

A logical break-up of the genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes: Colubridae) along phylogenetic and morphological lines.

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ABSTRACT

The Catsnake genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 as currently understood includes a diverse assemblage of distantly related and morphologically similar snakes from south-west Asia, southern Europe and north, central and southern Africa.

The various species groups are self-evidently morphologically and regionally distinct and so it is surprising that not all have been formally named in accordance with the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) or earlier codes.

This paper breaks up the genus along logical lines, the result being as follows:

Telescopus Wagler, 1830 (type species: *Coluber obtusus* Reuss, 1834) includes the North African assemblage commonly referred to in the literature as "the *dhara-obtusum* group".

Tarbophis Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is treated as a subgenus of *Telescopus* and includes the species with a distribution centred on the Middle-east and nearby parts of southern Europe and south-west Asia.

Ruivenkorporum subgen. nov. is erected to accommodate two divergent species within *Telescopus* with a distribution centred on Pakistan and Iran.

Elfakhariorumserpens gen. nov. is erected to accommodate the very different four described species-level taxa from south-west Africa, and another from sub-Saharan Africa, with *Matsonserpens* subgen. nov. erected to accommodate the sub-Saharan African species *Dipsas variegata* Reinhardt, 1843.

Two species, formerly treated as variants of "*Tarbophis nigriceps* Ahl, 1924" are herein formally named as *Telescopus (Tarbophis) mannixi* sp. nov. and *Telescopus (Tarbophis) gocmeni* sp. nov..

Keywords: Taxonomy; nomenclature; snakes; *Telescopus*; Africa; Southern Africa; Middle-East; Catsnake; Colubridae; *Tarbophis*; *semiannulatus*; *variegatus*; *nigriceps*; new genus; *Elfakhariorumserpens*; new subgenus; *Ruivenkorporum*; *Matsonserpens*; new species; *mannixi*; *gocmeni*.

INTRODUCTION

The very distinctive Catsnake genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 as currently understood includes a diverse assemblage of distantly related and morphologically similar snakes from south-west Asia, southern Europe and north, central and southern Africa.

An audit was done on the genus as currently understood with the following general results.

At the species level, it appears that most, but not all extant species have been named, with numerous synonyms for many being available.

Numerous papers have been published over the past two hundred years dealing with the species-level taxonomy in detail and so as of 2017, species level taxonomy of the group is largely resolved.

The various species groups are self-evidently morphologically and regionally distinct and so it is quite surprising that not all have been formally named in accordance with the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) at either genus or subgenus level.

The type species for *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is *Coluber*

obtusus Reuss, 1834 and this is clearly the appropriate name for the north African assemblage.

The divergent lineage from Eurasia, with a centre of distribution in the Middle-East has the available name *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831).

However the sub-Saharan species, which clearly constitute a different lineage remain unnamed at either the genus or subgenus level.

Noting the deep divergences within these groups it is appropriate that this unnamed sub-Saharan group be afforded recognition at the genus level. This is formally done in this paper.

As the four species from south-west Africa are significantly different from the central African species, it too is afforded genus level recognition, being treated herein as a subgenus within the south-west African group, although I note that this central African taxon may in time be elevated to a full genus.

In terms of the divergent Asian form *Dipsas rhinopoma* Blanford, 1874 from the region of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, it, along with *Tarbophis tessellatus* Wall, 1908 is placed in a subgenus.

The species *Tarbophis nigriceps* Ahl, 1924, now placed in that subgenus, as currently understood has a centre of distribution on the Middle-east, ranging from Israel to Iran. It has been shown by previous authors to consist of a number of morphologically divergent populations.

Distribution records were matched against known landforms and barriers to reveal two separate and very distinct populations, separated by the Euphrates River Valley. There is no doubt that they are separate species and so the southern population is herein named for the first time as a new species.

The northern populations also appear to be split by the Tigris River and tributaries and so the Turkish populations to the east of this basin are also herein described as a new species, separate to *Telescopus (Tarbophis) nigriceps* Ahl, 1924.

