

COMMENTS ON THE TYPES AND SOME OTHER INTERESTING AMPHISBAENIANS
IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ZOOLOGICAL INSTITUTE AT LENINGRAD

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In 1881 Alexander Strauch published what he described as a preliminary report of his studies of amphisbaenians--a small group of reptiles allied to the lizards and snakes. This important paper was based upon a reexamination of most of the types in European museums. Strauch's success in clarifying the concept of a number of species rested to a large extent upon his willingness to travel in order to examine the original types rather than to expend major efforts in extrapolating a concept from the often inadequate original descriptions. Four of the six new species described in his study were based upon specimens then in the collection of the St. Pétersbourg Academy of Sciences, which is now the Zoological Institute, and have apparently not been reexamined until this time.

It is truly unfortunate that Strauch was only able to publish the text of his revision (both in the Bulletin and the Mélanges Biologiques of the Académie des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg) but that the illustrations could not be printed. His intention to include them in a later, perhaps more extensive study is indicated by the existence in the library of the Zoological Institute of a plate labelled A. Strauch, Amphisbaeniden Tab. 1 and Mem. Acad. Sci. VII Serie. This document includes views of nine species (Fig. 1, *Trogonophis wiegmanni*; Fig. 2, *Bipes canaliculatus*; Fig. 3, *Amphisbaena fuliginosa*; Fig. 4, *A. alba*; Fig. 5, *A. pretrei*; Fig. 6, *A. leucocephala*; Fig. 7, *A. martensi*; Fig. 8, *A. vermicularis*; Fig. 9, perhaps *A. prunicolor*--this illustration does not seem to pertain to any of the forms described in Strauch, 1881), but the paper for which it was intended was apparently never published.

Another important collection was apparently purchased in 1885 from the "Linnea" Institute. The small collection ascribed to "Paraguay, Amer. merid." included five important amphisbaenians that were catalogued with the ascription "Original" by names described by Boettger (1885) as from a "Linnea" collection. As best can be determined now, the "Linnea" was a commercial company which purchased specimens from foreign collectors (in this case, H. Rohde), had them identified and published on (often paid for on a "per species" basis), and then sold the specimens to various museums such as London, Wien, and apparently Leningrad. Until 1885, Linnea was located in Frankfurt am Main, but records in the British Museum disclose that it moved to Berlin in that year and apparently became defunct about a decade later (cf. Gans, 1966a).

My colleague, Dr. Ilja Darevsky, had earlier informed me of the existence in the Leningrad collection of five specimens of amphisbaenids purchased from "Linnea" in 1885 and ascribed to the five new species described in Boettger's 1885 paper. Since Boettger had only a single specimen of each form, since no other specimens with these data were found in any European museum, and since it was unlikely that two collections of equivalent composition would appear in a single year, I have already predicted (Gans, 1966a, 1967) that Strauch acquired all five types. It is now possible to confirm this. Not only are the entries marked "original" in the old Academy catalog, but the specimens agree with the original descriptions in

many significant details.

The Leningrad collection, furthermore, contains the holotype of Nikolskij's (1907) *Diplometopon zarudnyi* deposited there together with the rest of the Iranian collection described by that author. Besides these specimens Strauch was also able to exchange paratypes and syntypes of various species described by Boulenger and others. All of these are referred to in the list given below, together with their current status and comments upon the specimens where indicated. The sequence follows that of my checklist of the Amphisbaenia (Gans, 1967), except for the species of *Leposternon*, which are listed in the order of their description.

I am most grateful to my colleague, Dr. Ilja Darevsky for permission to examine these materials in his care, for hospitality during my stay in Leningrad, and for arranging to translate these notes.

LISTING

TROGONOPHIDAE

Pachycalamus brevis Günther, 1881 (Z.I.L. No. 6678), from Socotra, presumably a paratype exchanged by the British Museum in 1885.

Diplometopon zarudnyi Nikolski, 1907 (Z.I.L. No. 10341), labelled "East Persia, Djibel-Tnie, neighbourhood Nasrie and Achvas." Holotype.

AMPHISBAENIDAE

Amphisbaena albocingulata Boettger, 1885 (Z.I.L. No. 6660), from "Paraguay." Holotype purchased from Linnea, 1885. The specimen has 193 body, 3 lateral, and 24 caudal annuli, 16 dorsal and 11-12 ventral segments per midbody annulus, and a snout-vent plus tail length of 72 plus 10 mm. The posterior part of the head shields are asymmetrical as is the mentomalar region. Other characteristics are in good agreement with the description and the name is properly assigned as *Amphisbaena prunicolor albocingulata* (cf. Gans, 1966b).

Amphisbaena fenestrata (Cope), 1861 (Z.I.L. No. 5106), from "St. Jean," marked as exchanged from Reinhardt (Copenhagen), 1878; may be one of the paratypes of *Amphisbaena antillensis* Reinhardt and Lütken, 1862.

Amphisbaena gracilis Strauch, 1881. The holotype of this species is supposed to be Z.I.L. No. 5517, without locality. The specimen appears to have become lost or destroyed which is unfortunate since the description is not immediately assignable and the status of the name remains in doubt.

