

America. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Massachusetts. 616 pp.) that far exceeds the currently-depicted natural distribution in the state (Ross and Ernst 1994. Cat. Amer. Amph. Rept. 600.1-600.14).

On 17 March 2001, at ca. 1630 h, an adult male *A. mississippiensis* measuring 312 cm in length was found dead within the riparian zone of Buffalo Slough, a tributary of the Cache River, 2.4 km SW of Egypt (T14N, R1E, S14), Craighead County, Arkansas, USA. This location lies at the northwestern extreme of the species' range in the United States (Conant and Collins, *op. cit.*). The alligator, discovered by two local youths (Joey Graham and Tim Lamb), was reported to an AGFC wildlife officer (Butch Wilkins) who immediately transported the specimen to Arkansas State University within the same county. The specimen, which had begun necrosis but exhibited no external wounds or signs of decay, was placed in a freezer at the Department of Biological Sciences at 2030 h. AGFC biologist Sam Barkley (who was involved with the alligator restocking program and who examined the specimen), stated that this alligator was not one of the original juvenile specimens released in this part of the state. Presumably, the animal died from exposure during a flooding episode and subsequent cold snap that occurred in the area one week prior to its discovery. This alligator represents the largest specimen ever reported from northeastern Arkansas.

The alligator was deposited into the Arkansas State University Museum of Zoology herpetological collection (ASUMZ 25591). We thank Sam Barkley for allowing us to salvage the alligator and for providing insight into its demise.

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PALEOSUCHUS TRIGONATUS (Schneider's Smooth-fronted Caiman) **NESTING**. Natural history and nesting patterns of forest-dwelling caimans is remarkably lacking due to the difficulty of finding and studying these animals in their remote habitats. In this contribution we document the characteristics, development, and hatching of a *Paleosuchus trigonatus* nest found near the Tiputini River in the Ecuadorian Amazon Basin.

The nest was discovered serendipitously on 30 September 1999 while walking in a sector of *terra firme* forest at least 2 km away from the main river and 4.5 m from a shallow stream ca 1 m wide. The nest was at the base of a tree that had a broken branch, producing a gap in the canopy. This resulted in the nest being located under ca. 82% canopy coverage in the area that received the most direct sunlight.

The nest was built with decomposing leaf litter, small branches, and soil. Small roots were found throughout, indicating that it was not recently constructed. The nest was of typical size for caimans, with a diameter of 1.40 m, and a height of 39 cm. The egg chamber was located in the center of the leaf pile and was 18 cm long, 22 cm wide, and 31 cm deep at its deepest point. The nest contained 16 fertile eggs that were on average 68.65 ± 3.3 cm long, 43.61 ± 0.61 cm wide and 73.75 ± 3.11 g in weight; and one infer-

tile egg that was 50.8 cm long, 41.7 cm wide and 47 g. By the time of discovery, no band was evident when examining the eggs against a flashlight, but they were opaque enough to assume that the eggs were developing. The bands probably went all the way to the poles.

Daytime temperature was monitored regularly during the first month showing an average of 27°C on the surface and 30°C at the egg chamber. On 27 November the nest was found to have hatched. All the eggs appeared to have hatched successfully (the infertile egg was removed upon discovery). In the shells there were numerous ants that were eating the remains of blood and yolk attached to the shells, which suggests a very recent hatching (probably the previous day at the earliest). On 19 March 2000 we found five juvenile dwarf caimans within 100 m from the nest (see measurements in Table 1) and no other crocodylian was found in the creek.

The juveniles were found spread out in both directions of the creek, not clumped in a group and when they were caught they were very feisty and not prone to exhibit distress calls, unlike other juvenile caimans. Day and night surveys of the small creek as far as 500 m in both directions failed to reveal the presence of any adult caiman suggesting that the female did not guard the nest or neonates.

It is difficult to speculate about the survival of the clutch as there was a large flood at about the time of hatching (and before we found the hatchlings) that could have moved some of the hatchlings down the river. However, tiger herons (*Tigrisoma lineatum*) do occur in the area and were often seen in this same habitat in hunting position. It is interesting that the placement of the nest was right below a gap in the canopy such that it received direct sun during some hours of the day. Such combination of a gap in the canopy and proximity to a creek might be important cues that the female uses in order to build a successful nest.

Data were collected during the activities, and as a byproduct, of a course in tropical ecology offered by Boston University and Universidad San Francisco de Quito at Tiputini Biodiversity Station. We thank Mayer Rodriguez, Hendry Navaez, Franklin Narvaez, Jaime Guerra, and Bradley Kline for their help in the field, and K. Swing, T. Kunz, and D. Romo for editorial comments on the manuscript.

TABLE 1. Mean measurements, standard deviation, minimum and maximum measurements of 5 juvenile *Paleosuchus trigonatus* found in the basin of the Tiputini River in the Ecuadorian Amazon. SVL = Snout-vent Length, TL = Total Length, HL = Head Length, HW = Head Width.

	Weight (g)	SVL (cm)	TL (cm)	HL (mm)	HW (mm)
Mean	103	17.34	31.62	52.65	20.83
SD	13.27	0.67	1.14	1.5	1.85
Min	85	16.1	29.9	50.09	17.28
Max	120	18	32.8	54.21	22.27

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