Similar splits of related species in the Syrian region have also been found in geckos within the *Hemidactylus turcicus* species complex (Moravec *et al.* 2011).

Endemism of fauna and flora in Anatolia and adjacent ranges is also well known and documented (Davis 1971, Ekim and Güner 1986).

The taxon *Dipsas variegata* Reinhardt, 1843, currently better known as *Telescopus variegatus* (Reinhardt, 1843), is herein treated as being of a single species.

However there is a strong likelihood that more than one species is being included within this wide-ranging putative taxon.

Hence in finality this paper breaks up the genus *Telescopus* as currently recognized on the most logical basis, the result being as follows:

Telescopus Wagler, 1830 (type species: *Coluber obtusus* Reuss, 1834) includes the North African assemblage commonly referred to in the literature as "the *dhara-obtusus* group".

Tarbophis Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is treated as a subgenus of *Telescopus* and includes the species with a distribution centred on the Middle-east and nearby parts of southern Europe and south-west Asia. *Ruivenkampungum* subgen. nov. is erected to accommodate the species *Telescopus rhinopoma* (Blanford, 1874) and *Telescopus tessellatus* (Wall, 1908).

Elfakhariorumserpens gen. nov. is erected to accommodate the very different four described species-level taxa from south-west Africa, and that from sub-Saharan Africa, with *Matsonserpens* subgen. nov. erected to accommodate the sub-Saharan African species *Dipsas variegata* Reinhardt, 1843.

Two species until now treated as populations of *Telescopus (Tarbophis) nigriceps* Ahl, 1924 are herein named *Telescopus mannixi* sp. nov. and *T. gocmeni* sp. nov..

MATERIALS AND METHODS

These are not formally explained in a number of my recent papers under the heading "Materials and methods" or similar, on the basis they are self evident to any vaguely perceptive reader. However, the process by which the following taxonomy and nomenclature in this and other recent papers by myself of similar form (in *Australasian Journal of Herpetology* issues 1-33), has been arrived at, is explained herein for the benefit of people who have recently published so-called "criticisms" online of some of my recent papers. They have alleged a serious "defect" by myself not formally explaining "Materials and Methods" under such a heading.

The process involved in creating the final product for this and other relevant papers has been via a combination of the following:

Genera and component species have been audited to see if their classifications are correct on the basis of known type specimens, locations and the like when compared with known phylogenies and obvious morphological differences between relevant specimens and similar putative species.

Original descriptions and contemporary concepts of the species are matched with available specimens from across the ranges of the species to see if all conform to accepted norms.

These as a matter of course include those held in museums, private collections, collected in the field, photographed, posted on the internet in various locations or held by individuals, and only when the location data is good and any other relevant and verifiable data is available.

Where specimens do not appear to comply with the described species or genera (and accepted concept of each), this non-conformation is looked at with a view to ascertaining if it is worthy of taxonomic recognition or other relevant considerations on the basis of differences that can be tested for antiquity or deduced from earlier studies.

When this appears to be the case (non-conformation), the potential target taxon is inspected as closely as practicable with a view to comparing with the nominate form or forms to see if other similar taxa have been previously named.

Other relevant data is also reviewed, including any available molecular studies which may indicate likely divergence of populations.

Where molecular studies are unavailable for the relevant taxon or group, other studies involving species and groups constrained by the same geographical or geological barriers or factors, or with like distribution patterns are inspected as they give reasonable indications of the likely divergences of the taxa being studied herein.

Additionally other studies involving geological history, sea level and habitat changes associated with long-term climate change, including recent ice age changes in sea levels, versus known sea depths are utilized to predict past movements of species and genus groups in order to further ascertain likely divergences between extant populations (as done in this very paper).

When all available information checks out to show taxonomically distinct populations worthy of recognition, they are then recognized herein according to the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999).

This means that if a name has been properly proposed in the past, it is used as is done in this very paper for the name *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831.

Alternatively, if no name is available, one is proposed according to the rules of the Code as is done in this paper for one genus and one subgenus (and two species).

As a matter of trite I mention that if a target taxon or group does check out as being "in order" or properly classified, a paper is usually not published unless some other related taxon is named for the first time.

