

## A new species of Australian venomous snake, previously identified as *Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) from Western Australia.

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### ABSTRACT

As part of an ongoing audit of Australian reptiles, specimens of the little-known West Australian endemic Snake species *Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) from Western were examined.

It was found to comprise two readily identifiable allopatric and geographically distinct forms, worthy of taxonomic recognition. The unnamed form is herein formally described as species in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) as amended.

*Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) is the species found generally near the West Australian coast from a region spanning the Abrolhos in the north to Jurien Bay in the south.

The new species *Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. named in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) as amended is found in the region bounded by the Cape Range in the North to near Shark Bay in the south.

*S. fukdat* sp. nov. is separated from *S. littoralis* by having 1/ Only 16-23 rings around round the body, against 24-34, 2/ Fewer ventrals and subcaudals.3/ Longer nuchal blotch, 4/ Relatively longer tail, and 5/ Having on average one less caudal ring.

**Keywords:** Snakes; taxonomy; nomenclature; Storr; Elapidae; Western Australia; Australia; *Simoselaps*; *littoralis*; new species; *fukdat*.

### INTRODUCTION

As stated in the abstract, as part of an ongoing audit of Australian reptiles, specimens of the little-known West Australian Snake species *Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) from across the known range of the putative species were examined.

The materials and methods of the examination also included a thorough review of the previously published literature and all other available information including photos of live specimens with good locality data.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

While this is self evident from both abstract and introduction, I mention that inspection of specimens of this species has been over a 30 year period.

Relevant references relevant to the taxonomy and nomenclature of the putative species *Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) and the taxonomy and nomenclature presented in this paper include the following: Cogger (2014), Cogger *et al.* (1983), Dubois *et al.* (2019), Günther (1858), Jan (1859), Lee *et al.* (2016), Ride *et al.* (1999), Sanders *et al.* (2008), Storr (1967, 1979), Storr and Harold (1978), Storr *et al.* (2002), Wells and Wellington (1984, 1985) and sources cited therein.

Unless otherwise stated, material downloaded from the internet was last downloaded and checked on 7 February 2020.

### RESULTS

*Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) was found to comprise two allopatric and geographically distinct morphologically different forms, worthy of taxonomic recognition, as effectively noted by Storr (1968).

The unnamed forms are geographically disjunct from one another and contrary to the assertion of Storr (1978) I did not see any evidence of specimens that were intermediate in form, which is in large part why I have not hesitated to formally name the so-called far northern form of this putative species.

The two species are easily identified and separated from one another in the field and also in the absence of known locality information.

It is herein formally described as a new species in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) as amended.

*Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) is the species found generally near the West Australian coast from a region spanning Shark Bay islands and the Abrolhos in the north to Jurien Bay in the south.

The new species *Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. named in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) as amended is found in the region bounded by the Cape Range in the north to near Shark Bay in the south.

*S. fukdat* sp. nov. is separated from *S. littoralis* by having 1/ Only 16-22 rings around round the body, against 24-34, 2/ Fewer ventrals and subcaudals, 3/ Longer nuchal blotch, 4/ A relatively longer tail, and 5/ Having on average one less caudal ring.

The name *Simoselaps* Jan, 1859 is the relevant genus grouping for these snakes based on phylogeny (see for example Lee *et al.* 2016), although Storr (1967) erroneously placed the relevant species in the genus *Vermicella* Günther, 1858.

Storr in fact originally described the taxon as *Vermicella bertholdi littoralis* in 1967 before later elevating it to full species (Storr 1979).

The name *Simoselaps* may in future be overwritten by a name coined by the Wolfgang Wüster gang of thieves in line with their edicts as published in Kaiser *et al.* (2013) and Kaiser (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014a, 2014b), even though by their own admission this would be against the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999 as amended).

The alleged basis for their theft of works of others and their "name authority" is that the original publication was not "peer reviewed" by members of their own group.

The lunacy of this gang of thieves and their claims have been completely and comprehensively discredited in the publications of Dubois *et al.* (2019), Hoser (1989, 1991, 2007, 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015a-f, 2019a-b) and sources cited therein.

However of relevant importance here is the fact that no edition of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (editions 1, 2, 3 and 4) as applicable have ever mandated that peer review (by anyone) is a requirement for a nomen to be used.

Therefore *Simoselaps* is used as the appropriate and correct name for this genus of snakes not closely related to any others in Australia on the basis it is the first available name. Any later name coined by Wolfgang Wüster and his gang of thieves (as sought in Kaiser *et al.* 2013 as amended frequently) should therefore be ignored, as that document is not within the rules of the ICZN and the demands within it are therefore illegal in most places including Australia, the USA, European Union, UK and all other countries being a party to the CITES Treaty.

In terms of the scientific description below, the formal description in accordance with the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) as amended is based on healthy adult specimens in life unless otherwise stated.

It should be noted that unless mandated by the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (fourth edition) or relevant subsequent publication, the spelling of the new scientific name should not be altered.

