

## **CAPTIVE BIRTH OF MOJAVE RATTLESNAKES, *CROTALUS SCUTULATUS SCUTULATUS***

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Earlier this year I applied for and received a 'Non-Resident Scientific Collecting Permit' from the Arizona Fish and Game Department. The collecting trip was from July 14th through July 24th, and concentrated in the southern half of the state.

On the evening of July 19th, myself, Paul Krusling and Bill Maynard drove west from Phoenix on route 60 to a small town named Aguila. Here we picked up a dirt road, which passed through suitable habitat for Mojave rattlesnakes, *Crotalus scutulatus scutulatus*, and Sonora sidewinders, *Crotalus cercobombus cercobombus*, both of which I was permitted to collect. At about 2:00 am we stopped to hunt a large wash that extended on both sides of the road. It was along this wash that a pair of Mojave rattlesnakes were collected, and the female at this time appeared to be gravid.

Upon our return to Cincinnati, I measured and recorded the total lengths of both snakes - with the male measuring 94 cm, and the female measuring 76 cm. Each snake was placed in a 38 l aquarium fitted with a locking lid.

On 29th July, although distended with young, the female accepted a small mouse, which had been left in her cage overnight. By the second week in August, the distension had moved within cm or so of the female's vent, and it was obvious that she was nearing the end of her gestation period.

Typically, many females will shed their skin prior to egg laying or giving birth, and this was the case with the female Mojave, as she started going opaque on August 9th. On the morning of August 14th at about 10:00 am I found that the female had shed her skin, and also had given birth to eight young. All eight young were born alive, and there did not appear to be any deformities whatsoever.

The young rattlesnakes were removed from the cage, and the total length of each was measured and recorded (see Table 1 for individual lengths). Their total length ranged between 25 and 27 cm. Each young Mojave was placed in a plastic shoebox measuring 30.5x15x10 cm. A number (83-A, 83-B, 83-C, etc.) was assigned to each snake. The number indicated that they were born in 1983, and the letter helped keep each one separated to facilitate record keeping. In addition, the head or neck pattern of each snake was drawn on its feeding card. This served as identification in case the young were ever put together in a single container.

The shoeboxes were filled with newspaper as a substrate, thereby facilitating cage maintenance. A small plastic water dish was placed in each shoebox, as was a plastic retreat box made from the bottom of 2-liter pop bottles.

A few days after their birth, the young snakes started going opaque. The first shedding occurred on August 21st, and by August 24th the remaining seven snakes had shed their skins as well (see table 1 for individual dates). Feeding was first attempted on September 1st, when a pink mouse was placed in each shoebox overnight. By the following morning two of the young Mojaves had accepted this food. A second attempt at feeding was made on September 5th, and thawed lizard tails (*Anolis* and *Eumeces*) were used. Again, the food was placed in the shoeboxes overnight, but only with those snakes that hadn't eaten

yet. Overnight, two more young had accepted this food. The remaining four snakes that hadn't eaten were offered food again on September 17th and September 18th. The food that was offered was lizard tails and fuzzy mice, respectively. Now, all eight young had accepted their first meal. On September 18th, fuzzies were also placed in the shoeboxes of those young that had already eaten once, and they accepted their second meal within a matter of minutes. Fuzzy mice have been offered on a weekly basis, and the feeding dates are listed below in Table 1.

For now, these young Mojave rattlesnakes will be fed fuzzy mice once a week. After a few months, small mice will be used every ten days. After they reach sub-adult size, they will be fed adult mice every two weeks.

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Foto 1: *Crotalus scutulatus*, Mojave rattlesnake, California City, California, U.S.A. Foto C. Matisson.

Number	Length (cm)	Weight (g)	Shed	Food
83-A	26.0	12.9	210883	170983 AT 141083 MF
83-B	26.7	12.8	250883 061083	170983 AT 220983 MF
83-C	25.5	13.9	210883 230983	010983 MP 180983 MF 250983 MF 051083 MF
83-D	25.5	12.7	250883 290983	180983 MF 250983 MF 051083 MF
83-E	27.0	13.4	220883 270983	180983 MF 050983 ST
83-F	24.7	12.5	260883 280983	050983 ST 180983 MF 220983 MF 051083 MF
83-G	26.0	11.3	220883 011083	010983 MP 180983 MF 051083 MP
83-H	26.7	12.0	240883 101083	050983 AT 180983 MF 250983 MF 051083 MF

**Table 1:** Data of newborn Mojave rattlesnakes. Key: AT-Anole tail, ST-Skink tail, mp-mouse pinkie, mf-mouse fuzzy