The published literature relevant to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830

sensu lato and the taxonomic judgments herein include: Ahl (1924, 1925), Al-Quran (2009), Amaral (1927), Ananjeva *et al.* (2006), Anderson (1895), Anderson (1963), Arakelyan *et al.* (2011), Arnold (1980), Auerbach (1987), Aylmer (1922), Beard (1987), Baier *et al.* (2009), Baran (1976), Barbour (1922), Barbour and Amaral (1927), Bar and Haimovitch (2012), Bauer *et al.* (1993), Bauer and Branch (2003), Berger-Dell'mour (1986), Beshkov and Nanev (2006), Beyhaghi (2016), Bischoff (2002), Blanford (1874), Boettger (1877, 1880), Böhme (1977, 2010), Böhme *et al.* (1989), Boulenger (1888, 1895a, 1895b, 1896, 1913), Branch (1987, 1993), Broadley (1959, 1962, 1994), Broadley and Blaylock (2013), Broadley and Cotterill (2004), Broadley and Howell (1991), Broadley *et al.* (2003), Broggi (2014), Buchert and Buchert (2011), Cattaneo (1990), Chabanaud (1916), Chirio and Ineich (2006), Chirio and Lebreton (2007), Corkill and Cochrane (1966), Cox *et al.* (2012), Crochet *et al.* (2008), Das and Naresh (1998), Davis (1971), Disi (1993), Disi *et al.* (2001, 2017), Domergue (1955, 1959), Duméril *et al.* (1854), Egan (2007), Ehrlich and Trapp (2010), Ekim and Güner (1986), Engelmann *et al.* (1983), Esterbauer (1985a, 1985b), Fleischmann (1831), Forskål (1775), Frör and Beutler (1978), Gardner *et al.* (2009), Geniez (2015), Geniez *et al.* (2004), Göçmen *et al.* (2007, 2009), Goldberg (2015), Grillitsch and Grillitsch (2002), Grossmann (2012, 2013), Gruber (1974), Gruber and Fuchs (1977), Günther (1888), Haacke (2013), Haagner *et al.* (2000), Haas and Battersby (1959), Herrmann and Branch (2013), Hoser (2012, 2013), Hraoui-Bloquet *et al.* (2002), Hughes (2013), Ilgaz *et al.* (2007), Jongbloed (2000), Kasapidis *et al.* (1996), Kirchner (2009), Kucharzewski (2015), Kumlatius *et al.* (2004), Kwet (2010), Kwet and Trapp (2014), Kyriazi *et al.* (2013), Lanza (1990), Lagen and Spawls (2010), Lagen and Rasmussen (1993), Leviton *et al.* (1992), Loveridge (1929, 1956), Marias (2004), Martens (1993), Marx (1968), Mattison (1995, 2007), Mazuch (2013), Menzies (1966), Meyer (1985), Moravec *et al.* (2011), Nicolay (1987), Nilson and Padial (2006), Parker (1949), Pichler (2014), Pietersen *et al.* (2013), Pitman (1974), Pyron *et al.* (2013), Rasmussen and Hughes (1996), Reinhardt (1843), Reuss (1834), Ride *et al.* (1999), Robertson *et al.* (1963), Schleich *et al.* (1996), Schlüter (2006, 2009), Schmid (2015), Schmidt (1939), Schmidt and Gruschwitz (2004), Schmidt and Marx (1950), Schneider (1983), Schweiger (2012), Scortecci (1935), Sehnal and Schuster (1999), Sindaco *et al.* (2000, 2006, 2013, 2014), Smith (1849), Smith (1943), Sochurek (1979), Sowig (1985), Spawls *et al.* (2002), Sternfeld (2010), Steward (1971), Tóth *et al.* (2002), Trape and Mané (2002, 2006, 2015), Trapp (2007), Trutnau (1975), Uhrin *et al.* (2016), Ullenbruch *et al.* (2010), van der Kooij (2001), Veith (1991), Venchi and Sindaco (2006), Wagler (1830), Wall (1908, 1913), Wallach *et al.* (2014), Warnecke (1988), Werner (1897, 1909, 1917, 1919, 1936), Werner (1983, 1988), Wettstein (1952), Zinner (1977) and sources cited therein.

