

II. CONFIRMATION OF TWO COLOUR PHASES OF THE TENTACLED SNAKE (*Erpeton tentaculatum*)

The Tentacled Snake (*Erpeton tentaculatum*) has been known to science since LACÉPÈDE described it in 1800. The preponderance of Thai specimens of this snake are typically orange-coloured with brown markings and white spots, but some specimens are black with grey markings and white spots. The latter are so strikingly different from the former that various authors have been led to believe them to represent a distinct form. For reasons given below both forms are colour phases of *E. tentaculatum*.

During a seventeen month period the author kept in his possession three live female specimens of *tentaculatum* which had been taken in Bangkok. On 15 August 1965 one of them, a large specimen of the melanistic form, gave birth to sixteen young, of which eight were coloured as herself and eight as the typical orange form (the female is presently Thai National Reference Collections No. 523-323, and twelve of her young are Nos. 523-324 to 523-335). The second female (No. 523-315), of the orange form, gave birth to seven young over the period 25 August 1965 to 2 September 1965 (Nos. 523-316 through 523-322). Six of these were orange and one was black. The third female, an orange one, gave birth to twelve young on 24 June 1966, of which seven were black and five orange (three of the young were preserved and are Nos. 523-411 to 523-413). In all three cases the young were either distinctly black or typically orange.

It would appear from the above observations that *E. tentaculatum* has two distinct colour phases, and that females of each phase are capable of reproducing individuals of both phases in the same pregnancy. While specimens whose coloration may appear to be intermediate between these two extremes do exist, a specimen is usually distinctly melanistic or distinctly of the typical orange form. Further, there would appear to be no appreciable colour changes during the period of transition from juvenile to adult.

Paul Soderberg