Amphisbaena leucocephala Peters, 1878 (Z.I.L. No. 5569), from Bahia. This specimen, correctly identified by Strauch, is only the third known individual of the species (cf. Gans, 1965). The specimen is faded, but it is still noticeable that the head was light colored and the darker brown pigment covers the dorsal surface from the neck to the tail only. The specimen has 233 body, 4 lateral and 25 caudal annuli with the autotomy site on the 6th caudal. Supra- and infralabials number 4 and 3, the first and second postgenial rows have 2 and 5 segments, and there are 9 post-labials. Ten preloacal pores occur, and a mid-body annulus has 19 to 21 dorsal and 20 to 21

ventral segments. Snout-vent plus tail length is 314 plus 45 mm and midbody diameter 12 mm. Particularly the yellow head, the low number of body annuli, the high number of precloacal pores, and the relatively short tail length of this, now somewhat dried, specimen are in good agreement with those for the two previously reported specimens, and the former differs mainly in the enlargement of the post-frontal head segments, which are quite small in the third specimen.

Amphisbaena mertensi Strauch, 1881 (Z.I.L. No. 311). The holotype actually has 230 body, 5 lateral and 27 caudal annuli (as contrasted to the 231, 3, 32 in the original description). All other meristic characters are in excellent agreement with the original description. Rather than being only light brown dorsally and lighter ventrally, as stated by Strauch, this specimen indeed shows the anterior half of each segment pigmented all around the trunk. The name clearly belongs with the species to which it has been assigned.

Amphisbaena pretrei Duméril and Bibron, 1839 (Z.I.L. Nos. 1197, 1199, 1200, 5563 from Bahia; Nos. 1202, 1203, 5563 without data). Several of these specimens appear to have the pigmentation more clearly expressed than those previously examined (Gans, 1965). The anterior part of the body has the individual segments markedly pigmented, while the zone lateral to the cloaca shows each segment with a dark dot. Both are characteristics seen also in A. vermicularis.

Amphisbaena ridleyi Boulenger, 1890 (Z.I.L. No. 7856), from Fernando Noronha, Brazil may be part of the original syntype series and hence a lectoparatype. It was exchanged with the British Museum in 1889.

Amphisbaena s. steindachneri Strauch, 1881 (Z.I.L. No. 312). The lectoparatype bears only the designation Brazil and is in exceedingly rotten condition. As far as can be determined the assignment is correct.

Blanus s. strauchi Bedriaga, 1884 (Z.I.L. No. 5903). The collection contains a single lectoparatype obtained from Bedriaga and in good agreement with the original description.

Blanus s. bedriagae Boulenger, 1884 (Z.I.L. No. 6679). This syntype from "River Xantus, Asia Minor" is in good agreement with the original description.

Leposternon rostratum Strauch, 1881 (Z.I.L. Nos. 314 and 315). The first of these two syntypes collected in 1837 by Luschath is here named lectotype since Strauch indicated that it formed the basis for the description. The head scalation of the lectoparatype is considerably more irregular. For reasons given in the revision of the genus (Gans, 1971) the name belongs in the synonymy of Leposternon infraorbitale.

Leposternon crassum Strauch, 1881 (Z.I.L. No. 316). The holotype from "Basilien" is in good condition and its counts agree quite well with those of the original description. Analysis of the characteristics suggests that this is a very large specimen of Leposternon microcephalum probably taken in the vicinity of the city of Rio de Janeiro and it has hence been placed in the synonymy of that species (Gans, 1971).

Leposternon quentheri Strauch, 1881 (Z.I.L. No. 313). The holotype is in good condition and

its characteristics suggest that it is a specimen of Leposternon microcephalum presumably taken from the frontier region between Rio Grande do Sul and Corrientes (Argentina) (Gans, 1971).

Leposternon boulengeri Boettger, 1885 (Z.I.L. No. 6656). This is the first of four names in this genus described by Boettger and assigned to specimens derived from "Paraguay." The type is in good agreement with the original description and the name belongs in the synonymy of Leposternon microcephalum (Gans, 1971).

Leposternon strauchi Boettger, 1885 (Z.I.L. No. 6655). No specimen with this label was initially found in the collection. However, there were two specimens labelled L. onychocephalum (Z.I.L. No. 6653) with one of the labels in the new format using the Cyrillic alphabet. Since Boettger described only one specimen of onychocephalum and the specimen with the new label agrees exactly with Boettger's description, it is assumed to be the holotype. The name belongs in the synonymy of Leposternon microcephalum (Gans, 1971).

Leposternon affine Boettger, 1885 (Z.I.L. No. 6654). The holotype agrees well with Boettger's description and the name belongs in the synonymy of Leposternon microcephalum (Gans, 1971).

Leposternon onychocephalum Boettger, 1885 (Z.I.L. No. 6653). The holotype is in good agreement with the original description and the name belongs in the synonymy of Leposternon microcephalum (Gans, 1971). This or some of the other names here assigned to Leposternon microcephalum might be resurrected if it should ever prove desirable to assign names to geographic races of Leposternon microcephalum.

[Please consult the original paper for the literature citations in the text.]