Some material within descriptions below may be repeated for different described taxa and this is in accordance with the provisions of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* and the legal requirements for each description. I make no apologies for this.

I also note that, notwithstanding the theft of relevant materials from this author in an illegal armed raid on 17 August 2011, which were not returned in breach of undertakings to the court (Court of Appeal Victoria 2014 and VCAT 2015), I have made a decision to publish this paper.

This is in view of the conservation significance attached to the formal recognition of unnamed taxa at all levels and on the basis that further delays may in fact put these presently unnamed or potentially improperly assigned taxa at greater risk of extinction.

This comment is made noting the extensive increase in human population in Africa, the Middle-east, south-west Asia and southern Europe and the general environmental destruction across these and/or other areas as documented by Hoser

(1991), including low density areas without a large permanent human population.

I also note the abysmal environmental record of various National, State and Local governments in many regions in the past 200 years as detailed by Hoser (1989, 1991, 1993 and 1996).

NOTES ON THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR ANY POTENTIAL REVISORS

Unless mandated by the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, none of the spellings of the newly proposed names should be altered in any way. Should one or more newly named taxa be merged by later authors to be treated as a single genus-level group, the order of priority of retention of names should be the order (page priority) of the descriptions within this text.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 are also both redefined below so that herpetologists can be well aware of the differences between the various biological entities.

GENUS TELESCOPUS WAGLER, 1830.

Type species: *Coluber obtusus* Reuss, 1834.

Diagnosis: The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:

B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Elfakhariumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakhariumserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariumserpens* gen. nov..

Distribution: *Telescopus* occurs in Southern Eurasia, west of the Indian Subcontinent, including the Middle-east and also northern Africa.

Content: *Telescopus obtusus* (Reuss, 1834) (Type species); *T.*

dhara (Forksals, 1775); *T. fallax* (Fleischmann, 1831); *T. gezirae* Broadley, 1994; *T. gocmeni* sp. nov.; *T. hoogstraali* Schmidt and Marx, 1956; *T. mannixi* sp. nov.; *T. nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924); *T. pulcher* (Scortecci, 1935); *T. rhinopoma* (Blanford, 1874); *T. somalicus* (Parker, 1949); *T. tessellatus* (Wall, 1908); *T. tripolitanus* (Werner, 1909).

SUBGENUS *TARBOPHIS* FLEISCHMANN, 1831

Type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831.

Diagnosis: The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:
B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

- 1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:
- 2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:
- 3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The genus *Elfakharioumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakharioumserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakharioumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakharioumserpens* gen. nov..

Distribution: *Tarbophis* occurs in Southern Europe, eastwards to Iran and including the Middle-east.

Content: *Telescopus* (*Tarbophis*) *fallax* Fleischmann, 1831 (Type species); *T. (Tarbophis) gocmeni* sp. nov.; *T. (Tarbophis) hoogstraali* Schmidt and Marx, 1956; *T. (Tarbophis) mannixi* sp. nov.; *T. (Tarbophis) nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924).

SUBGENUS *RUIVENKAMPORUMUS* SUBGEN. NOV.

Type species: *Dipsas rhinopoma* Blanford, 1874.

Diagnosis: The subgenus *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:
B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

- 1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:
- 2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:
- 3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The genus *Elfakharioumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakharioumserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakharioumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakharioumserpens* gen. nov..

Distribution: *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. occurs in the region of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Etymology: Named in honour of Nathan and Katrina Ruivenkamp of Warrandyte, Victoria, Australia in recognition of logistical assistances to the Snakebusters, Australia's best reptiles, wildlife displays, associated wildlife conservation and scientific research projects over more than a decade.

Content: *Telescopus* (*Ruivenkamporumus*) *rhinopoma* (Blanford, 1874) (type species); *T. (Ruivenkamporumus) tessellatus* (Wall, 1908).

