



Article

urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:1A573F56-885A-4F36-B144-5D852317CF5D

A new species of *Amphisbaena* Linnaeus (Squamata, Amphisbaenidae) from the state of Maranhão, northern Brazilian Cerrado

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Abstract

We describe a new species of *Amphisbaena* based on a single specimen collected in the northern Brazilian Cerrado, municipality of Loreto, state of Maranhão, Brazil. The new species is characterized by presenting a unique combination of characters including: absence of precloacal pores, body annuli 306, caudal annuli 21, autotomic site in the eighth postcloacal annulus, dorsal sulci absent, 10 dorsal segments and 14 ventral segments in a midbody annulus.

Key words: Amphisbaenia, *Amphisbaena* new species, taxonomy, Cerrado

Resumo

Nós descrevemos uma nova espécie de *Amphisbaena* com base em um espécime coletado no norte do Cerrado Brasileiro, no município de Loreto, estado do Maranhão, Brasil. A nova espécie é caracterizada por apresentar uma combinação única de caracteres incluindo: ausência de poros pré-cloacais, 306 anéis corporais, 21 anéis caudais, sítio de autotomia no oitavo anel pós-cloacal, sulco dorsal ausente, 10 segmentos dorsais e 14 segmentos ventrais em um anel do meio do corpo.

Palavras chave: Amphisbaenia, *Amphisbaena* nova espécie, Taxonomia, Cerrado

Introduction

Amphisbaenia is a monophyletic group of squamates (Kearney & Stuart; 2004; Macey *et al.*, 2004). Numerous attempts to infer the phylogenetic relationships of amphisbaenians have been proposed based on both morphological and molecular data (Kearney, 2003; Kearney & Stuart; 2004; Macey *et al.*, 2004; Mott & Vieites, 2009). Mott & Vieites (2009) in the most recent molecular phylogenetic study proposed a hypothesis to the relationships of South American species including new taxonomic rearrangements, as the synonymization of *Anops*, *Aulura*, *Bronia*, *Cercolophia*, and *Leposternon* with the genus *Amphisbaena* Linnaeus, 1758.

Among six families of amphisbaenians known worldwide (Amphisbaenidae, Bipedidae, Blanidae, Cadeidae, Rhineuridae and Trogonophiidae), Amphisbaenidae includes 164 species in 11 genera, and occurs mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (77 species in nine genera) and South America (95 species in two genera) (Gans, 2005; Uetz, 2011). In Brazil, this group is represented by one family (Amphisbaenidae) and two genera, *Amphisbaena* and *Mesobaena* Mertens, 1925, with a total of 68 species (Bérnils & Costa, 2011; Ribeiro *et al.*, 2011). Six species of amphisbaenians are known to occur in the state of Maranhão, Brazil [*A. alba* Linnaeus, 1758, *A. anomala* (Barbour, 1914), *A. ibijara* Rodrigues, Andrade & Lima, 2003, *A. mitchelli* Procter, 1923, *A. polystega* (Duméril, 1851), and *A. vermicularis* Wagler, 1824].

In recent years, several new species of amphisbaenians have been described mainly due to herpetofaunal inventories (surveys where the soil is overturned), faunal rescue operations, and also analysis of incorrectly