



A new species of *Hydrodynastes* Fitzinger, 1843 from central Brazil (Serpentes: Colubridae: Xenodontinae)

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Abstract

A new species of *Hydrodynastes* is described from the State of Tocantins, Central Brazil. The new species is distinguished from all congeners by having a melanistic color pattern, with head and dorsum of the body mostly dark-brown to black; absence of postocular stripe; venter grayish-brown, with dark rounded blotches outlining two lateral stripes which become gradually paler towards the posterior region of the belly, disappearing after midbody. Comparisons of the new species are made with others species of the genus and its affinity with *H. gigas* is suggested based on meristic and hemipenial characters.

Resumo

Uma nova espécie de *Hydrodynastes* é descrita do estado de Tocantins, Brasil central. A nova espécie é distinta de todos os congêneres por apresentar um padrão de coloração melânico, com cabeça e dorso do corpo predominantemente marrom-escuro a preto; ausência de faixa pós-ocular; ventre marrom-acinzentado, com manchas pretas arredondadas que formam duas faixas laterais que se tornam gradualmente mais pálidas na região posterior do ventre, desaparecendo após o meio do corpo. Comparações da nova espécie são feitas em relação às demais espécies do gênero e sua proximidade com *H. gigas* é sugerida com base em caracteres merísticos e de hemipênis.

Key words: Taxonomy, New species, Color pattern, Hemipenis

Introduction

The genus *Hydrodynastes* Fitzinger, 1843 is traditionally positioned within the subfamily Xenodontinae (= Xenodontidae *apud* Pinou *et al.*, 2004) (Dowling & Duellman, 1978; Dowling *et al.*, 1996; Zaher, 1999; Vidal *et al.*, 2000; Pinou *et al.*, 2004) and currently comprises two species: *H. gigas* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854) distributed from Suriname (pers. com. M.S. Hoogmoed), French Guyana, Venezuela, Peru, east to Bolivia and Paraguay, south to northern Argentina, and north to southeastern and central Brazil (Giraud & Scrocchi, 2002); and *H. bicinctus* (Hermann, 1804), which encompasses two subspecies *H. bicinctus bicinctus* occurring in Colombia, Venezuela, the Guianas, and Brazilian Amazon (Peters and Orejas-Miranda, 1986) and *H. bicinctus schultzi* Hoge, 1966, described from the western region of the state of São Paulo, southeastern Brazil (Hoge, 1966). Species of the genus *Hydrodynastes* are large semi-aquatic snakes, feeding mostly on frogs and fishes (Lancini, 1986; Bels, 1987; Strüssmann and Sazima, 1993). Although the monophyly of the