SUBGENUS *TELESCOPUS* WAGLER, 1830.

Type species: *Coluber obtusus* Reuss, 1834.

Diagnosis: The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

- 1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:
- 2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:
- 3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporumus* subgen. nov. is separated

from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:
B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.* is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariormserpens subgen. nov.* by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.*

Distribution: The subgenus *Telescopus* occurs in the northern half of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Content: *Telescopus obtusus* (Reuss, 1834) (Type species); *T. dhara* (Forksals, 1775); *T. gezirae* Broadley, 1994; *T. pulcher* (Scortecci, 1935); *T. somalicus* (Parker, 1949); *T. tripolitanus* (Werner, 1909).

GENUS ELFAKHARIORMSERPENS GEN. NOV.

Type species: *Telescopus semiannulatus* Smith, 1849.

Diagnosis: The genus *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.* is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 (as described immediately below) and conforms to that diagnosis, except for the following details. *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.* can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariormserpens subgen. nov.* by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.*

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other

of:

1/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:
2/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa.

Etymology: Named in honour of Daniel, Akram and Moses El-Fahkri and their wives, all of Northcote, Victoria, Australia in recognition of their services to the taxi industry in Victoria, Australia over some decades as well as their many years of logistical support to the conservation efforts of Snakebusters, Australia's best reptiles, wildlife displays.

Content: *Elfakhariormserpens semiannulatus* (Smith, 1849) (Type species); *E. beetzi* (Barbour, 1922); *E. finkeldeyi* (Haacke, 2013); *E. polystictus* (Mertens, 1954); *E. variegatus* (Reinhardt, 1843).

SUBGENUS MATSONSERPENS SUBGEN. NOV.

Type species: *Dipsas variegata* Reinhardt, 1843.

Diagnosis: The genus *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.* is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 (as described immediately below) and conforms to that diagnosis, except for the following details.

Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariormserpens subgen. nov.* by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariormserpens gen. nov.*

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporumus subgen. nov.* by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

1/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:

2/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Distribution: Sub-Saharan West and central Africa.

Etymology: Named in honour of Greg Matson of Harkaway, Victoria, Australia in recognition of his long term logistical support to the conservation efforts of Snakebusters, Australia's best reptiles, wildlife displays.

Content: *Elfakhariormserpens (Matsonserpens) variegatus* (Reinhardt, 1843) (monotypic).

SUBGENUS ELFAKHARIORUMSERPENS GEN. NOV.

Type species: *Telescopus semiannulatus* Smith, 1849.

Diagnosis: The genus *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 (as described immediately below) and conforms to that diagnosis, except for the following details. *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariorumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 (type species: *Tarbophis fallax* Fleischmann, 1831) is separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

1/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:

2/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Distribution: Southern Africa.

Etymology: Named in honour of Daniel, Akram and Moses El-Fahkri and their wives, all of Northcote, Victoria, Australia in recognition of their services to the taxi industry in Victoria, Australia over some decades as well as their many years of logistical support to the conservation efforts of Snakebusters, Australia's best reptiles, wildlife displays.

Content: *Elfakhariorumserpens* (*Elfakhariorumserpens*) *semiannulatus* (Smith, 1849) (Type species); *E. (Elfakhariorumserpens) beetzi* (Barbour, 1922); *E. (Elfakhariorumserpens) finkeldeyi* (Haacke, 2013); *E. (Elfakhariorumserpens) polystictus* (Mertens, 1954).

TELESCOPUS (TARBOPHIS) MANNIXI SP. NOV.

Holotype: A preserved specimen in the Field Museum of Natural History at Chicago, Illinois, USA, specimen number: FMNH Amphibians and Reptiles 11367, collected at Ar Rutbah, Iraq.

The female has a coal black belly and black head. The dorsal scale formula is 19-19-15; ventrals 187;

anal divided; subcaudals 55; upper labials nine-nine; lower labials 10-10; oculars one-two; temporals two-two; and total length 380 mm, tail 65 mm. The number of dorsal dark bands is 18 on the body and five on the tail.

