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Mephitis macroura, by Walter Woelber Dalquest and E. Raymond Hall**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GEOGRAPHIC RANGE OF THE HOODED
SKUNK, MEPHITIS MACROURA ***

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Mephitis macroura, with Description of a
New Subspecies from Mexico**

[575]

BY
E. RAYMOND HALL and WALTER W. DALQUEST

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**Geographic Range of the Hooded Skunk, Mephitis
macroura, with Description of a New Subspecies
from Mexico**

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E. RAYMOND HALL AND WALTER W. DALQUEST

The hooded skunk, *Mephitis macroura* Lichtenstein, can be distinguished from the only other species in the genus, *Mephitis mephitis* Schreber, by the larger tympanic bullae, in the white-backed color phase by having some black hairs mixed with the white hairs of the back, and in the black-backed phase by having the two white stripes widely separated and on the sides of the animal instead of narrowly separated and on the back of the animal. The starting point for taxonomic work with *Mephitis* is A. H. Howell's "Revision of the skunks of the genus *Chincha* (N. Amer. Fauna, 20, 1901)." Of the species *Mephitis macroura*, Howell (*op. cit.*) recognized three subspecies: *M. m. macroura*, *M. m. milleri*, and *M. m. vittata*.

The species *M. macroura* is restricted to the arid region made up mostly of the Mexican Plateau. Also, wherever the species occurs beyond this Plateau, as for example in Guatemala, at San Mateo del Mar in Oaxaca, in the vicinity of Piedras Negras in Veracruz, and in southern Arizona, aridity is marked. Whether the species has a continuous distribution from the southern end of the Mexican tableland southward to Dueñas in Guatemala is not known but it is unlikely that the lowland population at San Mateo del Mar on the Pacific slope of Oaxaca has contact with *M. m. macroura* of the Mexican Plateau and it is almost certain that the population, which is here named *M. m. eximius*, from the arid coastal plain of eastern Mexico in Veracruz, has no connection with the upland population, *M. m. macroura*. The lowest elevation on the eastern slope of the Plateau from which we have record of the occurrence of this species is 4,500 feet at Jico. All along the eastern slope of the Plateau, between the elevations of approximately 2,000 and 4,500 feet, the belt of lush, dense vegetation of the upper humid division of the Tropical Life-zone constitutes a barrier to *Mephitis* and tends to exclude the hooded skunk from the arid territory below the humid belt. Another kind of skunk, *Conepatus tropicalis*, lives in the humid belt, at least on the eastern side of the Mexican tableland. How the population of *Mephitis*, which was sampled by us from west and west-northwest of Piedras Negras, arrived there is unknown but we think that its geographic range is not now connected with that of the population on the Plateau. The same can be said of the lowland population at San Mateo del Mar in Oaxaca. There, on the Pacific slope of the Mexican tableland, the lower humid division of the Tropical Life-zone probably has tended to restrict the spread southward and westward of *Mephitis*; however, on this Pacific slope the humid belt is less humid and it is less continuous, we think, than on the Atlantic slope.

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Four subspecies of *Mephitis macroura* may be recognized. They are as follows:

***Mephitis macroura milleri* Mearns**

1897. *Mephitis milleri* Mearns, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 20:467, 1897.

1901. *Mephitis macroura milleri*, Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 14:334, November 12, 1901.

Type locality.—Fort Lowell, Pima County, Arizona.

Range.—Northwestern Mexico and southeastern Arizona. See figure 1. Marginal occurrences (unless otherwise indicated, after Howell, N. Amer. Fauna, 20:42, 43, 1901) are: *Arizona*: Santa Catalina Mountains; Tucson; Fort Lowell. *Chihuahua*: Casas Grandes; Chihuahua (City). *Coahuila*: La Ventura. *Chihuahua*: Guadalupe y Calvo (mountains near). *Sonora*: Camoa; Hermosillo; Sierra Cubabi (Burt, Miscl. Publ., Mus. Zool., Univ. Michigan, 39:30, 1938).

Characters.—Long skull (♂ 60 mm, ♀ 56 mm) and large m1.

***Mephitis macroura macroura* Lichtenstein**

1832. *Mephitis macroura* Lichtenstein, Darstellung Säugethier, pl. 46, with accompanying text, 1832.

Type locality.—Mountains northwest of the City of Mexico.

