

THE SNAKES OF SURINAM, PART XIV: SUBFAMILY XENODONTINAE (GENERA RHINOBOOTHRYUM, SIBON AND SIPHLOPHIS).

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THE GENUS *RHINOBOOTHRYUM* WAGLER, 1830

There are only two species, of which one occurs in Surinam.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head is somewhat angular with a blunt snout. The head is distinct from the small neck. The large eyes have vertically oval pupils. The rostral is large and separates the internasals.

Body: Slender, obliquely flattened, and with keeled scales.

Tail: Slender.

Behaviour: Arboreal and nocturnal.

Food: Unknown.

Habitat: Upland rain forests, savannah woods.

Reproduction: Unknown.

Special features: The bands of red, white and black are somewhat like those of coral snakes.

Rhinobothryum lentiginosum (Seopoli, 1758)

Dutch name: Sproetkop boomslang of Koraalslang-achtige boomslang.

Maximum length: About 160 cm.

Scalation: Dorsals in 19 rows (7 keeled plus apical); 245-278 ventrals; 95-120 subcaudals (in two rows); anal scale divided; 1 large preocu-

lar; 2 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 supralabials, of which the 4th and 5th reach the eye; 10 sublabials; 2+2 or 2+3 temporals.

Colouration: The head is strikingly coloured and patterned. The head scales are black with a clear reddish brown (sometimes whitish) edging. On the side of the head there are small scattered black spots on a light reddish brown background. The whole looks like marquetry.

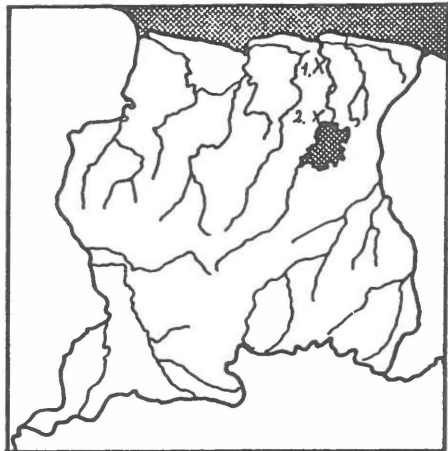
There are some twentyfour black dorsal crossbands, separated by white bands which are half as broad as the black ones. The white bands are more or less divided in two by a red-brown band that goes exactly to the ventral edge, where it is little narrower than in the middle of the back. Due to the presence of small black spots, this red-brown band has a dark lustre. The whole looks somewhat like a coral snake.

Remarks: One rainy evening I found a run over specimen alongside the road. The animal was still alive, but did not survive, so the next day J. Moonen had to be satisfied with photographing a handsome but dead snake.

Another specimen was found by W. Eriks in the neighbourhood of the village of Brownsweg. As far as I can determine, there are only three specimens known from Surinam.

Distribution: Amazon and Paraguay basins, and in Surinam.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Lelydorp; 2. Village Brownsweg.



THE GENUS *SIBON* FITZINGER, 1826

The genus *Sibon* consists of nine species, of which one species has two subspecies and another has four subspecies. In Surinam, only one species occurs.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head is broad with a somewhat narrowed and short snout. The junction with the thin neck is clearly visible. The eyes are large, with vertical pupils. Large nasal grooves, the lack of preoculars, and prefrontals which touch the eye, are diagnostic features.

Body: Long and slender, vertically flattened and with smooth scales. A useful feature is that the scales of the vertebral row are larger than the rest.

Tail: Long and thin.

Behaviour: Arboreal, sometimes terrestrial, and nocturnal.

Food: Snails and slugs.

Habitat: Rain forests (highland forests) and savannah woods. The genus finds shelter in bromeliads, behind loose pieces of bark, but also sometimes on the ground under a heap of leaves, or in holes and clefts in dead trunks, etc.

Reproduction: Oviparous.

Special features: The rigid chin is an adaptation in connection with the food. Unlike the still better adapted *Dipsas* species, this genus still has a mental groove.

Sibon nebulata nebulata (Linnaeus, 1758)

Dutch name: Kortsnuitboomslang.

Surinam name: Sribi-oeroekoekoe or Sribi-owroekoekoe.

Maximum length: About 80 cm.

Scalation: Dorsals in 15 rows (smooth scales; en-



Fig. 1. *Rhinobothryum lentiginosum*. Foto: J. Moonen.



Fig. 2. *Sibon nebulata nebulata*. Foto: A. Abuys.

larged vertebral scales); 148-199 ventrals; 73-114 subcaudals in a double row; single anal scale; no preoculars; 2 (sometimes 3) postoculars; 1 loreal; 7 (sometimes 8) supralabials, of which the 4th and the 5th touch the eye); 9 or 10 sublabials; 1+2 temporals.

