



On the status of *Trimeresurus monticola meridionalis* Bourret, 1935 (Squamata: Viperidae)

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Abstract

The name-bearing type specimens of *Trimeresurus monticola meridionalis* Bourret, 1935 are shown to be composed of two primary syntypes that are referable to *Ovophis monticola* (Günther, 1864) as currently conceived, and a secondary syntype that belongs to *Ovophis convictus* (Stoliczka, 1870). Based on comparison of the three syntypes with other taxa of the *Ovophis monticola*-complex, historical analysis and a taxonomic review, we select one of the primary syntypes from northwestern Vietnam as the lectotype of *T. monticola meridionalis* Bourret, 1935 and fix the status of this taxon as a junior subjective synonym of *Ovophis monticola*. This position differs from the current synonymy of *T. monticola meridionalis* Bourret, 1935 with *O. convictus*.

Key words: name-bearing types, *Ovophis monticola*, *Ovophis convictus*, snakes, taxonomy, Vietnam

Introduction

The systematics of the viperid snake *Ovophis monticola* (Günther, 1864) has been quite controversial. An analysis of its subspecific contents is detailed below. Recent authors such as Gumprecht *et al.* (2004) and Vogel (2006) agreed in dividing *O. monticola* into five subspecies. The complex of *Ovophis monticola* (Günther, 1864) was recently revised by Malhotra *et al.* (2011). On the basis of molecular analyses, these authors recognized four major clades within *O. monticola* auctorum, with a clade divided into three subclades (see below). As far as systematics is concerned, Malhotra *et al.* (2011) recognized the following five species in the genus *Ovophis*: *O. monticola* (Günther, 1864), *O. convictus* (Stoliczka, 1870), *O. makazayazaya* (Takahashi, 1922), and *O. zayuensis* Jiang in Djao & Jiang, 1977 (these three latter taxa were previously considered subspecies of *O. monticola*), and *O. tonkinensis* (Bourret, 1934). Two subspecies of *O. monticola* previously recognized by David & Ineich (1999), Gumprecht *et al.* (2004) and Vogel (2006) were not considered valid by Malhotra *et al.* (2011). *O. monticola orientalis* (Schmidt, 1925) was synonymized with *Trimeresurus makazayazaya*, and *Ovophis monticola zhaokentangi* Zhao, 1995 was considered a synonym of *O. zayuensis*. Based on Malhotra *et al.*'s (2011) revision, *Ovophis monticola* (Günther, 1864) is now a monotypic species.

Malhotra *et al.* (2011) referred populations from northwestern Vietnam (Lào Cai Province), central Vietnam and Laos to *O. monticola*, but these authors noted that some specimens from these regions were morphologically different from other populations of *O. monticola* (Nepal, India, Myanmar). These authors stated that, if the Indochinese populations had to be eventually referred to a distinct taxon, the name *Trimeresurus monticola meridionalis* Bourret, 1935 would be available. However, this latter taxon had been previously synonymized with *O. m. convictus* (Stoliczka, 1870) by Golay *et al.* (1993). Most recent authors accepted this synonymy, with the consequence that *O. convictus* included populations from northern and central Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia (Sumatra) (Golay *et al.* 1993; Gumprecht *et al.* 2004; Vogel 2006). In contrast, according to Malhotra *et al.*'s (2011) results, *Ovophis convictus* as previously conceived becomes distributed over two clades referred to two distinct species. On the one hand, *O. convictus* is the valid species for populations of West