

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES OF BLIND-SNAKES (TYPHLO-
PIDÆ) FROM THE CONGO FREE STATE.

BY

LEONHARD STEJNEGER,

Curator of the Department of Reptiles and Batrachians.

The National Museum is under obligations to Mr. J. H. Camp for a small, but very interesting collection of reptiles and batrachians from Leopoldville and Stanley Pool. One of the species sent proves to be new and may be described as follows:

Typhlops præocularis, sp. nov.

DIAGNOSIS.—A preocular, not in contact with supralabials; no suboculars; ocular in contact with nasal below preocular, reaching lip behind second supralabial; snout with sharp horizontal edge.

HABITAT.—Congo Free State, Africa.

Type.—U. S. National Museum, No. 20799; Leopoldville, or Stanley Pool, Congo Free State; J. H. Camp coll.

Description.—Snout very prominent and pointed, but not hooked, with sharp cutting edge; nostrils inferior, situated just beneath the cutting edge, between two large nasals almost at the point where the internasal suture joins the rostral; rostral very large, about two-thirds the width of the head, the portion visible from below wider than long; labial border of rostral concave, without the usual central prolongation backwards; anterior nasal half-moon shaped, the outer edge nearly parallel with the rostral, the nasal cleft proceeding from the lower border of the rostral, ending at the rostral just below the cutting edge; posterior nasal at the cutting edge as wide as the preocular and ocular together, becoming narrower above and below, in contact above with prefrontal and supraocular, below with second supralabial and ocular; preocular about as wide as ocular, below widely separated from the supralabials by the posterior nasal and ocular; ocular rather narrow, below anteriorly in contact with posterior nasal, and second supralabial reaching the lip behind the latter; eyes indistinguishable; first supralabial exceedingly small, forming the edge of the lip below the anterior nasal, anteriorly receding within the mouth behind the rostral, being separated from the corresponding labial on the other side by a small squarish scale behind the rostral; second supralabial rather larger, in contact with first supralabial, anterior and posterior nasal and ocular, its upper posterior corner wedged in between the two last-mentioned shields; a long and narrow shield behind the lower posterior

edge of the ocular represents what is ordinarily the fourth supralabial, its anterior point, however, barely reaching the lip; prefrontal and frontal subequal, wider than long; subocular and parietal subequal, wider than long, somewhat wider than frontal; one mental; two sublabials; diameter of body at the middle 67 times in the total length, the body growing thicker posteriorly; tail very short, wider than long, ending in a short spine; 24 to 26 scales round the middle of the body. Uniform, pale brownish gray, scarcely paler below. Total length 340 millimeters.

Remarks.—This very distinct species seems to be quite unique in the way in which the facial shields border the upper lip. The rostral, as described above, forms the anterior border as usual, but instead of this consisting of a narrow square projection backwards, the lower free border of the rostral is distinctly concave forward. The posterior projection, however, can be detected under the microscope as a separate small scale inside the mouth back of the rostral, separating the two exceedingly small but elongated anterior supralabials from each other by barely discernible sutures, while the suture separating it from the rostral is very distinct. The next peculiarity of the upper labial border consists in the absence of the third supralabial, in place of which the lower end of the ocular reaches the lip, while the fourth (in this case third separate) labial is forced backward. Another rather uncommon feature is the exclusion of the preocular from the supralabials, the posterior nasal and the ocular being broadly in contact below it. The snout from below, therefore, superficially somewhat resembles that of one of the *Leptotyphlopidae*. The nostrils are placed uncommonly close to the rostral, being situated almost at the junction of the cutting edge with the rostral and internasal sutures.

Altogether this is a very remarkable form which seems to have no particularly close relationship to any of the hitherto known species.