

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

GENERAL NOTES.

A SNAKE NEW TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

[By Permission of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.]

In his "List of the Batrachians and Reptiles of the District of Columbia and Vicinity" (Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, XV, 1902, pp. 121-145) Prof. W. P. Hay enumerated 21 species of snakes as of more or less certain occurrence in the District. I am now able to add a species, viz: *Cemophora coccinea* (Blumenbach).

A specimen of the "Scarlet Snake" was presented recently to the National Museum by Dr. I. W. Blackburn, of the Government Hospital for the Insane, who kindly writes me regarding its origin as follows:

"The specimen of *Cemophora coccinea* came into my possession alive, about the summer of 1893. It was captured by an employee of St. Elizabeth Hospital, in the vicinity of Anacostia."

It is now No. 35,308, U. S. National Museum.

Compared with the other snakes in the District of Columbia, as defined in Prof. Hay's List, it belongs to the non-venomous section with smooth scales; anal plate not divided; underside of body is uniformly white, thus differing from the three species of *Lampropeltis* with which it otherwise agrees most. An important structural character is the prominent and somewhat conical rostral which even caused Schlegel to place it in the genus *Heterodon*.

This record extends the known range of the species considerably. It has been known from Louisiana to Florida and north to South Carolina, and has been regarded as a southern snake characteristic of the Austro-riparian region. Early in May, 1891, a live specimen was sent to the museum from St. Margarets, Anne Arundel Co., Maryland, by Mr. A. A. Stinchcomb, but unfortunately it escaped. A drawing and color description made from the living animal show that the determination was correct. These are the two most northern records. As the colors of the living snake are of interest a description of the last-mentioned specimen follows:

Iris chestnut; tongue anteriorly pale flesh color deepening backward to coral red; top of head in front of the postfrontal black cross-band, as well as

dorsal blotches, dull vermilion; occipital band, occupying posterior half of parietals, temporals, and anterior row of dorsal scales, orange (being of a light yellow ground-color clouded with vermilion); rostral and loreal region more pinkish; labials white; light dorsal interspaces primrose yellow, color deepest on median line and fading gradually into white on the first scale row; borders of vermilion patches jet black; lateral dusky spots dark brown (being black overlaid with vermilion); whole underside white with mother-of-pearl reflections.—*Leonhard Stejneger*.

WHY NOT *PARAMAYA*?

In a former paper* I referred to the substitution by Stebbing of *Mamaia* 1904† for *Maja* Lamarck 1801,‡ the latter genus being rightfully abandoned. There is, however, an earlier name than *Mamaia*, *Paramaya* de Haan, which has claims to validity. *Paramaya* first appeared in 1837 on plate XXIV of De Haan's *Fauna Japonica*, Crustacea, as a subgeneric designation, the type species being called "*PISA (Paramaya) spinigera n.*" This plate and plates E and F were issued with *Decas III*, pages 65 to 72, according to *Bulletin des Sciences Physiques et Naturelles en Néerlande*, Leyde, 1838, where the notice appears in the number for August 31, in a list of books published since January 1, 1838. That the date given (1838) is not early enough is evidenced by the fact that the "Ophidii" of the *Fauna Japonica* which was published at the same time, is noticed in *Gelehrte Anzeigen*, München, July 7, 1837. The text of "*Decas Tertia*" is also dated 1837 at the foot of page 65.

The type species of *Paramaya* is congeneric with the type species of *Mamaia*, *M. squinado* (Herbst), 1788.

The name *Paramaya* remained undisputed until 1839, when de Haan published his "*Decas Quarta*," including pages 73 to 108. On page 93, appears the caption "*MAJA (MAJA) SPINIGERA, n. sp.*," followed by "*T. XXIV. f. 4. ♀ (Paramaya) et T. G.*," thus rejecting his *Paramaya* for *Maja*. Again in the last issue of his work, in 1849, de Haan publishes under "*ERRATA IN TABULIS SPECIERUM*," the following, "*Tab. XXIV. fig. 4: Maja (Paramaya) spinigera, n.; lege: M. (Maja) spinig.*"

The right of an author to the privilege of *errata* published simultaneously with the error is conceded; but he can not cancel names at a later date, even in a continuation of the same work, without violating Canon XXXV of the A. O. U. Code, which says, "An author has no right to change or reject names of his own proposing, except in accordance with rules of nomenclature governing all naturalists, he having only the same right as other naturalists over the names he has himself proposed." *Paramaya*, therefore, was not obliterated by de Haan, but remained a synonym of *Maja* until to-day, when it must needs take the place of the older name.—*Mary J. Rathbun*.

* Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, XVII, p. 171, 1904.

† *Spolia Zeylanica*, II, pt. V, p. 2, April, 1904.

‡ *Syst. Anim. sans Vert.*, 154, 1801.