AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

Transfer of Boa constrictor occidentalis from Appendix II to Appendix I.

B. PROPONENT

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Reptilia

12. Order: Serpentes

13. Family: Boidae

14. Subspecies: Boa constrictor occidentalis Philippi, 1873

15. Common Names:
English: Argentine boa constrictor
French: boa constricteur de l'Argentine
Spanish: Ampalagua, Lampalagua, Boa de las Vizcacheras, Boa constrictor
German: argentinischen Boa constrictor, argentinischen Königsschlange.

16. Code Numbers: L-305.004.003.001

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: It occurs in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia (13.77). It is the southernmost subspecies of Boa constrictor. The southern limit is at about lat. 38°S., Lihuel Calel, La Pampa, Argentina (8). The northern limit is determined by the occurence of another subspecies Boa constrictor amarali, at about lat. 20° - 21° (Map, Annex 2).

In Paraguay, it occurs in the Gran Chaco area, from 21°S. to the Argentine border.

In Bolivia, it may occur in the sector adjacent to Argentina or Paraguay, but no accurate data exist.

In Argentina, it occurs in all semi-arid llanuras of the following provinces : Salta, Jujuy, Chaco, Formosa, Catamarca, La Rioja, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Córdoba, Santa Fé, San Luis, San Juan, Mendoza and La Pampa (1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 18).

Currently, it occurs locally throughout its original range in areas where it has almost totally disappeared, such as Tucumán Mendoza and La Pampa (6, 14, 20).

22. Population: Although no population studies exist, the trend of the populations is known. There is a consensus between all bodies of these countries, officials and private persons, in recognizing

that this subspecies is becoming increasingly rare. The situation in the Argentine Provinces are as follows:

In Córdoba, it is scarce due to the extensive trade in it.

In Tucumán it is considered potentially endangered for two reasons:

alteration of the habitat and

exploitation for leather (14).

In Mendoza it has disappeared. Occasionally, some specimens are found at the North or East limit of the Province. Old residents make reference to its former abundance. Some skins may be found in the houses of country people. The animal has been practically exterminated from fear, trade or hunting (12, 20, 23). The rarity of this animal is such in this Province that the wildlife Management Authorities do not consider it as part of the current animal list for Mendoza (6).

In San Juan, the Management Authorities consider that it has suffered a major reduction in numbers as a consequence of the impact of the illegal hunting (6).

In La Pampa, it is extremely rare; it is practically never seen and there are only three records (6).

In San Luis, the Management Authorities consider that it suffers decreasing numbers due to the poaching for trade in its leather, and that it is threatened (6).

In Salta, the authorities recognize a reduction in numbers which should lead to protection until it is proved to be recovering (6).

In Catamarca, the Management Authorities consider that populations have been considerably reduced as soon as hunting started; it was fairly abundant before (6).

In La Rioja, the authorities consider this subspecies as vulnerable (6).

Chaco, Formosa and Santiago del Estéro are the Provinces in which this animal is most common. There are few data on population status, but the subspecies finds, without any doubt, its best refuge in the extensive forest of this region.

The importance of Argentina in the management of Boa c. occidentalis can deduced from its distribution. The management of the populations of Paraguay and Bolivia may only be compared with that in the Argentine Provinces of Salta and Formosa.

If we take into account the fact that this subspecies is legally protected in both Bolivia and Paraguay, we may infer the existence of an international consensus on the need to protect its populations.

23. Habitat: This boa occurs in area with semi-arid climate, in forested or shrubby environments, in the following phytogeographic régions: Chaqueña, Monte and Espinal (3).

It is more abundant in the phytogeographic région of Chaqueña. Currently, this environment is much altered by extensive timber industry and cattle husbandry (15). The human encroachment on this type of vegetation is essentially due to the extraction of Quebracho for tannin and other timber species. Currently deforestation occurs for cattle husbandry and agriculture. Fire is used as a deforestation technique and the use of defoliants has been alleged. In many areas, not only the primary forest has disappeared but also the herbaceous layer, the only remaining plants being spring shrubs of Bromeliaceas and cacti (3). This severe alteration of the environment has led to a drastic reduction of this subspecies in Tucumán (14), East Chaco and Formosa in Argentina (22). In Paraguay this vegetation type is less altered.

