

TUCSON SHOVEL-NOSED SNAKE
(Chionactis occipitalis klauberi)

STATUS: No Federal status; removed from the Endangered Species Act Candidate list on September 23, 2014 ([79 FR 56730](#)).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A small snake (10-17 inches) in the family Colubridae, with a shovel-shaped snout and an inset lower jaw. The scales are smooth, in 15 rows and the anal plate is divided. Their overall coloring mimics the coral snake, with a pale yellow to cream-colored body with 21 or more black or brown saddle-like bands across the back, with orange-red saddle-like bands in between. The most notable features distinguishing them from the other subspecies are (a) the orange-red bands suffused with dark pigment, making them appear brown or partly black, and (b) both black and red bands not encircling the body.

HABITAT: Occurs in dry desert habitats, including sandy dunes, desert washes and valleys, and bajadas. Associated with soils that are soft, sandy loams, with sparse gravel.

RANGE: Historical: A roughly 35 mile-wide swath running along the Phoenix-Tucson corridor in northeastern Pima, southwestern Pinal, and eastern Maricopa counties. Historically found in the Avra and Santa Cruz valleys in Pima County, western Pinal County, and a portion of eastern Maricopa County.

Current: Based on recent genetic analysis (Wood et al. 2014¹), the subspecies' current range totals over 7.7 million acres in central and western Arizona including La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma counties. No systematic surveys have been conducted to assess the status of the subspecies throughout its range; however, collection data indicate that the subspecies is found throughout the entirety of its estimated range.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: The most important stressor affecting the subspecies includes potential loss of Sonoran Desertscrub habitat due to existing urban development and potential future urban development within this habitat. Additional sources of habitat loss include road construction, use, and maintenance; conversion to agricultural use; wildfires; solar energy development; and climate change and drought. However, much of its newly refined range is unlikely to be affected by these factors in the foreseeable future.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: Various, including lands owned or managed by Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, several Tribes, the State of Arizona, and private.

NOTES: Considered a "Tier 1b Species of Greatest Conservation Need" in the Arizona Game and Fish Department draft document, Arizona's State Wildlife Action Plan. Three habitat conservation plans have been in various stages of development and progress in the southern portion of the species range for several years.

Updated October 2014

¹ Wood, D.A., R.N. Fisher, and A.G. Vandergast. 2014. Frayed boundaries: color and gene flow patterns among parapatric subspecies of the Western Shovel-nosed Snake (*Chionactis occipitalis*). PLOS ONE 9: 1489–1507