

Rediscovery and redescription of the type of *Philodryas laticeps* Werner, 1900 and the taxonomic status of *P. oligolepis* Gomes, 1921 (Serpentes, Colubridae)

HUSSAM ZAHER^{1,4} GUSTAVO SCROCCHI² & ROBERTA MASIERO³

¹Museu de Zoologia, Universidade de São Paulo, Caixa Postal 42494-970, São Paulo, SP, Brasil. E-mail: hzaher@usp.br

²Instituto de Herpetología, Fundación Miguel Lillo, Miguel Lillo 251, 4000 San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina.
E-mail: gustavo.scrocchi@gmail.com

³Museu de Zoologia, Universidade de São Paulo, Caixa Postal 42494-970, São Paulo, SP, Brasil. E-mail: rlmasiero@hotmail.com

⁴Corresponding author

Abstract

Philodryas laticeps Werner, 1900 was previously known only from the holotype, which was believed to be lost during the World Wars. We found the holotype to be housed in the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin and here redescribe it and report on three additional specimens from the collections of the Instituto Butantan, São Paulo and Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin. We conclude that *Philodryas oligolepis* Gomes, 1921 and *P. affinis* Müller, 1928 are junior synonyms of *Philodryas laticeps* Werner, 1900. All specimens share the presence of a black mucosa surrounding the larynx and trachea in the floor of the mouth and distal rows of middle sized spines disposed in a typical “V-shaped” configuration on the asulcate surface of the hemipenial body, two uniquely derived features absent in all other species of the genus *Philodryas*. Intraspecific variation of external morphology, hemipenes, and coloration are documented.

Key words: Xenodontinae, *Philodryas laticeps* Werner, *Philodryas oligolepis* Gomes, *Philodryas affinis* Müller, taxonomy, hemipenis, distribution

Introduction

The genus *Philodryas* is known to include 15 to 22 species (we recognize 18, see Table 1) of large diurnal South American snakes for which few taxonomic papers are available (Peters and Orejas-Miranda, 1970; Thomas, 1976, 1977, 1997; Thomas and Johnson, 1984; Thomas and Fernandes, 1996; see Table 1). Until recently, *Philodryas laticeps* was recognized as a subspecies of *P. viridissima* (Thomas, 1976), and represented one of the most poorly known taxa of the genus. The species was described by Werner (1900), who based his description on only one specimen. This specimen was thought to be housed in the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, because Werner worked extensively with the Vienna collection and signed as a member of this museum the paper in which *Philodryas laticeps* is described. This fact might have misled previous workers who tried to locate the specimen. The holotype of *P. laticeps* was finally found to be housed in the Berlin Museum für Naturkunde under the collection number ZMB 15704, having been “donated” to the Museum by Ferdinand Weichberger. The information related to the specimen bears locality data from “Santa Catharina, Brasilien,” the same as the type locality published by Werner. Besides, the specimen matches perfectly the original description, showing the unusual scutellation of two preoculars and three postoculars mentioned by Werner.

Werner (1900) distinguished *Philodryas laticeps* from the two uniformly bright green species *P. olfersii* and *P. viridissima* mainly by the presence of two preoculars and three postoculars, recognizing a closer rela-