

NOTES

On the presence of the short-tailed opossum *Monodelphis adusta* (Thomas) in Venezuela

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The genus *Monodelphis* comprises 15 species in South America, of which only *M. brevicauda* and *M. orinoci* are presently known to occur in Venezuela (Reig *et al.* 1977 ; Honacki *et al.* 1982 ; Pérez-Hernández 1986). Reviewing the Colección de Vertebrados de la Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida (CVULA), I found two specimens of *Monodelphis*, from the SW slopes of the Venezuelan Andes whose characteristics and measurements seem to agree with Thomas' (1897) description of *Peramys adustus* (= *Monodelphis adusta*). This species inhabits the slopes occupied by mountain rain forest and mountain deciduous forest, occurring between 500 and 1,000 m a.s.l., of the Andes of Western Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Sierra de Darién in Panama. This account represents the first record for the species in Venezuela, extending the known distribution of this taxon at least 300 km towards the East.

Monodelphis adusta was described by Thomas (1897) as *Peramys adustus* on the basis of one specimen (sex not specified), from an unknown locality « in the low-lying hot regions » of W Depto. Cundinamarca, Colombia. *Peramys peruvianus* (= *Monodelphis peruviana*, in Cabrera and Yepes, 1940) was described by Osgood (1913) from Moyobamba, Perú. By 1940 these were the only two South American species known to have a general dark brown coloration without stripes on the dorsum (Cabrera and Yepes 1940). Later Cabrera (1958) included *M. peruviana* as a subspecies of *M. adusta*, while Handley (1966) and Kirsch and Calaby (1977) considered the Central American *M. melanops* (Goldman 1912) to be synonymous with *M. adusta*, and proposed that *M. peruvianus osgoodi* Doult (1938) could be a valid species that should be named *M. osgoodi*.

Specimens examined.

CVULA I-1606, dry skin, skull, and partial postcranial skeleton, female subadult from Campamento Siberia, 12 km SSE Pregonero, Estado Táchira, 1,100 m.

CVULA I-1607, dry skin, skull, and partial postcranial skeleton, female subadult from Potosí, 14 km SE Pregonero, Estado Táchira, 1,020 m.

TABLE 1. — External measurements (mm) and weights (g) of specimens examined.

	Venezuela		Colombia			
	CVULA 1-1606	CVULA 1-1607	ICN 5201	IND 908	IND 2544	IND 2545
Total length	152	149	175	158	192	175
Length of tail	48	51	51	54	56	53
Hind foot	14	13	13	16	15	15
Ear	15	12	—	11	9	14
Weight	20	15.2	—	18.6	—	—

TABLE 2. — Cranial measurements (mm) of specimens examined.

	Venezuela		Colombia	
	CVULA 1-1606	CVULA 1-1607	IND 908	ICN 5201
Greatest length of skull	26.15	26.0	26.6	29.3
Condylbasal length	26.15	26.0	26.6	29.3
Basal length	24.25	24.1	24.7	27.4
Palatal length	14.2	13.8	—	17.0
Zygomatic breadth	13.6	13.7	13.35	15.2
Interorbital constriction	6.2	6.1	6.1	7.1
Postorbital constriction	5.35	5.35	5.3	5.3
Breadth across canines	3.9	3.9	3.7	4.8
Breadth across molars M3-M3	8.8	8.6	8.0	9.8
Breadth of brain case	10.2	10.0	10.0	11.2
Breadth of palatal shelf	4.3	4.2	4.6	5.3
Length of tooththrow C-M4	10.35	10.2	10.8	11.9
Length of M1-M3	5.55	5.35 [†]	6.2	6.4
Breadth of nasals	4.15	3.9	4.0	4.8
Mandibular length	19.7	19.8	19.8	21.4
Length of m1-m3	4.7	4.8	6.8	6.7

I have checked the identification of the two Venezuelan specimens by examining four specimens from Colombia deposited at the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (ICN); and at Laboratorio de Fauna Silvestre, Unidad Investigativa Federico Medem, INDERENA, Bogotá (IND):

ICN 5201, dry skin and skull, male adult from Finca El Buque, Villavicencio, Depto. Meta, 500 m.

IND 908, dry skin and skull, female subadult, La Tirana 25 km S + 22 km W Zaragoza, Depto. Antioquia, 1,000 m.

IND 2544, dry skin, male Finca El Buque, Villavicencio, Depto. Meta, 500 m.

IND 2545, dry skin, male, Finca El Buque, Villavicencio, Depto. Meta, 500 m.

The external measurements (mm) and weights (g) of the six specimens examined are summarized in table 1. The cranial measurements (mm) were done following Gardner (1973) and are presented in table 2. Basal length is also included to allow a better comparison with the holotype.

Discussion.

The two Venezuelan specimens are of small size with uniform dark-brown dorsal coloration fur short and close, 4 mm long on back; demarcation line on sides inconspicuous; ventral coloration grayish-brown; throat with a spot of yellowish hairs of variable size; ears black, naked, and short. Skull small, flat and low; nasals projecting from behind; postorbital protuberance inconspicuous; sagittal crest absent; canines short; pm3 more simplified than pm2.

The Venezuelan specimens bear a close resemblance to the specimen from Zaragoza in coloration and external and cranial measurements (Tables 1 and 2). The specimens from Villavicencio are larger and paler in dorsal coloration than the others examined. Their measurements seem to agree better with Osgood's (1913) description of *Peromyscus peruvianus*. A clarification of the subspecific status of the taxon requires the comparison of more material from the distributional range.

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