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A new species of *Dendrelaphis* (Serpentes: Colubridae) from Southeast Asia

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Abstract

A new species of the colubrid genus *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger 1890 is described. *Dendrelaphis kopsteini* sp. nov. ranges from Thailand through Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore to Sumatra. A detailed statistical analysis of the differences between *D. kopsteini* sp. nov., *D. formosus* (Boie, 1827) and *D. cyanochloris* (Wall, 1921) is provided as the three species have been mixed up frequently in the literature. *D. kopsteini* sp. nov. differs from all other *Dendrelaphis* species by a brick red neck coloration. A neotype is designated and described for *D. formosus* and a lectotype is designated and described for *D. cyanochloris.*

Key words: Serpentes: Colubridae: *Dendrelaphis*: *Dendrelaphis kopsteini* sp. nov., *Dendrelaphis cyanochloris*; *Dendrelaphis formosus*, *Dendrelaphis humayuni*, Southeast Asia

Introduction

The colubrid snakes of the genus *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger 1890 are widely distributed, ranging from Pakistan in the West to the northern and eastern coast of Australia in the East and South and to southern China in the North (Ziegler & Vogel, 1999). Members of the genus *Dendrelaphis* are slender, diurnal species that are predominantly arboreal and feed on lizards and amphibians. The recent description of *D. hollinrakei* Lazell, 2002 has brought the number of known species to 21. Two Southeast Asian species, *D. formosus* (Boie, 1827) and *D. cyanochloris* (Wall, 1921), have been the subject of a long history of confusion. Starting in 1930, Smith identified a specimen as *D. formosus* but later rectified his identification to *D. cyanochloris* (Smith 1943). More than three decades later, Frith (1977) elaborated extensively on the problems he encountered with the differentiation between the two species. Nowadays, the confusion still persists. For example, Manthey & Grossmann (1997) and Lim & Lee (1989) portrayed under the name *D. formosus* a species clearly different from Stuebing & Inger's (1999) and Cox' et al. (1997) taxon. One of these species is presented as *D. cyanochloris* in Chan-Ard et al. (2001). One reason for the existing confusion lies in the inadequacy of the original descriptions of *D. formosus* and *D. cyanochloris*. These descriptions lack a sufficient level of detail to allow for unequivocal differentiation between the two species. In addition, the original description of *D. cyanochloris* is composite as it was partly based on specimens of *D. humayuni* Tiwari & Biswas, 1973. Another reason for the confusion is the existence of a third, undescribed, species that is similar to *D. formosus* and *D. cyanochloris* in its pholidosis and, in most cases, has been identified as *D. formosus* in the literature. In this article, this new species of *Dendrelaphis* is described. In addition, descriptions of the types of *D. formosus* and *D. cyanochloris* are provided.

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