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A checklist of the snake fauna of Guinea, with taxonomic changes in the genera *Philothamnus* and *Dipsadoboa* (Colubridae) and a comparison with the snake fauna of some other West African countries

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Abstract

We present here the results of a study of 4,906 snakes from Guinea belonging to 95 species collected from 2002 to 2013 at 54 localities in all administrative regions of the country. We resurrect *Dipsadoboa guineensis* from the synonymy of *D. brevirostris* and consider the latter species a junior synonym of *D. duchesnei*. In addition we resurrect *Philothamnus pobeguini* and *P. belli* from the synonymy of *P. heterodermus*. 19 species were not previously collected in this country, including *Letheobia coecata*, *Tricheilostoma bicolor*, *Myriopholis rouxestevae*, *Rhinoleptus koniagui*, *Python regius*, *Grayia tholloni*, *Natriciteres fuliginoides*, *Philothamnus heterolepidotus*, *Thrasops aethiopissa*, *Amblyodipsas unicolor*, *Gonionotophis granti*, *Mehelya crossi*, *Prosymna gregeirti*, *Prosymna meleagris*, *Rhamphiophis oxyrhynchus*, *Elapsoidea trapei*, *Naja katiensis*, *Naja senegalensis* and *Echis jogeri*. Based on a critical review of literature and our own data, we compare the currently known snake fauna of Guinea (104 species) with that of Sierra Leone (65 species), Liberia (63 species), Ivory Coast (101 species), Ghana (102 species), Togo (93 species), Benin (72 species) and Nigeria (118 species).

Key words: taxonomy, biogeography, Guinea, West Africa, *Dipsadoboa guineensis*, *Philothamnus belli*, *Philothamnus pobeguini*, *Echis jogeri*

Introduction

Little is known about the snake fauna of the Republic of Guinea. Specimens collected at the beginning of the 20th century were studied by Mocquard (1902), Klaptocz (1913), Chabanaud (1916, 1917, 1920, 1921) and Angel (1932). Further studies were conducted around Mount Nimba (Angel *et al.* 1954, Ineich 2003) and neighbouring forested areas of southeastern Guinea (Condamin 1959, Böhme 2000, Trape *et al.* 2008, Böhme *et al.* 2011). Few data are available for savanna areas of the country (Villiers 1950, Villiers 1953, Villiers 1954, Greenbaum & Carr 2005, Baldé *et al.* 2009, Chirio 2012).

From 2002 to 2013, we conducted snake collections in most regions of Guinea. A total of 4,906 specimens were collected. Although some of these specimens have already been mentioned in previous publications or included in distribution maps of the snake fauna of West Africa (Trape *et al.* 2008, Baldé *et al.* 2009, Trape & Mané 2006a,b, Trape *et al.* 2012), most records are still unpublished. Here we present a full account of these specimens and discuss selected taxonomic problems. We also establish a checklist of the snakes of Guinea and compare the snake fauna of this country to that of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, the other West African countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea.

Material and methods

We deposited cans or buckets half filled with formaldehyde or ethanol in 48 villages in Guinea. Local villagers

rainforest areas of the Togo Hills. This explains the differences between the snake fauna of these two countries, even if intense deforestation in Togo (and Ifangni area in Benin) may have currently eliminated most of the strictly rainforest species that have not been documented by recent surveys. Other differences between the six countries are in most cases more likely to reflect under-collection rather than actual differences in snake faunas and our data suggest that there are no endemic snake species in Guinea.

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APPENDIX. List of specimens collected and collection numbers with localities. Except when other museum acronyms are provided, specimens with uneven numbers are preserved at IRD Dakar, Senegal (J.-F. Trape, curator), and those with even numbers are preserved at IPG Kindia, Guinea (C. Baldé, curator).

