THE SNAKES OF SURINAM, PART VI: SUBFAMILY *XENODONTINAE* (GENERAL DATA AND GENUS *ATRACTUS*)

By: A. Abuys, Jukwerderweg 31, 9901 GL Appingedam, The Netherlands.

Contents: General data of the subfamily *Xenodontinae* - The genus *Atractus* - Acknowledgements - References.

GENERAL DATA OF THE SUBFAMILY *XENODONTINAE*

This subfamily includes snakes which have, in the upper or lower jaw, extended teeth. The teeth in the upper jaw may increase in size from the front to the back (e.g. *Helicops*). The last of the teeth in the upper jaw may be greatly enlarged and separated from the others (e.g. *Xenodon*).
The large rear teeth of the upper jaw may be connected to a venom gland by means of a furrow (e.g. *Oxybelis*). Another specialised arrangement is in the genus *Dipsas* which feeds almost exclusively on snails, and has two elongated teeth at the front of the lower jaw.
The following genera occur in Surinam:

1 *Atractus*
2 *Clelia*
3 *Dipsas*
4 *Erythrolamprus*
5 *Helicops*
6 *Hydrodynastes*
7 *Hydrops*
8 *Imantodes*
9 *Leimadophis*
10 *Leptodeira*
11 *Liophis*
12 *Lygophis*
13 *Oxybelis*
14 *Oxyrhopus*
15 *Philodryas*
16 *Phimophis*
17 *Pseudoboa*
18 *Pseudoeryx*
19 *Pseustes*
20 *Rhadinaea*
21 *Rhinobthryum*
22 *Sibon*
23 *Siphlophis*
24 *Tantilla*
25 *Thamnodynastes*
26 *Tripanurgos*
27 *Xenodon*
28 *Xenopholis*

THE GENUS *ATRACTUS* WAGLER, 1828

This genus includes about 73 species of which at least eight occur in Surinam (Hoogmoed, 1980).

General data of the genus:

Head: The head is small and indistinct from the body; the snout is flat and pointed; the skull is rigid being suited for the snakes habit of grubbing. The loreal is usually present and in contact with the eye; the eye is small and the pupil round. The nostril is situated between two nasals. Temporals are always in rows of 1+2.

Body: The body is cylindrical with (except for a single exception) smooth dorsal scales in 15 or 17 rows.

Tail: The tail may be short or long; the subcaudals are in pairs; anal single.

Behaviour: This genus is semi-subterrestrial, grubbing in the ground for invertebrates. Whether they are nocturnal or not is unknown to myself.

Reproduction: *Atractus* is oviparous, about three elongated eggs being laid at one time.

Food: Insects and their larvae, termites, worms and small young amphisbaenids.

Habitat: They are found mainly in woodlands, though occasionally on cultivated land or in secondary woodland. They can be found under fallen trees, rocks and, according to Amaral, in termite nests.

Remarks: I have little experience of this genus. Once I was given a specimen by a colleague, caught near Mamadam (March 1975), and one I caught myself close to the military camp near Zandery (May 1975). I was able to identify it only after writing to Dr. M.S. Hoogmoed. Except for some natural history notes, the des-

criptions of the species and the drawings are from a longer article by Dr. M.S. Hoogmoed (1980) on the genus *Atractus*, and all interested readers should consult that article.

Key to the Surinam species of *Atractus*.

1a. 1 Postocular shield ..... see 2
b. 2 Postocular shields ..... see 4

2a. Dorsal scales in 15 rows ..... *Atractus elaps*
b. Dorsal scales in 17 rows ..... see 3

3a. 6 Upper labials ..... *Atractus latifrons*
b. 8 Upper labials ..... *Atractus torquatus*