In the Monte phytogeographic region, the shrub heath is dominant. It is the most arid region of those in question (3). Here, it occurs preferably in the sub-arid heath and sandy environment (2). In its eastern part, the Monte has been partially altered for the vine culture in Argentina. However, a large part of it still exists. If the subspecies lives in the region, its abundance is decreasing in connection with the increase in the latitude. The Espinal phytogeographic region is charaterized by Prosopis sp. forests (3). Sightings of this boa in this environment are very rare, which is largely due to its almost total alteration by agriculture, cattle husbandry and deforestation for firewood in Argentina.

Boa c. occidentalis is associated with vizcacha (Lagostomus maximus) dens. They find refuge in these dens and feed on these animals (1, 10, 19). This rodent creates problems for agriculture and it is actively destroyed. One means to destroy it is to burn its dens using fuel or flamethrowers; toxic gas is also used (19). There is no doubt that these techniques have a drastic effect on the population of this boa.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: At the national level, this boa has been legally exploited for its leather for the manufacture of garments (7). It was one of the most exploited snakes in Argentina and Paraguay. The natives capture it to a lesser extent for its fat and occasionally for its meat for medicinal purposes or food. There is an illegal trade in live specimens for pets in Buenos Aires.

Argentina has imported about 30,000 skins from Paraguay for domestic use and also for re-export (5).

The main domestic market is in Buenos Aires, because most of the skins must enter this industry to be traded internally or for export; this was successful for a long period. This boa has been legally protected in Argentina since January 1986. This has stopped the entry of skins into Buenos Aires and their export, except for those authorized prior to that date, which were eligible for trade for a maximum period of 180 days.

Paraguay, depending on the circumstances, exported this subspecies occassionally.

Due to the apparent rare occurrance of this subspecies in Bolivia, one can assume that no significant trade exists there.

32. Legal International Trade: Argentina exported large quantities of skins of this subspecies. It provided the main part of the statistics for international trade in Boa constrictor.

From this can be deduced the need to separate this subspecies of the group Boa constrictor. The species has not been exploited as a whole and homogeneously. Some populations have suffered more than others - occidentalis - and, therefore, it is necessary to consider them separately.

The Argentine export statistics are as follows (5):

1972 to 1978: 21,334 skins

1979: 20,558 skins

1980: 21,249 skins

1981: 20,148 skins

1982: 19,154 skins

1983: 10,733 skins

1984: 4,511 skins

1985: 1,835 skins

TRAFFIC (USA) reported the entry into the U.S.A. of 18,545 products and 3,456 skins from Argentina between September 1983 and October 1984.

CITES Parties have reported a total of 17,401 Boa constrictor spp. skins traded in 1978 and 33,680 in 1979 (24), about 30,000 of the latter being occidentalis, imported by Argentina from Paraguay (5).

Between 1980 and 1982, 2,165 shipments of Boa constrictor have been reported with an annual mean of 64,855 units of products and live animals to which 21,395 m. of leather have to be added.

Of all these shipments (2,165) only 176 concerned the subspecies B.c. constrictor and B.c. imperator (25).

The international trade in this resource should not exist in view of the legislation of the three involved countries.

Even though the national legislation of Argentina did not protect this boa until January 1986, all the provincial laws include it in their list of protected animals. Thus, no skins should ever have been exported from Argentina.

The same should apply to the 30,000 skins imported from Paraguay in 1979, which recently were re-exported. However, we do not know at all the circumstance of this transaction by Paraguay, but it is in violation of its legislation which totally prohibits trade in the native wild fauna.

Due to the rare occurrance of this snake in Bolivia, we assume that no significant trade should exist. In addition, it is very difficult to determine the number of skins of this subspecies from the total declared in the statistics as Boa constrictor spp. exported from Bolivia, because a large part may correspond to the Boa constrictor constrictor.

Live specimens are sold in the United States of America under the name "Argentine boa constrictor" and the price is US$ 575. These specimens are often declared as bred in captivity (11).

