

Fig. 1. *Philodryas viridissimus*. Foto: A. Abuys.



Fig. 2. *Philodryas viridissimus*. Foto: A. Abuys.

THE SNAKES OF SURINAM, PART XII: SUBFAMILY *XENODONTINAE* (GENERA *PHILODRYAS*, *PHIMOPHIS* AND *PSEUDOBOA*).

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THE GENUS *PHILODRYAS* WAGLER, 1830

This genus includes sixteen species, two of which have two subspecies each. In Surinam two species occur.

General data for the genus:
Head: The head is slightly wider than the neck. The eyes are large and have round pupils.
Behaviour: Arboreal and diurnal.
Food: Birds, bats, small mammals, (tree)frogs and lizards.
Habitat: Some species live in savannah, rain forest and adjacent areas, whilst others prefer more open areas. In Surinam the two recorded species are normally associated with savannah or rain forest.
Reproduction: This species is oviparous and lays eight to 14 eggs.
General notes: Members of this genus are often mistaken for the Amazonian tree viper (*Bothrops bilineatus*). *Philodryas spp.* are not difficult to keep in a tropical terrarium.

Philodryas olfersii (Lichtenstein, 1823)

English name: Green tree snake.
Dutch name: Gekielde groene boomslang.

Surinam name: Pokai-sneki.
Maximum length: Approximately 1.50 m.
Scalation: Dorsals in 15 rows of which 5 median dorsal rows are lightly keeled + 1 apical; 175-207 ventrals; 99-126 paired subcaudals; anal divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 upper labials (the 4th and 5th border the eye); approximately 12 lower labials; 1+2, sometimes 2+2 temporals.
Teeth: The last two enlarged teeth in the upper jaw are grooved and separated from the other teeth by a small diastema. The grooves are connected to poison glands. If a person is bitten, and the snake manages to embed these teeth in the wound, mild envenomation symptoms may follow.
Colouration: The upper part of the head and the entire upper body are green to olive-green. The side of the head is marked with a thin irregular and sometimes broken black stripe, which runs exactly along the top of the upper labials. The belly is somewhat lighter in colour and may be of a blue-green hue.
Remarks: This is the rarer of the two Surinamese species of the genus *Philodryas*, and has not yet been recorded in the wild by the author.
Distribution: West Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, the northern boundaries of Argentina and Uruguay and the guianas.
Locality records in Surinam: This snake has not been found by the author in Surinam.

Philodryas viridissimus (Linnaeus, 1758)

English name: Two-coloured green tree snake.
Dutch name: Gladde groene boomslang.
Surinam Name: Pokai-sneki.
Maximum length: Approximately 1.50 m.
Scalation: Dorsals in 19 rows of smooth scales, each scale with 2 apicals; 205-228 ventrals;

106-131 paired subcaudals; anal divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 upperlabials (the 4th and 5th border the eye); 12 lower labials; 1+1 or 1+2 temporals.

Teeth: as in the previous species.

Colouration: Variation in ground colour of these snakes exists not only between the different species of this genus, but also between examples of the same species. Two specimens examined by the author had the following colours: The first specimen's head was leaf green, changing to a bluish-green in the labial region. The dorsals were yellow-green to light olive-green; definitely a lighter shade of green than the head. The throat was dirty-white with a blue tinge whilst the rest of the ventral surface was light green.

The second specimen had a dark olive-green head with a blue sheen. The labial area was yellow-green. The dorsals were light green to yellow-green with bluish edges so that the over-all appearance of the snake became olive-green. The ventral surface of the snake was a glazed broken-white, becoming yellowish towards the sides. The tip of the tail was light brown.

Remarks: One of the two specimens described above was captured in the act of raiding a bird's nest. Despite the swooping attacks of the older birds, the snake was able to swallow a young bird.

J. Moonen and W. Eriks found a *Philodryas viridissimus* about 50 cm long in an empty wooden hut while it was swallowing a bat.

The same snake lived for years in Eriks' terrarium on a diet of mice.

Distribution: From south Venezuela and the Guianas to Argentina, especially in the Amazon and Paraguay river basins.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. The area of Bosbivak Zanderij; 2. The village of Java.



Philodryas viridissimus

THE GENUS *PHIMOPHIS* COPE, 1860

This genus contains four species of which one occurs in Surinam.

General data for the genus:
Head: Relatively short with a shovel-shaped snout. The eyes have round pupils. The head is not a great deal wider than the neck. As is suggested by these characteristics, *Phimophis* is a burrowing genus.
Behaviour: Subterrestrial and diurnal.
Food: Probably insects and larvae.
Habitat: Savannah and savannah-like areas.
Reproduction: Oviparous.
Remarks: Not agressive.

Phimophis guianensis (Troschel, 1848)

Dutch name: Schepsnuit slang.
Maximum length: Approximately 60 cm.
Scalation: Dorsals in more than 18 rows (smooth scales); approximately 165 ventrals; approximately 60 subcaudals (paired); a single anal



Fig. 3. *Pseudoboa coronata* (?). Foto: A. Abuys.



Fig. 4. *Pseudoboa neuwiedii* (?). Foto: A. Abuys.

scale; 1 preocular (small, elongated); 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 upperlabials (4th and 5th border the eye); 9 lower labials; 2+3 temporals.