4a. 19-50 Subcaudals ..... see 5
b. 57-67 Subcaudals ..... *Atractus favae*

5a. 19-32 Subcaudals ..... see 6
b. 33-50 Subcaudals ..... see 7

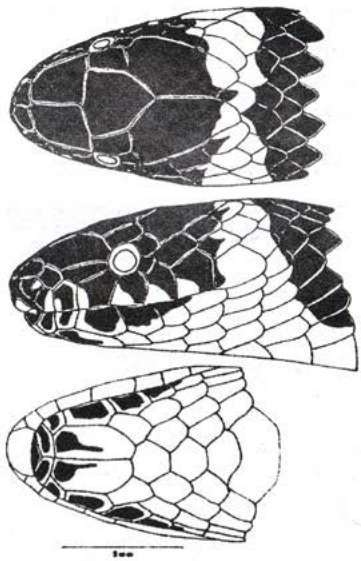
6a. 8 (exceptionally 7) upper labials; 7 or 8 lower labials; head brown, followed by a yellowish and a black band ..... *Atractus flammigerus*
b. 7 Upper labials; 8 (exceptionally 9) lower labials; head black, followed by a light brown and a black band ..... *Atractus schach*

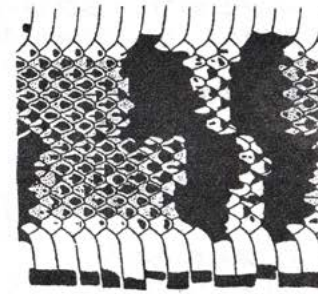
7a. Dorsal scales without apical pits ..... see 8
b. Dorsal scales with 2 apical pits ..... *Atractus zidoki*

8a. 7 (Sometimes 8) upper labials; 7 lower labials ..... *Atractus badius*
b. 8 Upper labials; 8 (exceptionally 7) lower labials ..... *Atractus torquatus*

Atractus badius (F. Boie, 1827)

Surinam name: Faja-sneki
Maximum length: males, 385 mm (tail 67 mm);





Atractus badius

females; 485 mm (tail 71 mm).

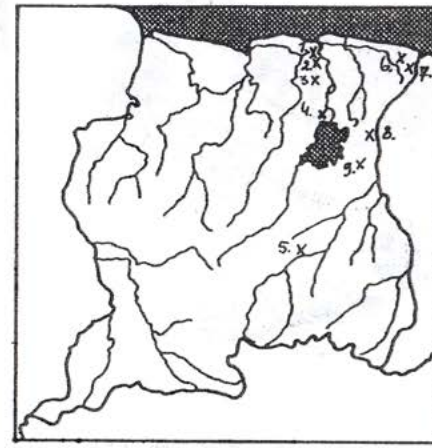
Scalation: 7 Supralabials (rarely 8), with the third and fourth in contact with the eye; 7 infralabials, three of which are in contact with the chin shields; loreal is oblong; preocular absent; 2 postoculars; smooth dorsals in 17 rows; 138-155 ventrals in males, 148-160 in females; 43-47 subcaudals in males, 33-50 in females.

Specific details: This is a large *Atractus* with a sharp pointed head and a short tail. The head is black with a yellow-white band on the nape. The dorsum is reddish with black bands in pairs. Each pair of black bands enclose a narrow whitish band. The resulting red bands (between each pair of black bands) may appear almost black as each scale has a black point. The red bands are narrower than the black-white-black combination. The belly is yellow-

white with a scattering of rectangular black spots. The underside of the tail is black or grey with scattered white spots.

Distribution: South America east of the Andes and north of Argentina.

Locality records in Surinam: Dr. Hoogmoed lists the following localities: 1. Paramaribo; 2. 10 km north of Onverwacht; 3. Republic; 4. Afobaka; 5. Tapanahoni River; 6. Djai Creek; 7. north of Albina; 8. Nassau Mountains; 9. Lely Mountains.

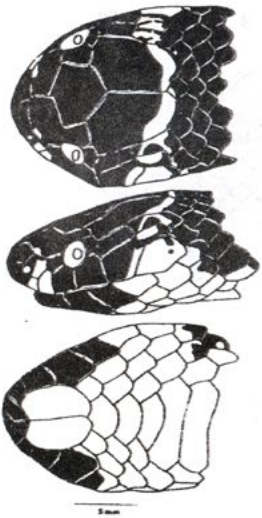


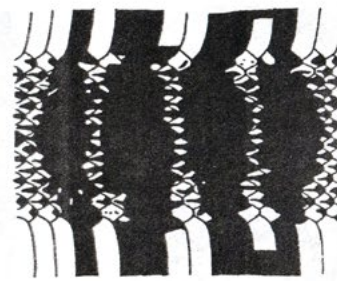
Atractus elaps (Günther, 1858)

Maximum length: The only known specimen from Surinam, a male, was 563 mm (tail 89 mm).

