

# STOMACH WORMS IN AN EASTERN YELLOW-BELLIED RACER FROM MONTANA

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*Physaloptera abjecta* (Leidy 1856) is a stomach-dwelling nematode that has been reported in colubrid snakes from California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Wisconsin (Leidy 1856, Mawson 1956, Morgan 1940, 1941, 1943, Reiber et al. 1940, Waitz 1961, Goldberg and Bursey 2001, Tucker et al 2001). In this note, we report its occurrence in an eastern yellow-bellied racer (*Coluber constrictor flaviventris*) from Montana. Eastern yellow-bellied racers occur on both sides of the Continental Divide in Montana (Werner et al 2004).

We collected one eastern yellow-bellied racer in Carbon County 12 km (7.5 mi) southeast of Bridger on Sage Creek Road, 45.21411° N, 108.84425° E (Datum WGS84) on 28 May 2005 as part of a survey of amphibians and reptiles in Montana. The snake was euthanized with an intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital following acceptable veterinary procedures (American Veterinary Medical Association 2001). It was preserved in 10-percent formalin and later stored in 70-percent ethanol according to standard reptile preservation procedures (Anderson 1965). We deposited the specimen in the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, Herpetology Collection as OMNH 41676. On preservation 7 (1 male, 6 females) stomach worms were removed from the stomach, identified as *P. abjecta* and deposited in the United States National Parasite Collection,

Beltsville, Maryland as USNPC 98265.

*P. abjecta* was originally described from a coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum* [= *Psammophis flagelliformis*]) from Pennsylvania by Leidy (1856). Identity of this snake was questionable as the coachwhip was not known to occur in Pennsylvania (Conant and Collins 1998). *P. variegata* (Reiber et al. 1940) described from an eastern racer (*C. constrictor*) collected in Florida, was synonymized with *P. abjecta* by Morgan (1941). *P. abjecta* has been reported from the coachwhip in Georgia (Reiber et al. 1940) as well as the eastern racer, eastern hog-nosed snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*), smooth greensnake (*Opheodrys* [= *Liopeltis*] *vernalis*) and common garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) from Georgia, Florida, or Wisconsin and the eastern glass lizard (*Ophisaurus ventralis*) from Georgia (Reiber et al. 1940, Morgan 1941, Mawson 1956).

*P. abjecta* is a member of the Physalopteridae and requires an insect intermediate host to complete its life cycle although frogs, snakes and mice may serve as paratenic (= transport) hosts (Anderson 2000). Members of the genus *Coluber* are known to include insects as well as reptiles, birds and mammal in their diet (Conant and Collins 1998). Montana is a new locality and a range extension for *P. abjecta*.

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