Range.—Southern half of Mexican Plateau and south to Guatemala. See figure 1. Marginal occurrences (all from Howell, N. Amer. Fauna, 20:41, 42, 1901) are: *Tamaulipas*: Jaumave. *Veracruz*: Las Vigas; Jico; Orizaba. *Puebla*: Tehuacan. *Guatemala*: Dueñas (vicinity). *Oaxaca*: 15 mi. W Oaxaca. *Colima*: Hacienda Magdalena. *Jalisco*: San Sebastian. *Tepic*: Santa Teresa. *Zacatecas*: Valpariso.

Characters.—Skull of medium size (basal length, ♂ 56, ♀ 54); tail averaging shorter than head and body.

***Mephitis macroura vittata* Lichtenstein**

1832. *Mephitis vittata* Lichtenstein, Darstellung Säugethier, pl. 47, with accompanying text, 1832.

1901. *Mephitis macroura vittata*, Allen, Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 14:334, November 12, 1901.

Type locality.—"San Matteo el Mar" [= San Mateo del Mar], Oaxaca.

Range.—Known only from the type locality. See figure 1.

Characters.—Skull short (♂ 54.6, ♀ 52.3); narrow across mastoid processes; tail long; body short.

***Mephitis macroura eximius* new subspecies**

Type.—Female, adult, skin with skull, No. 19272, Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Kansas; 15

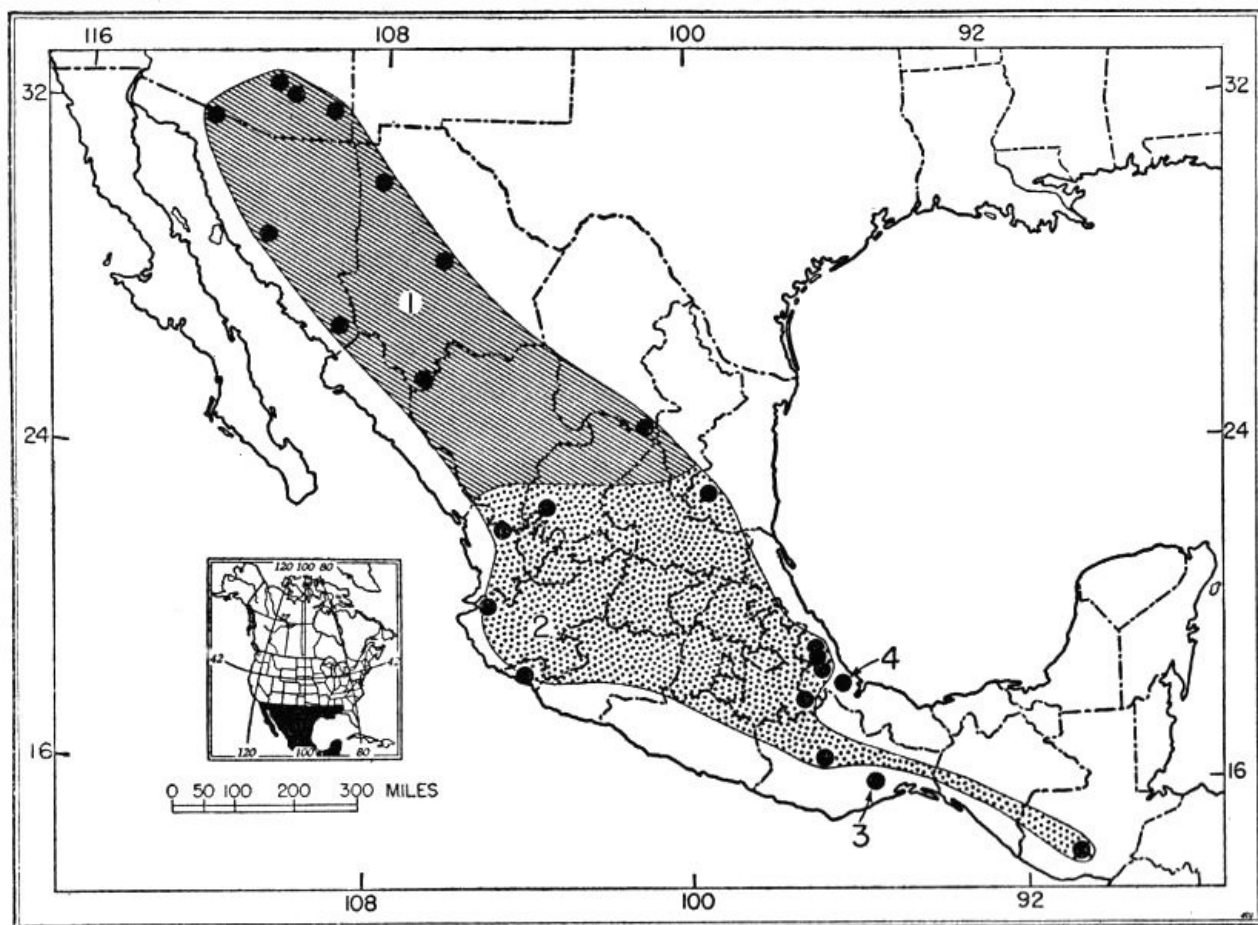
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kilometers west of Piedras Negras, 300 feet elevation, Veracruz, Mexico; 13 January 1947; obtained by J. Mazza and Walter W. Dalquest; original No. 7017, W. W. Dalquest.