Colouration: The ground colour is beige with a brown graining. On the head some large brown spots occur and all over the body irregular dark-brown crossbands exists, usually with a beige edge.

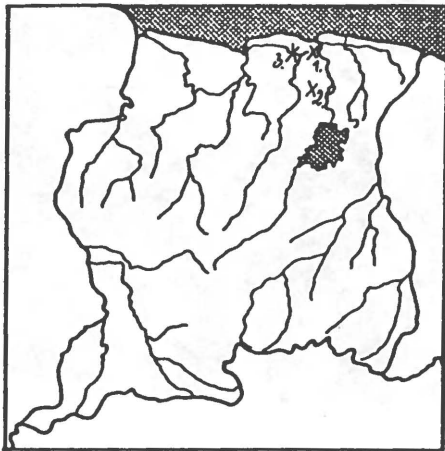
The belly is yellow-white with black spots or sometimes with black cross-bands or large black spots.

Remarks: According to Michael Emsley, this snake will defend itself by striking with a closed mouth. From my experiences with some specimens, I conclude that they are not aggressive. When threatened, they are likely to hide the head between their own coils.

Distribution: From Mexico, through the lowlands of Central America to the northern parts of South America, east of the Andes.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Surroundings of Paramaribo; 2. Surroundings of Zanderij; 3.

Along the east-west communication between Paramaribo and Monks-hoop.



THE GENUS *SIPHLOPHIS* FITZINGER, 1843

This genus consists of five species, of which one occurs in Surinam.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head is distinct from the neck. The eyes are large and have vertically oval pupils.

Body: Long and slender with smooth scales.

Tail: Long and slender.

Behaviour: Arboreal and nocturnal.

Habitat: Highland rain forests and savannah woods.

Reproduction: Oviparous, up to twelve eggs.

Siphlophis cervinus (Laurenti, 1768)

Dutch name: Zwartwitgevlekte boomslang, or Roodrugboomslang.

English name: Checkerbelly.

Maximum length: About 130 cm.

Scalation: Dorsals in 19 rows (smooth); 205-255 ventrals; 98-118 subcaudals; single anal scale; 1 preocular; 2 or 3 postoculars; 1 loreal; 8 (sometimes 9) supralabials, of which the 3rd, 4th and 5th touch the eye; 9 sublabials, the 4th and 5th particularly large; 2+3 temporals.

Teeth: The last two maxillary teeth are enlarged and separated from the other teeth by a diastema.

Colouration: The head shields are brown with a light centre and a thin light edging. The overall colouration of the head is brownish. The body is black with white or yellowish cross-bands or spots.

The belly is white to yellowish with grey-black cross-bands or spots.

Many colour variations are possible. In literature (J.R. Dixon and M. Emsley) there is mention of specimens with the dorsal colour combination being black and red instead of black and

white. A slide belonging to M.S. Hoogmoed shows a *Siphlophis cervinus* with an irregular reddish vertebral line all along the body, although the lateral parts have normal black and white or black and yellow bands or spots.

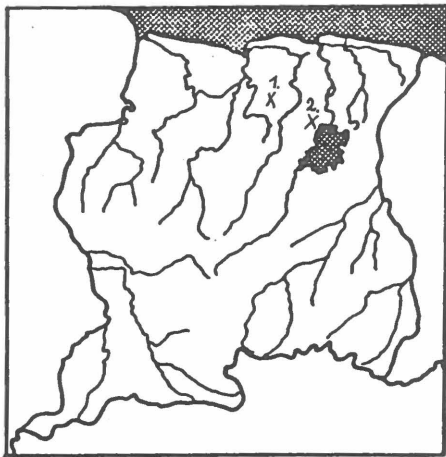
Remarks: I obtained two specimens, unfortunately both were already dead. The first specimen I received from a colleague. It was preserved in alcohol and originated from the surroundings of the camp at Brownsweg.

The second specimen I found on the bauxite road in the region of Mount Goliath. It was knocked down and killed.

Both specimens had the typical colour combination of black and white.

Distribution: Northwest and central South America, and on Trinidad.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. The road to Mount Goliath; 2. Near Brownsweg.



REFERENCES

- Dixon, James R. & Pekka Soini, 1977. The reptiles of the upper amazon basin, Iquitos region, Peru II: Crocodylians, turtles and snakes. Milwaukee Publ. Mus., Contr. Biol. Geol., No. 12: 1-91.

Emsley, Michael G., 1977. Snakes, and Trinidad and Tobago. Bull. Maryland Herp. Soc., Vol. 13 (4): 201-304.