33. Illegal Trade: Hunting of the subspecies in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay is illegal. The way illegal trade is conducted in Argentina has two different forms:

a) The existence of the legislation, either national or provincial, which protects it makes hunting an infraction. The same applies in Bolivia and Paraguay if we take into account that this boa is also protected by their legislation. However, it is continually hunted, and throughout the year goods are continuously smuggled to the tanners involved in the trade. Thus, the point is reached where, due to the fact that the products are held until legalization of the goods is requested, they may be traded legally in spite of their illegal origins. With the current (January 1986) ban on trade in Argentina, we can hope that this way of action will disappear.

It is possible that skins of this subspecies leave this country illegally.

b) There exists a certain illegal trade in which it is attempted to send out skins through the border or across the provincial limits without transport documents or any type of permit to validate the goods. The proof of this is the repeated press communiques issued by the provincial authorities of Argentina on the occasion of seizures. There is a seizure report (13/8/14) concerning skins of this boa made in Formosa (Argentina) for a total of 470 units which was communicated by the Gendarmería Nacional to non-governmental organizations.

Another example is the procedure conducted in Rioja in 1983, which resulted in the discovery of 2,780 skins of this snake (28). In the Province of Santiago de Estero, in Monte Quemado, a skin collector received, between 1983-1984, between 200-400 skins of this boa per month (22), the hunting of which is totally prohibited.

At the international level, we do not know the volume of illegal trade in this subspecies, except that it has been reported that skins left Argentina under the name Tupinambis sp. skins, in which trade is authorized (22). TRAFFIC (South America) reported to the CITES Secretariat an illegal trade

of tonnes of wild skins leaving Uruguay to Asia and Europe. All these goods, coming from Paraguay, were only accompanied by shipping documents (21) which included various species, common names such as 31,290 crocodiles, 10,000 m. of anaconda, etc. Many documents declared only "wild skins".

34. Potential Trade Threats:

341. Live Specimens: The trade in live specimens is less significant than the trade in skins. There are few live specimens exported commercially and there also exist specimens exported from Argentina as scientific exchanges with foreign institutions. No doubt the most important factor in the drastic reduction of this resource is, apart from habitat alteration, the uncontrolled commercial exploitation.

342. Parts and Derivatives: Under "Population", the situation of this boid has been explained in accordance with the few studies existing and with the opinion of scientific institutions and administrations in charge of the national resources in Argentina, as well as the declining trend of this resource. There is a general opinion within these institutions which recognizes the reduction in the number of the subspecies, and that it is directly linked with the illegal trade in its skins.

4. Protection Status

41. National: In Argentina, the international trade in wildlife is regulated under the Ley Nacional de Conservación de la Fauna 22.421, Decreto Reglamentario 691/81, Resolución 144. At the national level, this boa is protected under this law in accordance with Resolución 24 of the Secretaría de Ganadería y Agricultura, which expressly prohibits the export, interprovincial trade and trade, under federal jurisdiction, of live specimens and products of Boa c. occidentalis (5). This resolution entered into force recently (23 January 1986). In addition it is protected under all the provincial laws of the area where it occurs (6).

The provincial laws under which this boa is protected in Argentina are the following:

Formosa: Ley de Caza y Conservación de la Fauna No. 305, Decreto Reglamentario 1584/67. Chaco: Ley No. 635, Decreto Reglamentario 226/75. Salta: Ley de Conservación de la Fauna Silvestre No. 55/3. This subspecies has also been legally protected for 10 years. Jujuy: protected under Ley No. 3014, Decreto 5096. Tucumán: Resolución No. 218/84. Santiago del Estero: this Province prohibits hunting of this boa in addition to having five departments with a total prohibition on hunting of wildlife. Córdoba: Decreto Ley 4046/58, expressly prohibits its hunting. Catamarca: Ley No. 2308/69 and its regulatory decrees expressly prohibit its hunting and trade. La Rioja: Disposición No. 195/82. Considered as a vulnerable species under this legislation which protects it. San Juan: protected by Ley No. 3845/78 and its amendment 5204/83, this law protects all useful wildlife for 10 years.

San Luis: protected under Decreto No. 812. It is considered endangered. Santa Fé: hunting of all reptiles is prohibited. La Pampa: protected under Disposición No. 191/84. In Mendoza it is so rare that it is not considered as belonging to its fauna; it is, therefore, not protected. The legal situation in all Argentina is clear, it is unanimously protected by all the Provinces and by the national legislation. Thousands of skins are repeatedly discovered, which confirms that hunting continues. Both in Santiago del Estero and Formosa, hundreds of skins of this boa are commonly seen in shops and tanneries.