The spelling within this paper is intentional and this includes for the species nomen *fukdat*, which in the absence of this statement may be subject of unwarranted emendation by fools to some other nomen.

A similar unjustified emendation of the name *Acanthophis wellsei* Hoser, 1998 to the nomen "*wellsi*", was was improperly done by the morons Mirtschin *et al.* 2017.

There are no conflicts of interest in the preparation of this paper. Relevant museum staff, including herpetology curators across Australia are thanked for their assistance's in this and other relevant scientific projects myself and colleagues have engaged in over the last 40 years, most of whom have done an excellent job in this regard.

The conservation significance of timely recognition of potentially threatened taxa is important and best explained via the papers of Hoser (2019a, 2019b) or books of Hoser (1989, 1991), which means I have absolutely no hesitation whatsoever in publishing the scientific description within this paper.

#### **SIMOSELAPS FUKDAT SP. NOV.**

**LSID** urn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:867AC942-5439-4998-9B07-F1F594574496

**Holotype:** A preserved specimen at the Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia, specimen number: R 16885 collected from near Point Cloates, Western Australia, Australia, Latitude 22.7212° S, Longitude 113.6775° E.

This government-owned facility allows access to its specimens.

**Paratype:** A preserved specimen at the Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, specimen number: R.101773 collected from the Vicinity of Maud Hill, just north of

Coral Bay, Western Australia, Australia, Latitude 23.1330° S., Longitude 113.8330° E.

**Diagnosis:** Until now *Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. has been treated as a northern race of *Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968). The two species are separated from one another by the following suite of characters: 1/ Only 16-23 rings around round the body in *S. fukdat* sp. nov., against 24-34 in *S. littoralis*, 2/ Fewer ventrals and subcaudals, 3/ Longer nuchal blotch, 4/ Relatively longer tail, and 5/ Having on average one less caudal ring (largely adapted from Storr 1967).

By counting body rings alone as stated above, one can easily separate the two species.

Both *Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. and *S. littoralis* are readily separated from all other Australian elapid snakes by the following suite of characters:

No paddle shaped tail. No suboculars and no specialized curved spine on the end of the tail. Body has smooth scales. It is with crossbands starting on the neck. There is also a pair of blackish bars on the head, with one between the eyes (including them) and one that is broader across the nape. Internasals are present. 15 mid body rows, 100-125 ventrals, divided anal, 15-25 all divided subcaudals. The rostral is almost as long as broad and the rostral shield is rounded and not noticeably projecting. Nasal in contact with preocular. Three or more solid maxillary teeth follow the fang.

Body shape is slightly rounded and length versus width about normal for Australian elapid snakes, being about 15-25 times diameter.

The dorsal colouration is creamy-yellow to white above and with 20-45 narrow black rings, 1-3 scales wide, on body and tail, with most extending to the lower flanks and belly, being only slightly narrower than the paler interspaces. The head is pale brown on the snout, peppered with blackish or dark brown, being heavily blotched with black posteriorly to about the rear of the parietals, then with a narrow pale band separating the head from a broad, blackish nuchal band 2-5 scales in width. Throat greyish and belly generally white, except where dark crossbands extend over the sides of the belly.

Total length of males is under 200 mm and females under 400 mm. Tail is 11.7-14.2 percent of total length in males and 8.0-10.4 percent of total length in females.

*Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. is depicted in life in Cogger (2014) at page 932 (top right), specimen from Coral Bay, Western Australia.

*Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) is depicted in life in Storr, Smith and Johnstone (2002), on page 147 at bottom.

**Distribution:** *Simoselaps fukdat* sp. nov. is found in the region bounded by the Cape Range in the North to about Shark Bay in the south.

*Simoselaps littoralis* (Storr, 1968) is the species found generally near the West Australian coast from a region spanning the Shark Bay islands and Abrolhos in the north to Jurien Bay in the south. It has a type locality of 7 miles south of Geraldton, Western Australia.

**Conservation threats:** None known at present, but if the Australian government persists with its "Big Australia Policy", (see for example Saunders 2019), that being a long-term aim to increase the human population in Australia to over 100 million people by year 2150 (from the present 25 million as of 2019), all sorts of unforeseen threats to the survival of this species may emerge.

This is a restricted range species as compared to many other Australian elapid species and due to this I recommend further research on the taxon and potential future conservation threats in line with the previous paragraph, including by direct human activities as well as potential threats caused by changed vegetation regimes, introduced pests and potential pathogens, including those introduced via the legal importation of foreign reptiles by government-owned zoos and associated entities.

**Etymology:** The first specimen of this taxon seen by myself was shown to a local West Australian Aboriginal elder from the Jinigudira tribe.

As I pulled the snake out of a bag, he exclaimed "Fukdat" before running off with his hands in the air. Hence the name "fukdat" is adopted as the species nomen as it seems to be the word attached to the species of snake by local native Jinigudira.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.