts for particular species. To that end we would be grateful if you could send us your complete sloughs of any species of ratsnake if you are not comfortable counting scales, any scale counts of your animals or ones you've collected in the field of any species of ratsnake, whether Old World or New if you are more confident in counting scales. Even if you have just dorsal counts or maybe labial counts, they would help us with our long term project, as only the relevant data will be added for a particular sub project (i.e. sex determination, will require that the sex is known at the outset, for instance).

What do you mean by a Ratsnake then?

The term 'ratsnake' is obviously one of dubious taxonomic value, an artificial pigeon hole that certain groups of animals may fall into. Some people would describe some animals as racers while others would happily proclaim them to be ratsnake. The Foundations definition of 'ratsnakes' are all animals that are currently or have been described as such, primarily concerning all species formerly described as *Elaphe* in the tome written by Schulz, *A Monograph of the Colubrid Snakes of the Genus Elaphe (Fitzinger)*. We are however, also open to the discussion of any other snake commonly described as 'ratsnakes', such as *Rhynchophis boulengeri* (Rhino ratsnake), *Ptyas*, *Spilotes* & *Spalerosophis* species etc. in our eyes these snakes are also 'ratsnakes'. Needless to say, Corn snakes are also 'ratsnakes' as well.

What information do we require?

Well, as much as possible out of the following list but don't be put off if you just have some of the counts and not others, we'd be interested in any and all from the following list:

- 1 Species/Subspecies
- 2 Probe depth
- 3 Dorsal scale counts and the position they were taken from, i.e. mid-body, anteriorly or posteriorly.
- 4 Sex -if known
- 5 Labial Counts, both infra (lower) & supra (upper)
- 6 Ventral scales
- 7 Sub-caudal scales

Where to send it to

Please could you send complete sloughs or scale counts of your animals to:

Ratsnake Scutellation Records - The Ratsnake Foundation

Scale Counts

P.O. Box 810 - Taunton

TA1 9EA.

Alternatively send your counts to chairperson@ratsnakefoundation.org or log on to the site and PM Dave, Lou or Sue.

Many thanks in advance, the Ratsnake Foundation www.ratsnakefoundation.org

Kind regards, Dave Royans

Chairperson - The Ratsnake Foundation.

www.ratsnakefoundation.org

