

THE GENUS *FURINA* (SERPENTES: ELAPIDAE) IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

Furina ornata (Gray) is the only member of the genus occurring in Western Australia. It is redescribed.

INTRODUCTION

Furina is one of several Australian elapid genera whose limits are ill-defined. As the genus is centred in eastern Queensland, the problem of its definition is beyond the scope of this paper. For present purposes *Furina* is assumed to comprise *F. diadema* (Schlegel), *F. ornata* (Gray), *F. barnardi* (Kinghorn), *F. tristis* (Günther) and *F. warro* (DeVis).

This revision is based on the herpetological collection (R series) of the Western Australian Museum; registered numbers of specimens are cited without prefix.

SYSTEMATICS

Genus *Furina* Duméril

Brachysoma Fitzinger, 1843, *Systema reptilium*, p. 25. Type-species (by original designation): *Calamaria diadema* Schlegel. Not *Brachysoma* Brandt, 1835 (Coelenterata).

Furina Duméril, 1853, *Mém. Acad. Sci., Paris* 23: 517. Type-species (by designation of Jan, 1859, *Rev. Mag. Zool.* (2) 11: 124): *Calamaria diadema* Schlegel.

Glyphodon Günther, 1858, *Catalogue of colubrine snakes in the collection of the British Museum*, p. 228. Type-species (by designation of Boulenger, 1896, *Catalogue of the snakes in the British Museum (Natural History)* 3: 313): *Glyphodon tristis* Günther.

Lunelaps Worrell, 1961, *West. Aust. Nat.* 8: 22. Type-species (by monotypy): *Pseudelaps christieanus* Fry.

Diagnosis

Small to medium-sized, slender, nocturnal elapid snakes with eye about as large as its distance from lip; no canthus rostralis; head wide and slightly depressed; neck slightly to moderately narrower than head; midbody scale rows 15 or 17; anal divided; subcaudals in pairs. Distinguishable from *Vermicella* by nasal widely separated from preocular, temporals normally 2 + 2, and body and tail not cross-banded.

Distribution

Southern New Guinea and northern three-quarters of Australia.

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Furina ornata (Gray, 1842)

Fig. 1

Elaps ornatus Gray, 1842, Zoological miscellany, p. 55. Western Australia.

Brachysoma simile Macleay, 1878, Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 2: 221. Port Darwin, N.T.

Denisonia bancrofti DeVis, 1911, Ann. Qd Mus. no. 10: 23. Stannary Hills, Qld. For corrections to original description, see Mack & Gunn (1953: 59).

Pseudelaps christieanus Fry, 1915, Proc. R. Soc. Qd 27: 91. Point Charles, N.T.

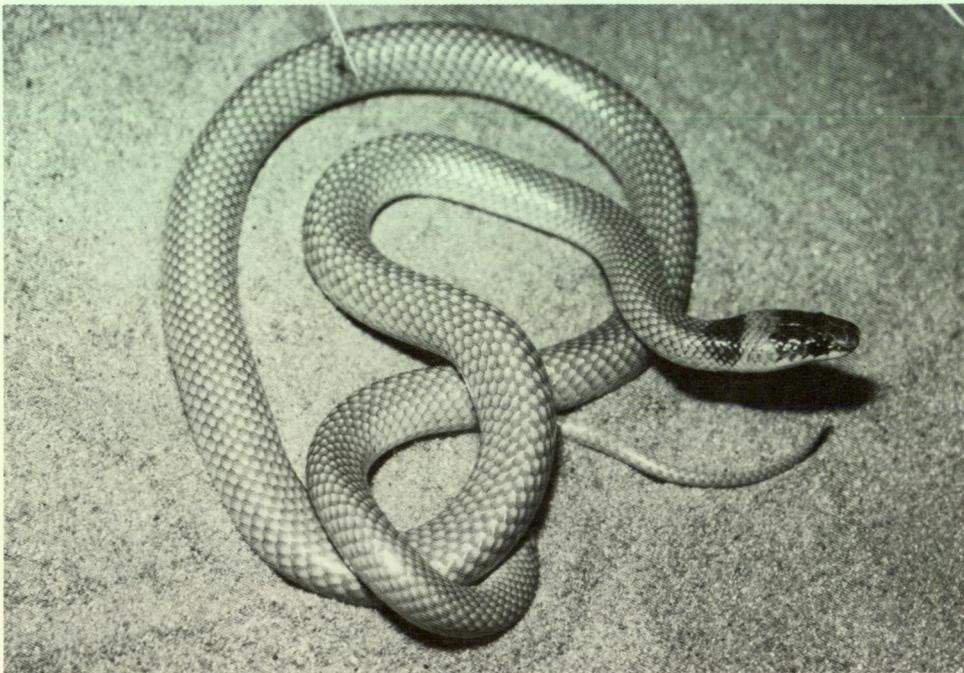


Fig. 1: A *Furina ornata* from Woodie Woodie. Photographed by R.E. Johnstone.

Diagnosis

Very like *F. diadema* (Schlegel) of eastern Australia, but larger and with wide orange occipital bar completely separating dark brown head and nuchal blotches (in *F. diadema* the black of head and neck are usually continuous below the small orange crescent on occiput).

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 128-508 (N 100, mean 304.7). Tail (% SVL): 14.1-26.8 (N 98, mean 19.8).

