

MORPHOMETRICS OF *ERYX CONICUS* (Schneider) AT A LOCALITY IN SOUTH INDIA (SQUAMATA : BOIDAE)

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ABSTRACT: This paper deals with the length-weight relationships of Russell's sand boa: that body length bears a strong positive correlation with tail length, head width and body weight. Sand boas are sexually dimorphic and the sex ratio of this sample was 1:1.

INTRODUCTION

While data on size and scutellation of many common Indian snakes are available, length-weight relationships, which are useful for describing surface area-to-volume ratios and the subsequent effect it has on metabolism (see Kaufman and Gibbons, 1975) have been largely ignored, due no doubt to the fact that most of the work on descriptive morphology concerning these organisms have been based on long-preserved material. In addition, while describing patterns of scutellation, few workers have had access to large samples collected from a single locality, most works based on material from widely scattered areas, and hence data on variability in scutellation in the population of a specific locality, even for the most common snake species are unavailable.

This study is focussed on *Eryx conicus*, the Russell's sand boa, or common earth boa, widespread in the comparatively xeric regions in

the Indian subcontinent. The biology of the species has been summarized by Whitaker (1978). A specialized burrowing erycine, the species utilises short burrows, especially in slightly sloping terrain, from where it ambushes passing invertebrate and occasionally small vertebrate prey. Large beetles were found to be the main diet of the population under investigation (Das, unpublished obs.).

METHODS

Twenty one examples of *Eryx conicus* were collected between February and May, 1990, from Chengai Anna (formerly Chingleput) District, Tamil Nadu State, in south India. Specimens were mostly dug up from in and around paddyfields and scrubland along a stretch of coastal land. Total body length (TBL) was taken to nearest 0.5 cm with a steel tape; head width (HW) and tail length (TL) to nearest 0.01 cm with a dial vernier caliper. Counts of the following scales typically utilized in characterising the

TABLE 1 : Morphometric data on *Eryx conicus* (sex-wise and pooled). References: TBL, total body length; TL, tail length; HW, head width; Wt. weight. Length in cm; weight in gm. individuals examined had large quantities of visceral fat, but none of the adults had oviducal eggs, embryos or showed pronounced testicular development.

	N	TBL range ($\bar{X} \pm \text{SE}$)	TL range ($\bar{X} \pm \text{SE}$)	HW range ($\bar{X} \pm \text{SE}$)	Wt range ($\bar{X} \pm \text{SE}$)
Males	10	22.1 - 67.1 (42.58 \pm 3.82)	1.37 - 4.73 (3.07 \pm 0.28)	0.76 - 2.37 (1.43 \pm 0.14)	9.9 - 290.0 (92.4 \pm 25.1)
Females	11	33.2 - 62.0 (46.1 \pm 2.82)	2.12 - 3.89 (3.03 \pm 0.20)	1.09 - 2.25 (1.525 \pm 0.96)	31.7 - 280.0 (112.1 \pm 23.3)
Pooled	21	22.1 - 67.1 (44.42 \pm 2.31)	1.37 - 4.73 (3.02 \pm 0.16)	0.76 - 2.37 (1.48 \pm 0.08)	9.9 - 290.0 (102.7 \pm 16.8)