



The first record of the genus *Cnemaspis* Strauch (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Laos with the description of a new species

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Abstract

A new species of a presumably karst dwelling Rock Gecko, *Cnemaspis laoensis* **sp. nov.**, is described from Dong Phu Vieng National Protected Area, Savannakhet Province, Laos. *Cnemaspis laoensis* is differentiated from all other Southeast Asian *Cnemaspis* in having a unique combination of color pattern (in alcohol) and scale characteristics. *Cnemaspis laoensis* is the first record of *Cnemaspis* from Laos and extends the range of this genus approximately 600 km to the northeast. Its presence in Laos underscores the need for continued exploration of karst habitats throughout Indochina where *Cnemaspis* commonly occur.

Key words: Southeast Asia, taxonomy, karst, Indochina, Rock Gecko

Introduction

Southeast Asian Rock Geckos (genus *Cnemaspis* Strauch 1887) comprise one of the fastest growing lizards groups in all of Asia with no less than 23 species having been described within the last seven years (Chan & Grismer 2008; Das & Grismer 2003; Grismer & Chan 2008, 2009, 2010; Grismer & Das 2006; Grismer & Ngo 2007; Grismer *et al.* 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; J. Grismer *et al.* 2010). This in a large part, is due to explorations into new areas coupled with re-analyses of older taxonomies by implementing the use of new characters. As such, numerous synonymies have been untangled and clearer, more stable species boundaries have been delimited (Grismer *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b, 2010).

During a recent revision of Thai *Cnemaspis* (Grismer *et al.* in prep.), a specimen from the Dong Phu Vieng National Protected Area, Savannakhet Province, Laos was discovered in the holdings of the Thailand Natural History Museum. An examination of that specimen (THNHM 12433) revealed it to be a species of *Cnemaspis* in that it has a flattened head; large, somewhat forward and upwardly directed eyes with round pupils and no eyelids; a flattened body; and long, widely splayed limbs with long, inflected digits. However, it could not be assigned to any known species of *Cnemaspis* given that it has a unique combination of color pattern (in alcohol) and squamation characteristics. It is therefore described below as a new species. Given that the general herpetological knowledge of Laos is considerably less complete than that of its surrounding countries (see Bezuijen *et al.* 2010; Campden-Main 1970; Cox 1991; Deuve 1970; Grismer *et al.* 2007, 2008c, 2008d; Inger *et al.* 1999; Manthey & Grossmann 1997; Stuart 2005; Stuart & Emmet 2006; Stuart *et al.* 2006; Teynie *et al.* 2004; Ziegler 2002) makes this discovery even more significant in that it represents a new country record for this genus. Additionally, this specimen extends the range of *Cnemaspis* approximately 600 km to the northeast from the Khao Ang Ru Ni, Chachoengsao Province in eastern Thailand (Grismer *et al.* in prep.).