CROTALUS OREGANUS HELLERI (Southern Pacific Rattlesnake [English]; ‘Éwii [Kumeyaay]; Àwii [Kwapa]). USA: CALIFORNIA: IMPERIAL Co.: Valley of the Moon (32.63103°N, 116.089099°W; WGS 84), 1136 m elev. 6 August 2022. Ethan Staats and Rexford Hill. Verified by Bradford D. Hollingsworth, San Diego Society of Natural History (SDSNH_HerpPC_05479, 05480; photo voucher). Juvenile of ca. 1 year, based on estimated size. A second individual (SDSNH_HerpPC_05481–05483; photo voucher) was also observed in the Valley of the Moon (32.63246°N, 116.08553°W; WGS 84; 1111 m elev.) on 6 August 2022. Adult of ca. 3 y, based on a rattle that had nine segments including the button. Both individuals were seen in the same sandy basin (Valley of the Moon), ca. 2 km east of the San Diego/Imperial counties border line, after full dark. Three previous Crotalus oreganus records are listed on VertNet (www.vertnet.org; 12 Aug 2022) from Imperial County, but we believe at least two of these (California Academy of Sciences [CAS] 4133; Louisiana Museum of Natural History, Louisiana State University [LSUMZ] 7751) are mistakes, and the first (SDSNH_HerpPC 39813) is at best unverifiable, given the location description. Record CAS 4133 is given as “Imperial County: Colorado Desert, 6 mi from Oak Grove”, but the description and coordinates occur near Oak Grove, California, which is in San Diego County, ca. 80 km west of the San Diego/Imperial counties border line. Record LSUMZ Herps 7751 is given as “Imperial: Lower Colorado River (possibly Palos Verdes)” without GPS coordinates, and Palos Verdes is an unverifiable location, but the “Lower Colorado River” lies ca. 140 km east across the entire Imperial Valley from the descending grade out from the Jacumba Mountains (currently thought to be the southeastern extent of the native distribution of Crotalus oreganus helleri in the USA) suggesting that this specimen likely represents a more eastern-distributed Crotalus species of similar appearance (possibly C. atrox or C. scutulatus), but the specimen is marked missing with the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science (D. Boyd, pers. comm.) so cannot be identified. Record SDSNH HerpPC 39813, collected by L. M. Klauber and C. E. Shaw in 1949, is given as “Imperial: Mountain Springs Grade; top of” presumably representing an area less than 5 km northwest from Valley of the Moon, however the location description is vague with respect to the county as the top of Mountain Springs Grade (contemporarily, US Interstate 8) weaves, headed east-to-west, from Imperial County into San Diego County, back into Imperial, back into San Diego again, back into Imperial again, and then finally back into San Diego County terminally; the specific location of this specimen is unknown, and C. o. helleri is not included in official Imperial County checklists (B. Hollingsworth, pers. comm.). These individuals therefore represent the first verifiable Imperial County records of C. o. helleri, and importantly the presence of two individuals of different life stages suggests that Valley of the Moon is inhabited by a resident population, rather than host to transient individuals; we suspect this latter case for the Mountain Springs Grade/County Park area, as it is frequently surveyed by hobbyists, but C. oreganus has never been recorded from the County Park area, while both C. pyrrhus and C. ruber frequently are. Interestingly, nearby our observations, in the same sandy basin, we also observed one adult C. pyrrhus (32.63204°N, 116.07954°W; WGS 84; 1106 m elev.), indicating that the Valley of the Moon may be one of only few desert localities where C. oreganus, C. pyrrhus, and C. ruber are all three sympatric, possibly the only locality for this in Imperial County. We respectfully acknowledge that these observations were made on unceded ancestral land of the indigenous Kumeyaay and Kwapa peoples.

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