There are provincial Wildlife Reserves in its range, most of which are adequately controlled. In addition, there is a National Reserve under the Parques Nacionales, la Reserva Natural Formosa, located in eastern Formosa Province, which has a small population in its 10,000 ha. Unfortunately, this reserve is not well controlled and, therefore, the protection of the resource is not guaranteed (22).

In Paraguay. the Decreto Presidencial 18.796 of 4 November 1975 prohibits hunting, import or export of all wildlife species (26).

CITES statistics and TRAFFIC (South America) findings demonstrate the repeated violation of this legislation.

Bolivia enacted the Ley de Vida Silvestre, Parques Nacionales, Caza y Pesca (Decreto Ley 12.301 of 14 March 1975). In Decreto Supremo 16.605 of 20 June 1979, which totally prohibits hunting and trade in endangered wildlife species, the list mentions the Boidae family, which includes this subspecies (26). Finally, on 27 June 1986 the Government established a total hunting ban for three years under Decreto Supremo No.21.312.

The creation of various National Parks planned in the Gran Chaco of Argentina and/or Paraguay will protect small but significant populations (22).

Its inclusion in the IUCN Red Data Book is imperative, the vulnerable category being the most appropriate.

It is considered fundamental to improve the control mechanism of the internal trade within the three states concerned, as the most sure measure in favour of conservation of the resource. Unfortunately, the economic situation of these countries, added to the occurrence of vast areas where controls are difficult, make difficult the adoption of drastic and sure measures. The international protection of the subspecies through its transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I will recognize the wish of the three countries (Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina) to protect it.

5. Information on Similar Species

Recently, Langhammer (1983), revised the group which includes the species Boa constrictor Linnaeus, 1758 by including a new subspecies Boa constrictor melanogaster Langhammer, 1983. Under its new arrangement, the group is composed of 8 subspecies which are the following: Boa constrictor constrictor Linnaeus, 1758; Boa constrictor amarali (Stull, 1932); Boa constrictor occidentalis Philippi, 1973;

Boa constrictor imperator Daudin, 1803; Boa constrictor melanogaster Langhammer, 1983; Boa constrictor sigma (Smith, 1943); Boa constrictor orophias, Linnaeus, 1758 and Boa constrictor nebulosa (Lazell, 1964).

In the work of Langhammer (1983), there is a key for the identification of these forms, as well as a detailed description of them, in particular for the live specimens.

Boa constrictor occidentalis is a subspecies of a generally very dark coloration. The back is dark chestnut, almost black with clearer hexagonal designs. The total number of such designs is 26-29 from the neck to the beginning of the tail. These designs have a light outline and the centre is as dark as the remainder of the back. On the side, a dark background which becomes lighter as it nears the belly, there is a linear yellow design which undulates longitudinally. The belly is a bright pattern of chestnut, beige and white. Except some juvenile specimens, almost all individuals of this form correspond exactly to this description.

In Annex I (1st figure), is shown the general appearance of the live specimens or raw skins compared with that of Boa constrictor ssp. presented in the CITES Identification Manual.

Undyed items and tanned skins show the annexed designs but more contrasted and lighter (Annex I, 2nd figure). Strongly dyed items which have lost the original pattern may be confused with other subspecies of Boa constrictor Linneaus, 1758. In the CITES Identification Manual other details for identification are given. With the initial description and the aid of the 1st figure of dorsal pattern, live specimens are readily recognizable.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Legislation of the range states confirms the need for better protection of the species than under CITES Appendix II.

7. Additional Remarks

It is necessary to remind that:

- the Boa constrictor subspecies present various morphological and ecological features which are unique and clear, which justify their independent management as biologically separate populations.

- the species Boa constrictor has not been homogeneously exploited in all its range.

- Boa constrictor occidentalis skins have represented the major percentage of the recent trade in Boa constrictor.

- the existence of an international market prepared to receive this resource is the only incentive to the companies which gather skins illegally in spite of the prohibition laws.

- international protection of this subspecies will discourage, partly, the illegal acquistion and facilitate implementation of the legislation in the three countries involved.

