



A new species of *Pareas* (Serpentes: Colubridae: Pareatinae) from the Gaoligong Mountains, southwestern China

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Abstract

A new species of *Pareas* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes: Colubridae: Pareatinae) is described from Gaoligong Mountains, Yunnan province, southwestern China. The new species is distinguished from congeners in the following combination of traits: preoculars 1/1; subocular and postocular fused into a single crescent-shaped scale; anterior temporals 1, posterior 2–3; 15 dorsal rows on whole body, 9 median rows feebly keeled (invisible on neck); vertebral scales slightly enlarged; ventrals 175; subcaudals 76 (excluding terminal spine), all divided; a big black oval patch on the back of head; two round black spots on each side of the face.

Key words: *Pareas nigriceps* sp. nov., snakes, systematics, taxonomy, Yunnan

Introduction

Members of the colubrid genus *Pareas* Wagler, 1830 are small and slender with a blunt snout, no mental groove and no teeth on the anterior part of maxillary. This southeastern Asian genus is widely distributed from about 10°S to 35°N and from 80°E to 125°E (Rao & Yang 1992). According to Rao & Yang (1992), Ota *et al.* (1997), Zhao *et al.* (1998), Jiang (2004), Huang (2004), and Grossmann & Tillack (2003), there are nine valid species in the genus *Pareas*, namely *Pareas boulengeri*, *P. carinatus*, *P. formosensis*, *P. hamptoni*, *P. iwesakii*, *P. margaritophorus*, *P. monticola*, *P. nuchalis* and *P. stanleyi*. Seven of them are distributed in China (Zhao, 2006). Other species previously included in this genus are now referred to the genus *Asthenodipsas* Peters, 1864.

During a Biodiversity Survey of the Gaoligong Mountains in May 2005, we collected two specimens of *Pareas* that could not be assigned to any of the known species, and which we describe here as a new species. We also present a new key to identifying the species of *Pareas*.

Material and methods

Specimens were preserved in 5% formalin solution and deposited in the Animal Museum, Hunan Normal University, Changsha, Hunan, China (HNU). Morphological traits of the specimens were studied with a SZ40-Olympus stereo- microscope. Measurements were taken to the nearest 0.01 mm using vernier caliper except for snout-vent length (SVL) and tail length (TL), which were taken with a flexible ruler to the nearest millimeter. Morphological description and scale counts follow Dowling (1951) and Zhao (1998). The terminal scute (tip) is excluded from the number of subcaudals. A preanal scale is a small single or divided scale