Scalation: 6 Supralabials, the third and fourth in contact with the eye; 7 infralabials four of which are in contact with the chin shields; loreal short and pentagonal; preocular absent; 1 postocular; dorsals in 15 rows; 150 ventrals in the single male; 35 subcaudals.

Specific details: A large species with a broad head, flat snout and a short tail. The head is black with a broad black neck band, which is preceeded by a light coloured band. There is a bright spot behind each nostril. On the dorsum is a pattern of broad black bands separated by





Atractus elaps

variegated small red and yellow bands. The black bands join together in pairs to form a single black band on the belly, the ground colour of which is light.
Remark: I am unsure what kind of colour is intended by the words "light coloured" or "light" as the above information is from a preserved specimen.

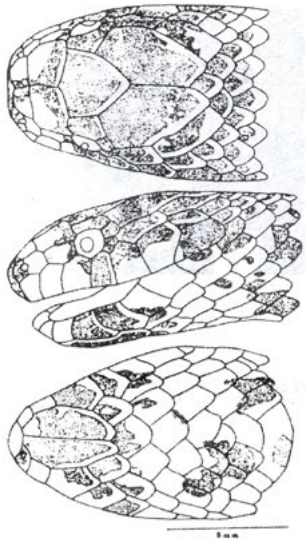
Distribution: The Highlands of Ecuador, northern Peru; eastern Colombia and Amazonian Brazil. Should be expected in Venezuela and Surinam.

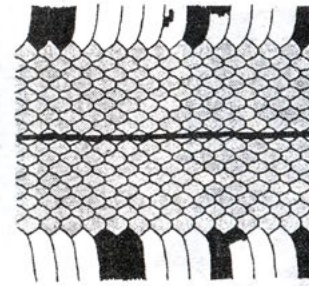
Locality records in Surinam: The only specimen supposed to be from Surinam is of no known locality.

Atractus favae (Filippi, 1840)

Maximum length: males 443 mm (tail 107 mm); females 538 mm (tail 135 mm).

Scalation: 7 Supralabials, third and fourth in contact with the eye; 7 infralabials, three of





Atractus favae

which are in contact with the chin shields; a small preocular may be present; 2 postoculars; loreal is oblong; dorsals in 17 rows; 167-174 ventrals in males, 177-180 in females; 57-67 subcaudals in males, about 66 in females.

Specific details: This is a long and slender species with a flat snout and a long tail. The head is dark with a large white spot on the side of the head which covers the first three supralabials, the nasal, the loreal, the nasals and the prefrontals. There may be another light spot on the fifth and sixth supralabials. The dorsum is dark with a thin black line down the middle of the back. The belly is reddish with black bands.

Distribution: (British) Guyana and Surinam.

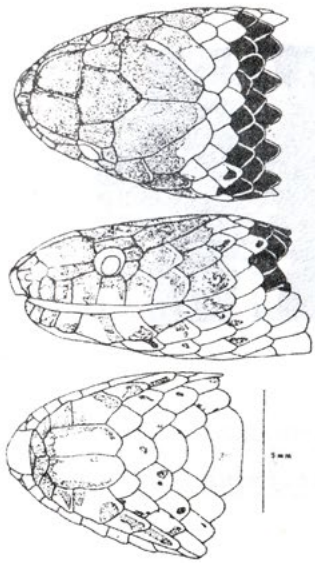
Locality records in Surinam: Detailed locality records are not known.

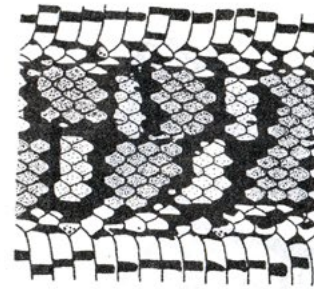
Atractus flammigerus (F. Boie, 1827)

Maximum length: males 378 mm (tail 50 mm); females 370 mm (tail 32 mm).

Scalation: 8 Supralabials, the fourth and fifth in contact with the eye; 7 or 8 infralabials with four in contact with the chin shields; loreal is very long; preoculars absent; 2 postoculars; dorsals in 17 rows; 138-148 ventrals in males, 145-150 in females; 26-31 subcaudals in males, 19-24 in females.

