

**A NEW SPECIES OF THE SNAKE GENUS AMPHIESMA
(SERPENTES: COLUBRIDAE: NATRICINAE)
FROM WESTERN SUMATRA, INDONESIA**

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ABSTRACT. – A new species of the natricine genus *Amphiesma* is described from the slopes of Gunung Kerinci, western Sumatra, Indonesia. *Amphiesma kerinciense* is distinguished from other species of the Sunda Region, namely West Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo, by a combination of morphological characters. Its relationships, especially with *Amphiesma sanguineum*, are discussed, and a key to the *Amphiesma* species of the Sunda Region is provided.

KEY WORDS. – Indonesia, Sumatra, Serpentes, *Amphiesma*, *Amphiesma kerinciense* new species.

INTRODUCTION

The snake fauna of Sumatra, one of the largest islands in Indonesia (total land area 473,606 sq km), is currently composed of 128 nominal species (David & Vogel [1996], modified by unpublished data). With its high proportion (20.3%) of endemic species, the herpetofauna of this island ranks as one of the richest in Asia. While examining the herpetological collection of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (formerly the Zoological Reference Collection of the National University of Singapore), one of us (ID) encountered a colubrid snake specimen collected in Sumatra that could not fit published keys and descriptions to the snakes of the Sunda Region, namely southern Thailand, West Malaysia and the islands of the western Sundas, comprising Sumatra and Borneo (De Rooij, 1917; Smith, 1943; Taylor, 1965; Tweedie, 1983; Cox, 1991; David & Vogel, 1996; Manthey & Grossmann, 1997).

Although this specimen shows the typical characters of the genus *Amphiesma* Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854, including features of dentition, general meristic characteristics and pattern, we regard it as representing an undescribed species on the basis of a combination of several characters in scalation and pattern different from those of other known species. This specimen serves as the holotype of a new species, which we describe below. We discuss its

possible relationships with congeners from Thailand, Sumatra, West Malaysia and the island of Borneo, and provide an artificial key to the species of the genus *Amphiesma* known from the Sunda Region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The description is based on external morphological characters regarded as taxonomically significant in the genus *Amphiesma* as defined by Malnate (1960) and Malnate & Underwood (1988). The uniqueness of the specimen precluded any investigation of the skull. Its maxillary teeth were counted by removing the exterior gum surfaces of the jaw *in situ*. Dentitional features of preserved specimens of congeners were either examined in the same way or on specimens for which the maxilla was already prepared (tooth sockets were included in the counts in cases of tooth loss.) Specimens examined for comparison are listed in the Appendix.

Measurements, except body and tail lengths, were taken with a slide-caliper to the nearest 0.1 mm; all measures on body were measured to the nearest millimeter. The number of ventral scales is counted according to Dowling (1951). The numbers of dorsal scale rows are given at one head length behind head, at midbody (i.e. at the level of the ventral plate