

NOTES

Persian Gulf Sea Snake *Hydrophis lapemoides* (GRAY) : New records from Phuket Island, Andaman Sea, and the southern part of the Straits of Malacca

During my study of the genus *Hydrophis*, I examined two specimens of *Hydrophis lapemoides* (Gray), which constitute new records for the species for Thailand and Malaysia.

The first specimen (ZMUC-R66460) was caught in September 1985, by trawl from a boat, off Phuket port. The second specimen (ZMUC-R66101) was caught during the Galathea expedition in 1952 in the Straits of Malacca (lat. 1° 35' N., long. 103° 01' E.). The finding has not been published until now.

The description of the two specimens is as follows (the methods of measurement and counting follow SMITH (1926). When different, the characters of the latter specimen are given in parentheses). Both males; total length 815 mm (590 mm), tail length 65 mm (60 mm), 11 maxillary teeth behind the poison fangs (right side). Head moderate, body robust, its greatest diameter 2.5 times that of the neck. One pre- and two post-oculars. Temporals 2 + 3, 8 supralabials, the second in contact with the prefrontal, the third and fourth touching the eye, the last four small. Three infralabials in contact with the sublinguals, both pairs of which are well developed and in contact with one another. A series of small cuneate scales separating the infralabials behind the third. Body scalation: 32 (31) scale rows at the level of ventral scale no. 15, and 50 (46) scale rows on the thickest part of the body. Ventrals 304 (333) distinct throughout, twice as broad as the adjacent dorsal scales anteriorly, narrowed posteriorly. Subcaudals 46 (48).

The specimen from Phuket is whitish in colour, with 49 blackish-grey bands strongly dilated dorsally and disappearing ventrally; head greenish with no yellow curved mark above (the snake was 6 to 8 hours dead when studied). The specimen from Malacca is also whitish in colour but with 46 blackish-grey bands strongly dilated dorsally and disappearing ventrally; head greenish with a yellow curved mark above. Thus the characters found in these specimens are within the known variation of the species (SMITH, 1926, 1943; TORIBA & SAWAI, 1981; VOLSOE, 1939).

The known range of *H. lapemoides* (Gray) has been given as the Persian Gulf in the west to India and Sri Lanka in the east (SMITH, 1926; MINTON, 1966; AHMED, 1975). GANS (1978) further mentioned the species from the Bangladesh coast, however, erroneously (GANS in lit.). Until now the species has not been recorded from Thailand (TAYLOR, 1965), however, TORIBA & SAWAI (1981) obtained two new specimens from the Penang region, Malaysia. Recently TAMIYA et. al. (1983) re-examined some sea snakes from the Philippines, caught during the Visayan Sea Expedition of the *Alpha*

Helix in 1975 by DUNSON & MINTON (1978) and first identified as *H. ornatus* and *H. inornatus* by Dr. Harold K. Voris (Field Museum of Natural History). TAMIYA et al. (1983) classified the specimens as belonging to *H. lapemoides*. However, in the spring of 1987 I examined these specimens (RASMUSSEN, in prep.), and none of them turned out to be *H. lapemoides*.

With the present records and the records from Malaysia the range of *H. lapemoides* can be summarized as follows: the Persian Gulf, the coasts of Pakistan and India, the west coast of Thailand and Malaysia to the southern part of the Strait of Malacca.

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