



A new species of *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger, 1890 (Squamata: Colubridae) from Thailand and Myanmar

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Abstract

A new species of the colubrid genus *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger 1890 is described. *Dendrelaphis nigroserratus* **sp. nov.** occurs in a part of West Thailand as well as in the extreme south of Myanmar. Morphologically, *D. nigroserratus* sp. nov. is similar to *D. cyanochloris* (Wall, 1921) with which it occurs sympatrically. It is distinguished from the latter by its highly conspicuous neck coloration, high incidence of paired postparietal shields and its much larger size. In coloration, it resembles *D. striatus* (Cohn, 1906) from which it is distinguished by several aspects of its morphology. The discovery of *D. nigroserratus* **sp. nov.** underscores the notion that the hilly western parts of Thailand are in need of further exploration.

Key words: *Dendrelaphis cyanochloris*, *Dendrelaphis nigroserratus* **sp. nov.**, *Dendrelaphis striatus*, Indochina, South-east Asia, taxonomy

Introduction

Thailand has been accessible to foreign visitors for a long time. Consequently, many herpetologists have visited the country to explore and document its herpetofaunal richness. Nevertheless, new species are still being described, especially snakes (e.g. David *et al.* 2002; Pauwels *et al.* 2002; Vogel & Van Rooijen 2007). In general, snakes are notoriously hard to find due to their low densities and elusive habits (e.g. Van Rooijen 2009), such that more undescribed species are expected to inhabit this country. This is particularly true for the northern and hilly western parts of Thailand, which remain underexplored (e.g. Pauwels *et al.* 2001). Indeed, some recent efforts have resulted in several new snake records from northern Thailand (Pauwels *et al.* 2001, 2009a, b; Tillack *et al.* 2006; Murphy *et al.* 2008), confirming our limited knowledge about the herpetofauna of this region.

In contrast to Thailand, Myanmar has been relatively inaccessible for foreign scientists for a long time. Since the work of George Boulenger, Malcolm Smith and Frank Wall in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, knowledge of the Myanmar herpetofauna remained more or less stationary until the initiation of the joint Myanmar-USA Myanmar Herpetological Survey (Wogan *et al.* 2008). This extensive survey greatly enhanced knowledge of Myanmar's herpetofauna (e.g. Wogan *et al.* 2008; Vogel & Van Rooijen 2011b), but it is safe to assume that species richness is still grossly underestimated.

Thailand and Myanmar are home to several species of the colubrid genus *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger, 1890. *Dendrelaphis* are slender, diurnal snakes that are predominantly arboreal and feed mainly on lizards and amphibians (e.g. Smith 1943). Boulenger (1894), Wall (1921), Meise and Henning (1932), Mertens (1934), Smith (1943) and Leviton (1968) have in turn revised the systematics of this genus. Lately however, a comprehensive revision of the genus has led to the description of nine new species, the revalidation of six species and the elevation to specific status of seven subspecies (Van Rooijen & Vogel 2008a, b, c, 2009; 2010; 2012; Vogel & Van Rooijen 2007; 2008; 2011a, b, c; Ziegler & Vogel 1999). During this review, two specimens, one from the province Tak, Thailand, the other from Mergui (Myeik), Myanmar, caught our attention. These specimens are similar to *D.*