Finally, the support of all the Parties is required for the transfer of this subspecies from Appendix II to Appendix I because there is an evident consensus in the legislation of the three countries which manage the resource on the need for total protection of the subspecies in question.

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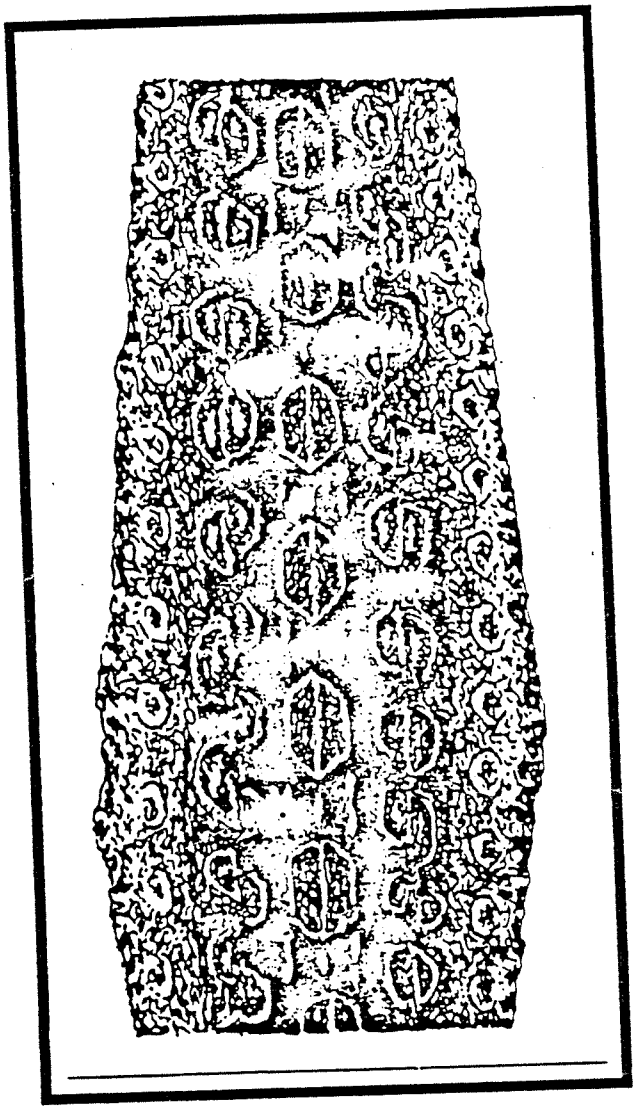
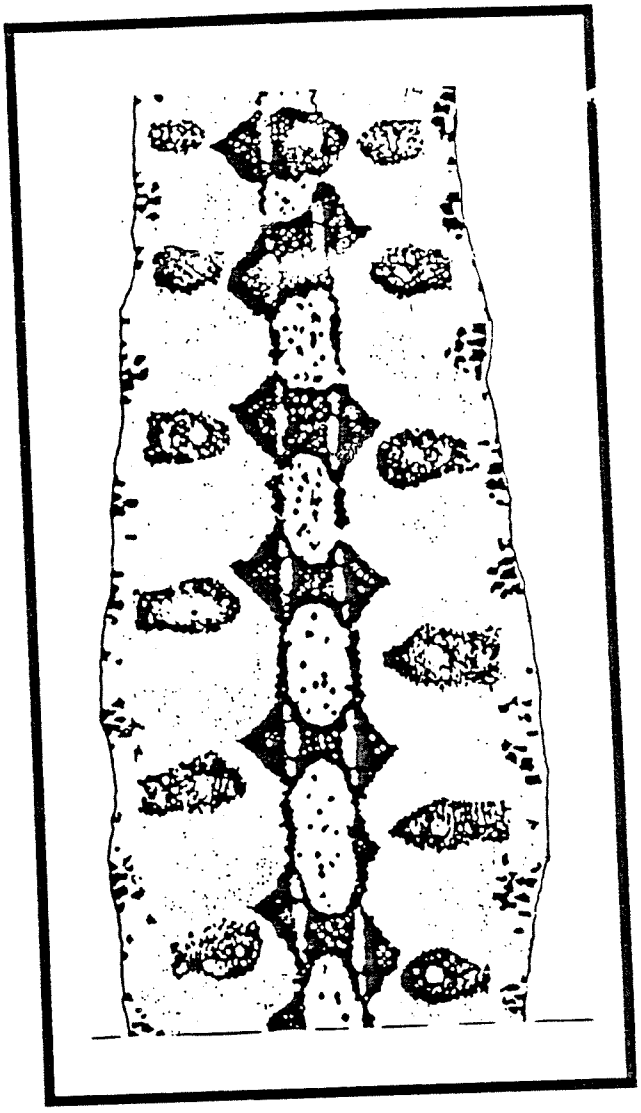
Anexo **1** Diseño comparado entre Boa constrictor occidentalis (A) y Boa constrictor constrictor (B) código L-305.004.003.001, del Manual de Identificación CITES, Vol. 5.