Teeth: The last two teeth in the upper jaw are enlarged, grooved and separated from the other teeth by a small diastema.

Colouration: Colour and pattern variations exist within this species.
Normally the head has a cream-coloured base, while the head shields have black spots creating a mosaic pattern. The back of the head is cream-coloured, with a large black spot on the base of the neck.
However, the head and the whole of the neck can be completely brownish-black in some individuals. The rest of the dorsal surface is yellowish-orange to yellow-brown with an irregular pattern of black spots. The underside is pinkish yellow.

Remarks: The author found one specimen between the buildings at Bosbivak at Zanderij, near the entrance to his sleeping quarters. It was seven o' clock in the morning and the specimen was picked up with little resistance.
Another specimen was also caught in the vicinity of Bosbivak.

Distribution: Panama, north Colombia, Venezuela and the Guianas.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. In the area in and around Bosbivak at Zanderij.



THE GENUS *PSEUDOBOA* SCHNEIDER, 1801.

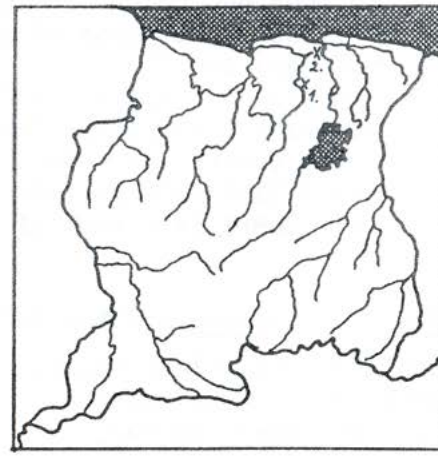
This genus comprises four species of which two occur in Surinam.

General data for the genus:
Head: The streamlined head is wider than the neck. The eyes have vertically elliptical pupils.
Body: Strong, slightly flattened from side to side and with smooth scales. These snakes are not large.
Tail: Normal.
Behaviour: Terrestrial and nocturnal.
Food: Lizards, reptile eggs, small snakes (even of its own species), small mammals and small eels (in the submerged rice fields).
Habitat: Mainly in the rain forests. However, *Pseudoboa coronata* can also be found in savannah forests and forested cultured areas. *Pseudoboa neuwiedii* can also be found in savannah-like areas.
Reproduction: Oviparous. Lays eight to sixteen eggs.
Remarks: The snakes of this genus constrict their prey even though they have strongly enlarged rear fangs. This explains the name *Pseudoboa*. The body and colour patterns of this genus are very much like those of specimens of the genera *Oxyrhopus* and *Clelia*.
According to Emsley (1977), the eggs of this species are sometimes found in ant nests (ants of the genera *Atta* and *Acromyrmex*). It has not been established whether this is coincidental or if there is a form of symbiosis.

Pseudoboa coronata Schneider, 1801.

English name: Black-headed scarlet snake.
Dutch name: Rode bosslang.
Surinam name: Ingibangi.

Maximum length: Approximately 1.15 m.
Scalation: Dorsals in 17 rows (smooth scales); 171-208 ventrals; 77-107 subcaudals in a single row; a single anal plate; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 7 upper labials (3rd and 4th border the eye); 8 lower labials; 2+2 (sometimes 1+2 or 2+3) temporals.
Teeth: The two back teeth in the upper jaw are strongly enlarged and have a deep groove. They are separated from the other teeth by a small diastema.
Colouration: The head is dark brown to black and the neck, which is the same colour, has a wide white band. The dorsal surface is brick-red to purplish red, and the belly is cream-coloured or yellowish.
Remarks: According to Dixon & Soini (1977) the white band on the neck disappears as the animals get older. Very young *Clelia clelia clelia* look like this species. The single row of subcaudals is the distinguishing characteristic for this genus.
Distribution: The Amazon basin in Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and the Guianas.
Locality records in Surinam: 1. In the savannah-forest near the indian village of Mata (approx. 10 km from Zanderij; 2. One specimen, caught in the botanical gardens in Paramaribo, may have been either a *Pseudoboa* or a very young *Clelia*.



Pseudoboa neuwiedii (Dum., Bibr. & Dum., 1854)

English name: Brown and yellow snake.
Dutch name: Rode savanneslang.
Surinam name: Ingibangi.
Maximum length: Approximately 1 m.
Scalation: Dorsals in 19 rows (smooth scales); 177-231 ventrals; 75-97 subcaudals in one single row; a single anal plate; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 upper labials (4th and 5th border the eye); 8 lower labials; 2+2 (sometimes 1+3 or 2+3) temporals.
Teeth: Similar to *Pseudoboa coronata*.
Colouration: The head is greyish-black to black. The dorsal surface is red-brown while the belly is orangish-yellow or light pink.
Remarks: The author caught only one specimen of this species so far, in the open savannah near a road. It was hiding under a large rock, and at first sight appeared to be a young Mussurana. At the time the author was unable to determine the species accurately for lack of proper data. The current species determination for this individual is based on a photograph taken at the time. The author is still not completely convinced that the photograph is of a *Pseudoboa neuwiedii*. Juvenile specimens of the species *Clelia clelia clelia* have the same colour pattern.
Distribution: From Panama all the way down the Atlantic coast to Surinam. It can also be found in Brazil directly south of the Amazon and on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.
Locality records: Savannah country in the area of Bosbivak Zanderij.

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