Range.—From the vicinity of the type locality on the arid coastal plain of the lowlands of central Veracruz. See figure 1.

Diagnosis.—Size small (see measurements); tail long, ranging from 110 to 133 percent of length of head and body; color black, with white areas containing a few black hairs, and in non-hooded phase with white lateral stripes low on sides of body and in some specimens almost absent; skull small but broad across mastoid processes.

Comparisons.—From *Mephitis macroura macroura* of the southern part of the Mexican Plateau, *M. m. eximius* differs in shorter head and body, relatively (to body) longer tail, and smaller skull. From *Mephitis macroura vittata* of the tropical lowlands of the Pacific slope of Oaxaca, *M. m. eximius* differs in slightly larger average size throughout and relatively longer tail.



1. *M. m. milleri* 2. *M. m. macroura* 3. *M. m. vittata* 4. *M. m. eximius*

FIG. 1. Map showing the geographic ranges of the four subspecies of the species *Mephitis macroura*.

FIG. 1. Map showing the geographic ranges of the four subspecies of the species *Mephitis macroura*.

Remarks.—*M. m. eximius* is regarded as a subspecies of *M. m. macroura* because there is some overlap in size between larger individuals of *M. m. eximius* and smaller individuals of *M. m. macroura*. Actually, as indicated above, we doubt that the geographic ranges of the two subspecies are continuous or that the geographic range of *M. m. eximius* is continuous with the geographic range of *M. m. vittata*. Small size and relatively long tail characterize both of the lowland, tropical subspecies, *eximius* and *vittata*, whereas the two upland subspecies of the temperate areas are larger and have relatively shorter tails.

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Habitat closely resembling that at the type locality extends from the southern base of the first mountains north of Jalapa southward as far as the north base of the Tuxtla Mountains—a distance of approximately 110 miles from northwest to southeast along the gulf coast. None of our 5 skins shows the hooded color-pattern so common on the Mexican Plateau and in *vittata* of Oaxaca. One of our five specimens has well-developed lateral stripes; three have greatly reduced lateral stripes and one is black except for a white spot on the right hip.

Measurements.—An adult male (University of Kansas Museum of Natural History Catalogue Number, 17900), a subadult male (19273), and adult female (19272, the holotype) and a subadult female (19902), measure, in millimeters, respectively, as follows: Total length, —, 599, 578, 583; length of tail, —, 319, 335, 305; length of hind foot, 58, 62, 58, 60; basal length of skull, 56.1, 55.0, 52.8, 53.1; basilar length of Hensel, 53.6, 52.6, 50.3, 51.2; greatest zygomatic breadth, 41.6, 38.0, 39.0, 37.0; greatest mastoid breadth, 34.6, 34.3, 33.3, 31.5; breadth across postorbital processes, 22.2, 20.2, 20.5, 21.0; least interorbital breadth, 20.3, 18.2, 19.0, 18.5; palatal length, 24.2, 25.1, 24.2, 24.0; postpalatal length, 31.5, 29.6, 28.8, 29.0; foramen magnum to plane of last molars, 30.8, 29.4, 27.5, 29.0.

Specimens examined.—Total number, 5, all from Veracruz, Mexico, as follows: Río Blanco, 20 km. WNW Piedras Negras, 3; 15 km. W Piedras Negras, 300 ft., 2.

University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, Lawrence, Kansas.

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