Afronatrix anoscopus: 2311 G, 2953 G, 2958 G, 2984 G, 2986 G, 2924 G, 2926 G, Avilissou ; 2627 G, 4182 G, 4183 G, 4191 G, 4207 G, 4721 G, 4722 G, Ballassou ; 0238 G, 0246 G, 0253 G, 0255 G, 0258 G, 0270 G, 0277 G, 0282 G, 0287 G, 0295 G, 0296 G, Camaraboundji ; 1743 G, 1744 G, 1745 G, 1746 G, 1747 G, 1748 G, 1749 G, 1750 G, 1751 G, 1752 G, 1753 G, 1754 G, 1755 G, 1756 G, 1757 G, 1758 G, 1759 G, 3006 G, 3007 G, 3010 G, 3019 G, 3022 G, 3023 G, 3034 G, 3039 G, 3041 G, 3044 G, 3056 G, 3057 G, 3059 G, 3063 G, 3074 G, 3080 G, 3083 G, 3087 G, 3089 G, 3091 G, 3105 G, 3109 G, Dalakan ; 2993 G, 2994 G, 2995 G, 2996 G, 2998 G, Foromata ; 0120 G, 0141 G, 0155 G, 0156 G, 0179 G, Foulaya ; 0086 G, Friguigbé ; 2001 G, 2053 G, 2054 G, 2055 G, 2056 G, Gbéleye ; IRD 2052 G, IRD 2003 G, IRD 2004 G, IRD 2005 G, IRD 2006 G, IRD 2007 G, IRD 2008 G, IRD 2009 G, IRD 2010 G, IRD 2011 G, IRD 2012 G, IRD 2013 G, IRD 2014 G, IRD 2015 G, IRD 2016 G, IRD 2017 G, IRD 2018 G, IRD 2019 G, IRD 2020 G, IRD 2021 G, IRD 2022 G, IRD 2023 G, IRD 2024 G, IRD 2025 G, IRD 2026 G, IRD 2027 G, IRD 2028 G, IRD 2029 G, IRD 2030 G, IRD 2031 G, IRD 2032 G, IRD 2033 G, IRD 2034 G, IRD 2035 G, IRD 2036 G, IRD 2037 G, IRD 2038 G, IRD 2039 G, IRD 2040 G, IRD 2041 G, IRD 2042 G, IRD 2043 G, IRD 2044 G, IRD 2045 G, IRD 2046 G, IRD 2047 G, IRD 2048 G, IRD 2049 G, IRD 2050 G, IRD 2051 G, Gborola ; 1183 G, Hamdalaye ; 4728 G, 4729 G, 4730 G, 4732 G, 4736 G, 4749 G, Kalankalan ; 0516 G, 0540 G, 0541 G, 0554 G, 0556 G, 0568 G, 0577 G, 0585 G, 0590 G, 0599 G, 0603 G, 0613 G, 0621 G, 0629 G, 0636 G, 0656 G, 0665 G, 0696 G, 0700 G, Kalékouré ; 0312 G, 0322 G, 0349 G, 0371 G, 0372 G, 0384 G, 0385 G, 0389 G, 0390 G, 0398 G, 0399 G, 0402 G, Kilissi ; 4864 G, 4865 G, 4866 G, Kindia ; 2650 G, 2657 G, 2689 G, 2699 G, 2778 G, 3869 G, Konipara ; 3572 G, 3575 G, 3576 G, 3577 G, 3581 G, 3589 G, 3591 G, 3595 G, 3597 G, 3600 G, 3601 G, 3603 G, 3608 G, 3609 G, 3610 G, 3613 G, 3614 G, 3622 G, 3623 G, 3628 G, 3638 G, Konsankoro ; 0493 G, Kouroumaya ; 1998 G, 2058 G, 2082 G, 2973 G, 2975 G, 2987 G, 2990 G, Koya ; 1951 G, 1968 G, 1977 G, 1982 G, 1983 G, 1984 G, Madina ; 3669 G, 3671 G, 3673 G, 3674 G, 3676 G, 3678 G, 3680 G, 3686 G, 3691 G, 3692 G, 3693 G, 3695 G, 3696 G, 3702 G, 3703 G, 3704 G, 3710 G, 3711 G, 3715 G, 3719 G, 3721 G, 3722 G, 3724 G, 3725 G, 3726 G, 3727 G, 3729 G, 3732 G, 3733 G, 3734 G, 3735 G, 3737 G, 3738 G, 3740 G, 3742 G, 3744 G, 3746 G, 3747 G, 3748 G, 3750 G, 3751 G, 3752 G, 3753 G, 3756 G, 3757 G, 3760 G, 3761 G, 3763 G,