Specific details: This is a large species with a broad head and pointed snout, and a short tail. The back is dark brown (?) with oblong or triangular, yellow spots with black edges which may form a zig-zag pattern. The belly has two rows of small, oblong brown or black spots. The underside of the tail is brown or grey with or without spots. In mature specimens the body scales on the posterior half and the



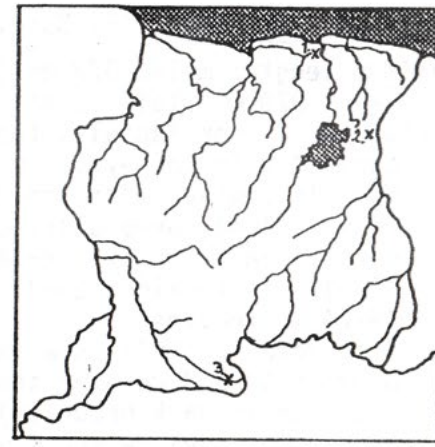


Atractus flammigerus

tail are keeled, and in males they may form extended ridges.

Distribution: Brazil (Para) and Surinam.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Surroundings of Paramaribo; 2. Nassau Mountains; 3. Sipalawini (airport).

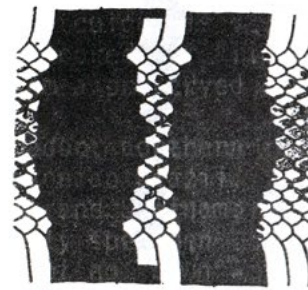


Atractus latifrons (Günther,1868)

Maximum length: Known from only one specimen, a male; 406 mm (tail 65 mm).

Scalation: 6 Supralabials, the third and fourth in





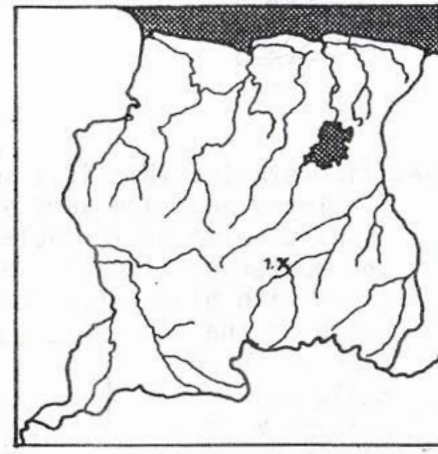
Atractus latifrons

contact with the eye; 6 or 7 infralabials, four of which are in contact with the chin shields; loreal pentagonal; preoculars absent; 1 postocular; dorsals in 17 rows; 146 ventrals in the single male; 36 subcaudals.

Specific details: A large species with a small pointed head and a short tail. The front of the head is black with a light spot in front of the eyes and a light spot on the parietals. The dorsum is red or yellow with black rings which encircle the body completely. The black rings are narrower on the belly than the dorsum and are narrower on the anterior half of the body than the posterior. The rings on the tail may give the tail a look of being completely black.

Distribution: East Peru, east Colombia, Brazil and Surinam.

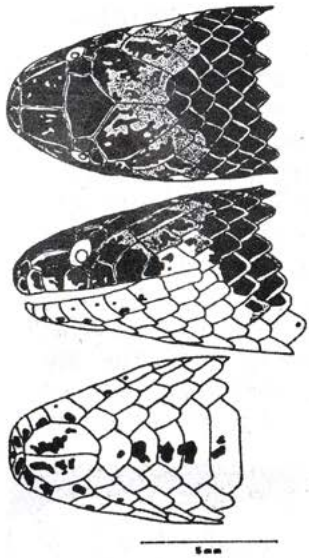
Locality records in Surinam: The single specimen recorded from Surinam, a male, came from Paloemeu.

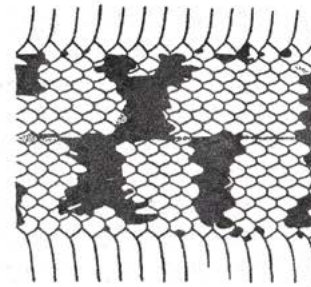


Atractus schach (F. Boie, 1827)

Maximum length: 216 mm (tail 24 mm)

Scalation: 7 Supralabials, the third and fourth in contact with the eye; 8 or 9 infralabials, the first four in contact with the chin shields; loreal elongated; 2 postoculars; dorsals in 17 rows; about 151 ventrals; about 32 subcaudals.





