



## *Coluber korros* Lesson, 1831 and *Coluber korros* Schlegel, 1837 (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae): there is a *korros* too many in the family

PATRICK DAVID<sup>1\*</sup>, JEAN LESCURE<sup>2</sup>, JAY M. SAVAGE<sup>3</sup>, INDRANEIL DAS<sup>4</sup>, OLIVIER S. G. PAUWELS<sup>5</sup>,  
GERNOT VOGEL<sup>6</sup> & THOMAS ZIEGLER<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institut de Systématique, Évolution et Biodiversité (ISYEB), Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Sorbonne Université, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Université des Antilles, CNRS, CP 30, 57 rue Cuvier, F-75005 Paris, France.

✉ [patrick.david@mnhn.fr](mailto:patrick.david@mnhn.fr); <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7562-684X>

<sup>2</sup>Institut de Systématique, Évolution et Biodiversité (ISYEB), Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Sorbonne Université, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Université des Antilles, CNRS, CP 30, 57 rue Cuvier, F-75005 Paris, France. ✉ [lescure@mnhn.fr](mailto:lescure@mnhn.fr)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biology, San Diego State University, 4408 Braeburn Rd., San Diego, CA 92116, USA.

✉ [savy1@cox.net](mailto:savy1@cox.net); <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2798-855X>

<sup>4</sup>Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Malaysia

✉ [idas@unimas.my](mailto:idas@unimas.my); <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9522-2228>

<sup>5</sup>Département des Vertébrés Récents, Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique, Rue Vautier 29, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium.

✉ [osgpauwels@yahoo.fr](mailto:osgpauwels@yahoo.fr); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3265-5496>

<sup>6</sup>Society for Southeast Asian Herpetology, Im Sand 3, D-69115 Heidelberg, Germany

✉ [gernot.vogel@t-online.de](mailto:gernot.vogel@t-online.de); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4542-518X>

<sup>7</sup>AG Zoologischer Garten Köln, Riehler Straße 173, D-50735 Cologne, Germany

✉ [ziegler@koelnerzoo.de](mailto:ziegler@koelnerzoo.de); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4797-609X>

\*Corresponding author. ✉ [patrick.david@mnhn.fr](mailto:patrick.david@mnhn.fr)

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to solve an overlooked nomenclatural problem involving two taxa of Colubridae, both described as *Coluber korros*. The first one is *Coluber korros* Schlegel, 1837, now *Ptyas korros*, a well-known and widespread species in south-east Asia. Its senior homonym is *Coluber korros* Lesson, 1831, a long forgotten taxon. Furthermore, these taxa are undoubtedly non-conspecific. We tentatively identify the holotype of this latter taxon as a large specimen of *Coelognathus radiatus* (F. Boie, 1827) and we specify its type locality as “Region of Kolkata, West Bengal State, eastern India” (the same specification of type-locality can hence be applied to the elapid *Naja kaouthia* Lesson, 1831). Nevertheless, following the strict principle of priority, *Coluber korros* Lesson, 1831 has priority over *Coluber korros* Schlegel, 1837. Based on the *Code*, we use Article 23.9 on reversal of precedence in order to preserve the use of the well-known taxon *Coluber korros* Schlegel, 1837 (now *Ptyas korros*) against its senior primary homonym *Coluber korros* Lesson, 1831. Finally, we consider *Coluber boncorage* Lesson, 1831 to be a *nomen dubium*.

**Key words:** Nomenclature, taxonomy, Serpentes, *Ptyas korros*, *Naja kaouthia*, South Asia, South-east Asia

### Introduction

*Ptyas korros* (Schlegel, 1837), the Indochinese Rat Snake, is one of the most widespread colubrid snakes in South and South-east Asia. Its range extends from north-east India to southern and south-eastern China across Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar, and southward, up to Indonesia (Sumatra, Borneo [Kalimantan], Java and Bali), across the whole of the Indochinese Region, Thailand, West Malaysia, Singapore, East Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam (Wallach *et al.* 2014). It is also a common snake in much of its distribution range, although this species is not included in the most recent edition of the IUCN *Red List* as its status has not been evaluated.

The combination *Coluber korros* was first mentioned by Kuhl (1824: 81, footnote), credited to C. G. C. Reinwardt. However, Kuhl stated in his text (our translation of the French text) that among the genus *Coluber* Linnaeus, 1758, “I had found here [in Java] only four species, of which one is the *Coluber cancellatus* Oppel, already mentioned”. Then, in the first footnote of the same page 81, Kuhl stated that (our translation) “The long list