



## A new species of *Rhynchocalamus* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae) from Turkey

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### Abstract

A snake species new to science, *Rhynchocalamus barani* n. sp., is described from Turkey. It differs from other *Rhynchocalamus* species in having higher numbers of dorsalia (17 instead of 15) and lower number of ventralia (163–173 instead of 180–240) and upper labials in contact with eye (1 instead of 2) and by a characteristic color-pattern of the body.

**Key words:** *Rhynchocalamus barani* n. sp., *R. m. melanocephalus*, *R. m. satunini*, *R. arabicus*, Colubridae, Turkey, new species

### Introduction

The genus *Rhynchocalamus* can be distinguished from related genera through the count of 15 dorsal scales at mid-body, by a larger rostral shield that extends backwards between the internasalia and by a very wide frontal shield. This frontal shield is nearly as wide as it is long and has special dentition features with 6–8 maxillary teeth, with mandibular teeth that are slightly longer anteriorly than posteriorly and with palatine teeth absent (Schmidt 1933; Gasperetti 1988; Baran & Atatür 1998).

In the Middle East two species of the genus *Rhynchocalamus* are currently known. These are *Rhynchocalamus arabicus* Schmidt 1933 that is only known from Aden in South Yemen (Schmidt 1933) and *R. melanocephalus* (Jan 1862) distributed over Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey (Reed & Marx 1959; Darevsky 1970; Eiselt 1970; Gasperetti 1988; Werner 1988; Latifi 1991; Leviton *et al.* 1992; Engelmann *et al.* 1993; Franzen & Bischoff 1995). Two subspecies of *R. melanocephalus* are found in Turkey. The nominotypical form is documented from one locality 20 km S of Harbiye, Hatay whereas *R. m. satunini* (Nikolsky, 1899) is been reported from Malatya, Mardin and Adana (Eiselt 1970; Baran 1976; Franzen & Bischoff 1995; Başoğlu & Baran 1980; Baran & Atatür 1998; Sindaco *et al.* 2000). On May 1, 2006 we found unusual specimens snakes belonging to the genus *Rhynchocalamus* in the Amanos Mountain, Hatay, Turkey, that we here describe as a species new to science. Notes on the new species' natural history are also presented.

### Material and methods

Color and color pattern characteristics were recorded on live specimens. Following Başoğlu & Baran (1980) the animals were anaesthetized with ether, initially fixed in a mixture of 5% formalin and 70% ethanol for