



Redescription and variation of *Micrurus paraensis* Cunha & Nascimento 1973 (Serpentes: Elapidae)

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Abstract

A Neotropical snake, *Micrurus paraensis* Cunha & Nascimento 1973 from east of Pará state, Brazil is described. This snake is found in secondary forest vegetation and remnants of tropical rainforest in Suriname, and Brazil from Pará, Maranhão, Mato Grosso and Rondônia states. Some authors disagree about the validity of the specific status and they prefer to maintain the subspecific status. The objective of this paper is to enlarge the knowledge about *M. paraensis* morphology with a description of new systematic characters. External morphology of 64 specimens were analyzed. The species is characterized by the number of black bands on body (12 to 21) and by having a black cap beginning on rostral. The hemipenis is long and bifurcated.

Key words: Snake, *Micrurus paraensis*, Neotropical, taxonomy, hemipenis

Introduction

The Neotropical snake *Micrurus psyches paraensis* Cunha & Nascimento 1973 was described to allocate specimens from east of Pará state. The number of ventral and subcaudal scales, and the number of black rings on the body were the diagnostic characters to differentiate this taxon from the other two subspecies, *M. psyches psyches* (Daudin, 1803) and *M. psyches circinalis* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854). Hoge *et al.* (1978) described *Micrurus donosoi* based on specimens from São Félix do Xingu, south Pará. Later Nascimento *et al.* (1987) recognized as a melanic population from the taxon described by Cunha & Nascimento (1973), *Micrurus psyches paraensis*. This color pattern can be observed in some populations, as the south and east Pará populations.

Cunha & Nascimento (1978) comments about the possibility of *M. psyches paraensis* do not be subspecies of *psyches*, observing that *M. psyches psyches* has a higher number (23 to 37) of black body rings, besides do not being registered for Brazilian territory, its distribution is limited to Venezuela, north Guyana, Suriname and French Guyana (Roze, 1996). In contrast, the subspecies *M. psyches paraensis* has a lower number (13 to 20) of black body rings.

Hoge & Romano (1981), revising the poisonous snakes from Brazil, raised *M. p. paraensis* to the specific category. However, in posterior papers, the specific name was not adopted (see: Roze, 1982; Campbell & Lamar, 1989). Later, Cunha & Nascimento (1982) contributed to Hoge & Romano's (1981) affirmation, considering *M. paraensis* valid and distinct from the subspecies cited above.

Abuys (1987) described *M. paraensis debruini* based on one specimen from south Suriname. Distinguished from *Micrurus paraensis* by double white rings on the tail, in contrast to this species, that possesses the single white rings. In a recent review of the coralsnakes of the Americas, Roze (1996) proposed these sub-