The Field Museum of Natural History at Chicago, Illinois, USA allows public access to its holdings.

Diagnosis: *T. mannixi* sp. nov. has until now been treated as a variant of *T. nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924).

T. mannixi sp. nov. can be readily separated from both *T. nigriceps* and *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. by the lower number of cross bands on the body and tail (23 or less, versus 24 or more in *T. nigriceps* and *T. gocmeni* sp. nov.).

T. gocmeni sp. nov. is readily separated from *T. nigriceps* and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. by the ground coloration of the body which is pinkish gray instead of pale brown or pale gray in both other taxa.

T. gocmeni sp. nov. is further separated from the other two species by as a rule having 8/8 supralabials versus 9/9 in the other species.

T. nigriceps, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. can be distinguished from the similar and sometimes sympatric *T. fallax* Fleischmann, 1831 by the following combination of characters; relatively plump body, most have regular coal black cross bands which fuse with the shiny blackish venter, coal black-blackish gray or pinkish gray head, pinkish gray, pale brown or pale gray ground colour of dorsum, and an almost black and shiny venter dashed with pinkish gray spots and blotches. *T. nigriceps*, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. are also separated from *T. fallax* by the numbers of temporals, subcaudals, blotches on the dorsum of the body and the numbers of ventrals as detailed by Gocmen *et al.* (2007) (given for the species they defined as *T. nigriceps*).

T. hoogstrali Schmidt and Marx, 1956 is readily separated from *T. nigriceps*, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov., *T. mannixi* sp. nov. and *T. fallax* by the higher number of dorsal cross-bands, being around 40 on the dorsum between the neck and vent.

The five species *Telescopus (Tarbophis) fallax* Fleischmann, 1831 (Type species for the subgenus), *T. (Tarbophis) gocmeni* sp. nov., *T. (Tarbophis) hoogstrali* Schmidt and Marx, 1956; *T. (Tarbophis) mannixi* sp. nov. and *T. (Tarbophis) nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924), forming the subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 can be readily separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals.

These snakes are found in the general region of Southern Europe, eastwards to Iran and including the Middle-east.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:

B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23

mid-body rows and anal divided.

The genus *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakhariorumserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariorumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov..

Distribution: This taxon, *T. mannixi* sp. nov. is found in the elevated (non alluvial) region to the south of the Euphrates River in the Syrian desert and nearby hilly parts of Jordan, Israel and presumably western Lebanon.

Etymology: Named in honour of Daniel Mannix of West Sunshine, Victoria, Australia, owner of the Victorian Dog Training Academy (VDTA) in recognition for his services to animal welfare in Australia through his many years work as a leading dog trainer including through "snake avoidance training" thereby preventing dogs from killing snakes and the common effect of dog being killed by snake that defends itself when attacked and the snake is highly venomous.

Where the training is done, most, if not all local snakes are dangerously venomous to dogs and humans.

TELESCOPUS (TARBOPHIS) GOCMENI SP. NOV.

Holotype: A preserved female specimen at the Zoology Department of the Ege University (ZDEU), Bornova, Izmir-Turkey, specimen number: ZDEU 174/2007 collected at Polateli (Hayberi Mountain, 830 m, 36°50'44"N, 37°06'45"E), Kilis, Turkey, collected on 29 May 2007.

The Zoology Department of the Ege University (ZDEU), Bornova, Izmir-Turkey allows access to its holdings.

Paratype: A preserved male specimen at the Zoology Department of the Ege University (ZDEU), Bornova, Izmir-Turkey, specimen number: ZDEU 130/2007 collected at Akmagara (Tektek Mountain), Sanliurfa Province, Turkey on 28 April 2007.

Diagnosis: *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. like the species *T. mannixi* sp. nov. described above has until now been treated as a variant of *T. nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924).

T. mannixi sp. nov. can be readily separated from both *T. nigriceps* and *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. by the lower number of cross bands on the body and tail (23 or less, versus 24 or more in *T. nigriceps* and *T. gocmeni* sp. nov.).