Atractus schach

Specific details: This is a small species with a flattened head and very short tail. The head is black with an irregular brown cross band on the posterior half. The dorsum is orange-brown with black cross bars which may branch out near the ventrals. The belly is whitish with a single row of black spots in the middle. The underside of the tail is grey.

Distribution: Brazil (Manaos) and Surinam.

Locality records in Surinam: 1.

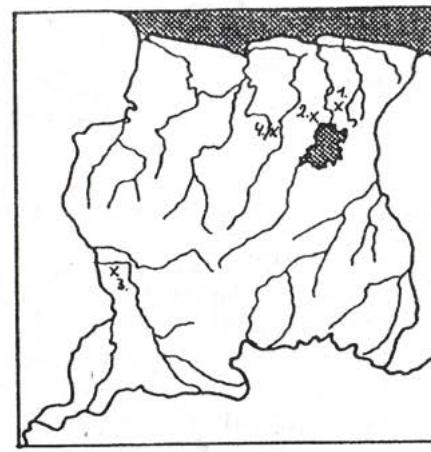




Fig. 1. *Atractus schach*. Foto: A. Abuys.

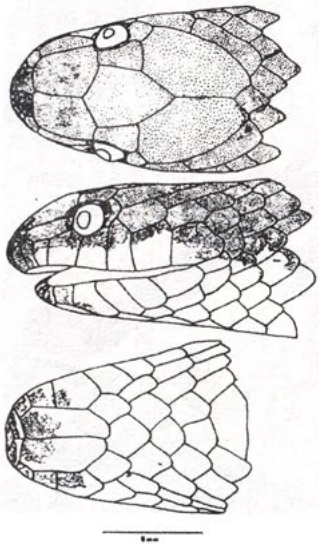
5 km NNE of Afobaka Dam; 2. north of the Browns Mountain, near the railway (km mark 121); 3. near Camp Gonini; 4. near Mamadam.

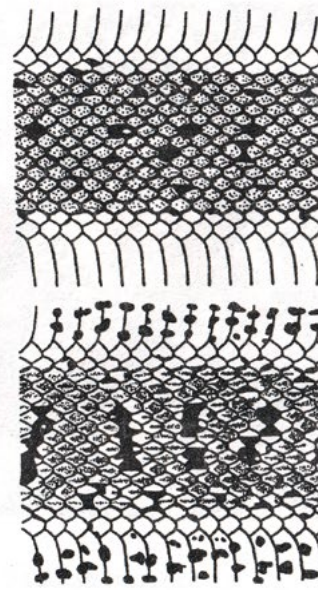
Atractus torquatus (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854).

Maximum length: males 557 mm (tail 94 mm); females 604 mm (tail 77 mm).

Scalation: 8 Supralabials, fourth and fifth in contact with the eye; 7 or 8 infralabials, the front four in contact with the chin shields; loreal oblong; preocular absent; 1 postocular; dorsals in 17 rows; 144-160 ventrals in males, 151-172 in females; 38-47 subcaudals in males, 36-42 in females.

Specific details: This is a large species with a pointed head and short tail. Head and back are grey- or red-brown with or without a black neck ring. Scattered on the dorsum are small

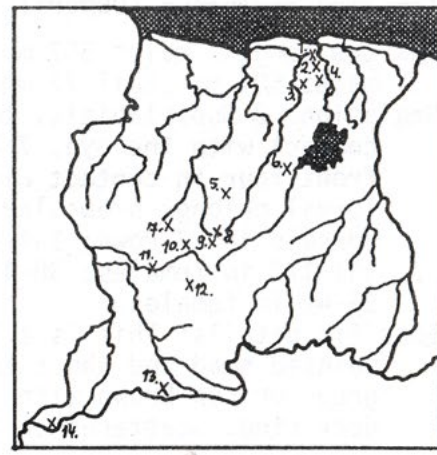




black spots which may form cross bars. The belly is cream or yellow with small brown spots. The underside of the tail is orange.