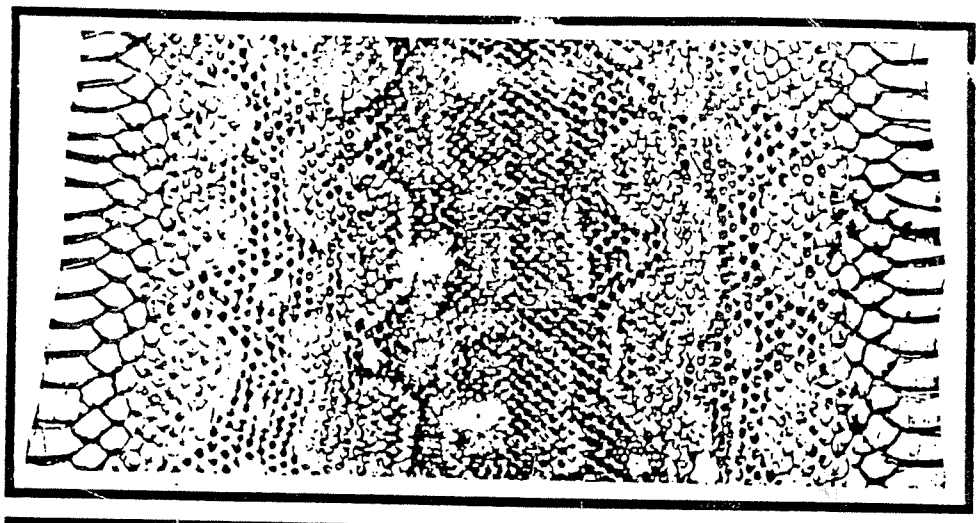


A

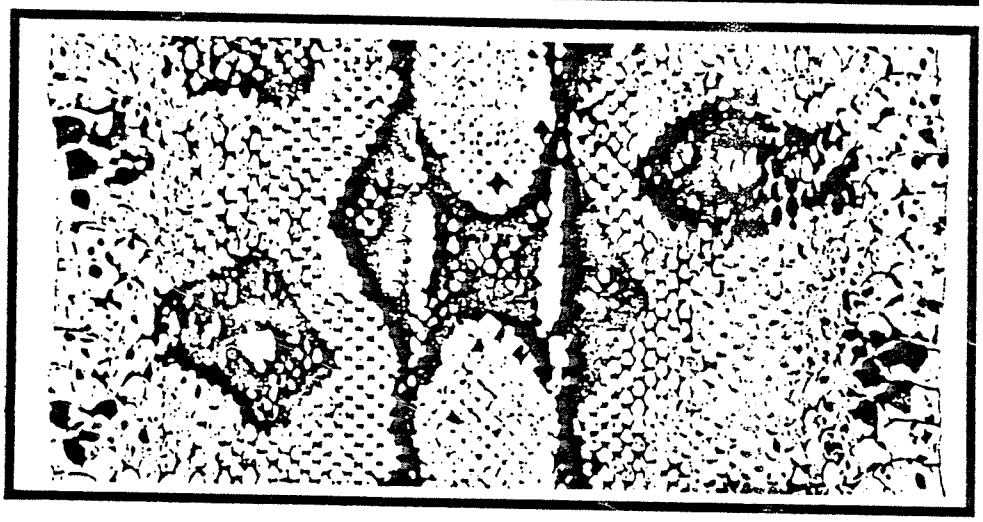


B

A



B



Anexo 2. Distribución geográfica de Boa constrictor occidentalis