

A new species of *Gegeneophis* Peters (Amphibia: Gymnophiona: Caeciliidae) from Maharashtra, India

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Abstract

A new species of caeciliid caecilian (Amphibia: Gymnophiona), *Gegeneophis seshachari*, is described from the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, India. Known only from the type specimen, this distinctive species differs from all other Indian caeciliids in lacking secondary annuli, and in possessing an unsegmented terminal shield. A rediagnosis of *Gegeneophis* is presented, and the caeciliid fauna of India is briefly discussed.

Key words: caecilians, herpetology, Western Ghats, South Asia, systematics

Introduction

Beddome (1870) described *Epicrium carnosum* from two caecilian specimens from Peria Peak, Wynaad (Wayanad), in the Western Ghats of Kerala, South India. This heralded the beginning of scientific knowledge of the caeciliid caecilian fauna of India. *Epicrium* Wagler was later (Gray, 1850) considered a junior synonym of *Ichthyophis* Fitzinger, but Günther (1875) recognised fundamental differences between Beddome's species and *Ichthyophis*, and Peters (1880) established the genus *Gegeneophis*, with *G. carnosus* the type species by monotypy. As currently conceived (Pillai & Ravichandran 1999), *Gegeneophis* includes two additional species from the Western Ghats and a single species from North East India. Here we describe a fifth species of *Gegeneophis*, based on a single, highly distinctive specimen from Maharashtra. The new species differs from all other Indian caeciliids in lacking secondary annuli and in possessing an unsegmented terminal shield, necessitating rediagnosis of *Gegeneophis*.