Distribution: Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Brazil and the Guyanas.

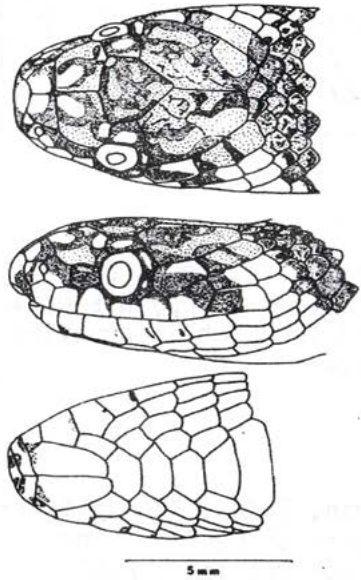
Locality records in Surinam: 1. Paramaribo; 2. Onverwacht; 3. Troeli Creek; 4. Zanderij; 5. Pokigron; 6. Toekoemoetoe Creek; 7. Coppename River; 8. Tafel Mountain (Top Plateau); 9. Rudi Kappel Airstrip; 10.

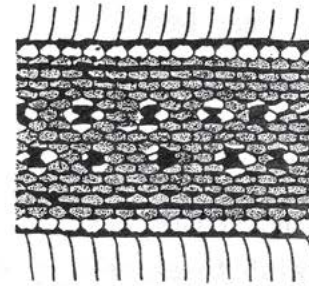


Wilhelmina Mountains (Camp 3); 11. Vreedzaam Creek; 12. Kayser Mountains (Airstrip); 13. New River; 14. Boundary Camp.

Atractus zidoki Gasc & Rodrigues, 1979.

Maximum length: 280 mm (tail 42 mm)
Scalation: 7 Or 8 supralabials, the third and the fourth (and rarely also the fifth) in contact with the eye; 7 infralabials, three of which are in contact with the chin shields; loreal is pentagonal; preocular absent; 2 postoculars; dorsals in 17 rows; 173-182 ventrals; 39-44 subcaudals. Some of the dorsolateral scales anterior to the anal region may be keeled.





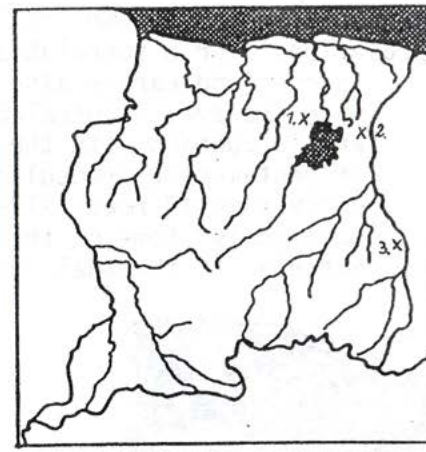
Atractus zidoki

Specific details: This is a small species with a pointed snout and a short tail. The head is brownish (?) with a dark neck band. The dorsum is lighter in colour and has two rows of spots.

There is a dorsolateral stripe which is white on the anterior and orange on the posterior and tail. A dark stripe marks the line between dorsal and ventral scales. The belly is reddish-orange and the underside of the tail dark.

Distribution: Surinam and French Guyana.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Between 150 and 500 m on the Browns Mountain; 2. Nassau Mountains; 3. near Benzdorp.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. M.S. Hoogmoed (Leiden) for permission to copy his drawings (of Hoogmoed, 1980) and for much information on the snakes discussed above.

REFERENCES

Dowling, H.G. & W.E. Duellman, 1974-1978. Systematic Herpetology: A Synopsis of Families and Higher Categories. HISS Publications, Publ. Herp., No. 7: i-vii, 1.1-118.3, I-VIII.

Hoogmoed, M.S., 1979. The herpetofauna of the Guiana Region. In: Duellman, W.E. (ed.): The South American Herpetofauna: Its origin, evolu-

tion, and dispersal. Mus. Nat. Hist. Univ. Kansas Monogr., No. 7: 241-279.

Hoogmoed, M.S., 1980. Revision of the genus *Atractus* in Surinam, with the resurrection of two species (*Colubridae, Reptilia*). Zool. Verhand., No. 175: 3-47, pl. 1-6.