T. gocmeni sp. nov. is readily separated from both *T. nigriceps* and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. by the ground coloration of the body which is pinkish gray instead of pale brown or pale gray in both other taxa.

T. gocmeni sp. nov. is further separated from the other two species by as a rule having 8/8 supralabials versus 9/9 in the other species.

T. nigriceps, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. can be distinguished from the similar and sometimes sympatric *T. fallax* Fleischmann, 1831 by the following combination of characters; relatively plump body, most have regular coal black cross bands which fuse with the shiny blackish venter, coal black-blackish gray or pinkish gray head, pinkish gray, pale brown or pale gray ground colour of dorsum, and an almost black and shiny venter dashed with pinkish gray spots and blotches. *T. nigriceps*, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov. and *T. mannixi* sp. nov. are also separated from *T. fallax* by the numbers of temporals, subcaudals, blotches on the dorsum of the body and the numbers of ventrals as detailed by Gocmen *et al.* (2007) (given for the species they defined as *T. nigriceps*).

T. hoogstrali Schmidt and Marx, 1956 is readily separated from *T. nigriceps*, *T. gocmeni* sp. nov., *T. mannixi* sp. nov. and *T.*

fallax by the higher number of dorsal cross-bands, being around 40 on the dorsum between the neck and vent.

The five species *Telescopus* (*Tarbophis*) *fallax* Fleischmann, 1831 (Type species for the subgenus), *T. (Tarbophis) gocmeni* sp. nov., *T. (Tarbophis) hoogstrali* Schmidt and Marx, 1956; *T. (Tarbophis) mannixi* sp. nov. and *T. (Tarbophis) nigriceps* (Ahl, 1924), forming the subgenus *Tarbophis* Fleischmann, 1831 can be readily separated from *Telescopus* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, 19 mid-body rows, less than 230 ventrals and 47-59 subcaudals. These snakes are found in the general region of Southern Europe, eastwards to Iran and including the Middle-east.

The subgenus *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. is separated from both *Telescopus* and *Tarbophis* by the loreal entering, or nearly entering, the eye, having 21 or 23 mid-body rows, more than 230 ventrals and 59-79 subcaudals.

The subgenus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 is separated from both *Tarbophis* and *Ruivenkamporum* subgen. nov. by the loreal being separated from the eye by the preocular and one or other of:

A/ Scales in 19 or 21 midbody rows and a single anal plate, or:
B/ Scales in 21 or 23 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

The genus *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 are separated from all other Colubrinae snakes by the following suite of characters: 10 to 12 maxillary teeth, the ones anterior being longest, gradually decreasing in size posteriorly and followed, after an interspace by a pair of enlarged, grooved fangs, situated below the posterior border of the eye; the anterior mandibular teeth strongly enlarged. Head is distinct from the neck; eye is moderate in size, with a vertically elliptical pupil. Body is cylindrical or slightly compressed; scales smooth, oblique, with apical pits, in 19 to 23 rows; ventrals rounded. Tail moderate; subcaudals divided into two rows as well as one or more of the following three suites of characters:

1/ Loreal enters or nearly enters the eye, or:

2/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, 19 or 21 mid-body rows and anal entire, or:

3/ Loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular 21 or 23 mid-body rows and anal divided.

The genus *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov. is essentially similar to *Telescopus* Wagler, 1830 and generally conforms to the diagnosis just given, except for the following details.

Elfakhariorumserpens gen. nov. can be separated from *Telescopus* by the following suite of characters: The loreal is separated from the eye by the preocular, always 19 midbody rows and a divided anal scale.

Matsonserpens subgen. nov. is separated from the nominate subgenus *Elfakhariorumserpens* subgen. nov. by having two labials entering the eye as opposed to three in all other *Elfakhariorumserpens* gen. nov..

Distribution: Known from the region of South-eastern Anatolia, Turkey, west of the Tigris River drainage and north of the Euphrates River valley and alluvial flats.

Etymology: Named in honour of Bayram Gocmen of Bornova, Izmir-Turkey in recognition of his previous research work on the taxon of snake herein named in his honour.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no known conflicts of interest in terms of this paper and conclusions within.

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