Rostral 1.8-2.5 times as wide as high. Internasals very much smaller than prefrontals. Frontal 1.1-1.8 times as long as wide, and 1.5-2.3 times as wide

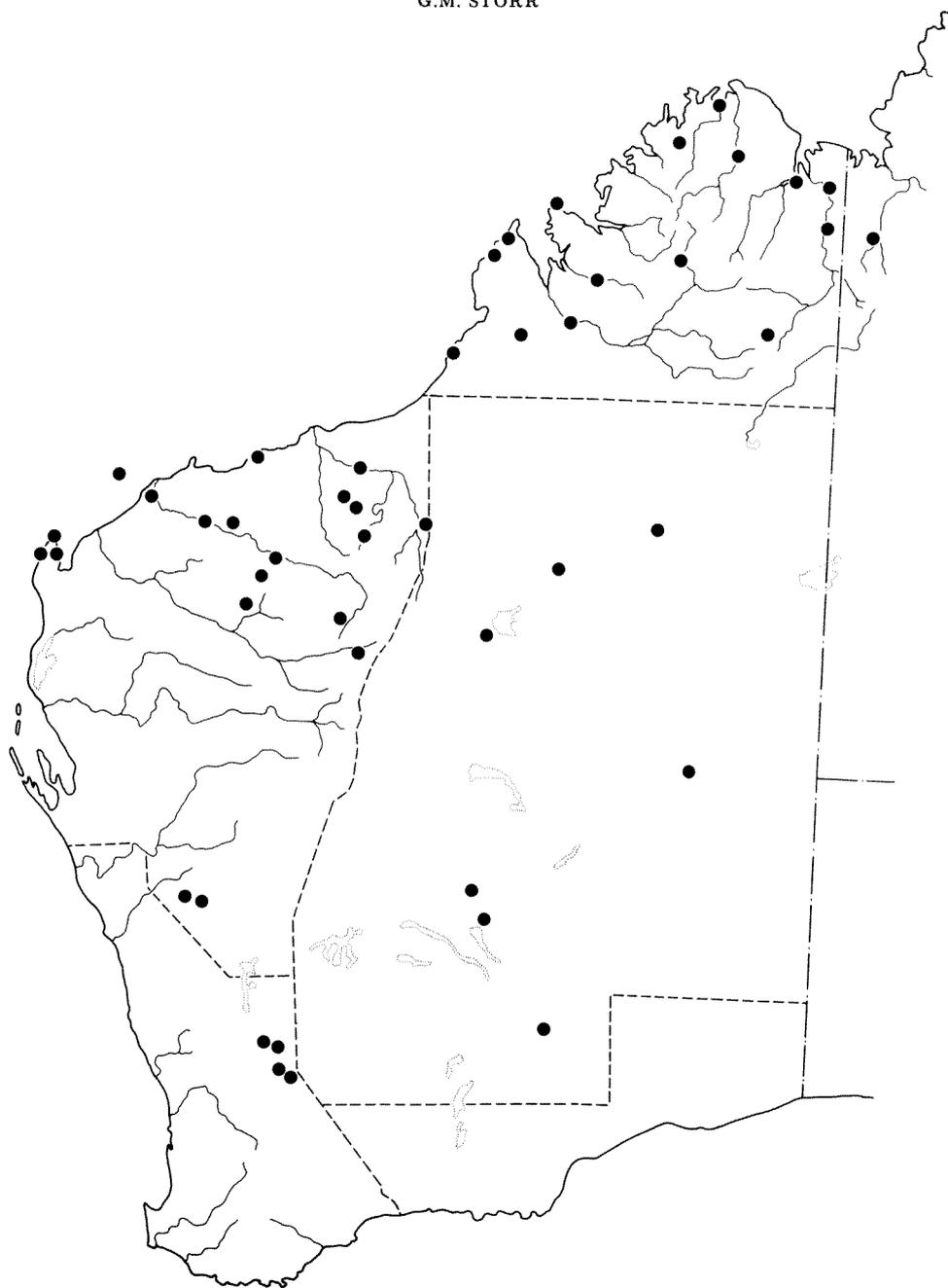


Fig. 2: Map of Western Australia showing location of specimens of *Furina ornata*.

as supraoculars. Parietals much longer than frontal. Nasal widely separated from preocular, which is in contact with frontal (N 80) or narrowly separated from it (16) or fused to it (1). Postoculars 2. Temporals: primaries 2 (N 93) or 3 (5); secondaries 2 (N 91) or 3 (7); lower primary not reaching lip (N 95) or in broad contact with it (3). Upper labials 6 (N 95) or 7 (2); latter count due to division of fifth. Dorsal scale rows: 15 (N 45) or 17 (58) at midbody; 17-23 (N 87, mean 19.4) on neck; 13-17 (N 78, mean 15.0) just before vent. Ventrals 163-235 (N 52, mean 197.5). Subcaudals 40-65 (N 58, mean 52.8). Ventrals plus subcaudals 212-291 (N 49, mean 250.0).

Head blotch dark brown or blackish-brown, usually extending back to a little before end of parietals (sometimes a little past them in adults) and down to top of upper labials; occasionally broken by small whitish areas, especially in front of eyes. Occipital bar orange-red (whitish in alcohol), 1½-6 dorsal scales wide and usually extending a little on to parietals. Nuchal blotch same colour as head blotch, extending back furthest (2-9 dorsal scales) on midline. Back and tail whitish, buffy, pale brown or pale reddish-brown, each scale (except usually the first 1 or 2 rows nearest to ventrals) narrowly edged with dark brown or reddish-brown; with age, edges thickening and pigment invading remainder of each scale, at first only the longitudinal rows nearest to midline, finally back and sometimes sides entirely dark. With age, dark pigment of head and nuchal blotches invading occipital bar. Lower surfaces whitish, except occasionally for dark lateral edge to ventrals.

Distribution

Greater part of Western Australia, south in the interior to the central Wheat Belt and Eastern Goldfields (Fig. 2). Also Northern Territory and north Queensland.

Geographic Variation

Specimens from north Kimberley and far north of Northern Territory tend to be darker than those from further south. Ventral and subcaudal counts are highest in the Pilbara and Central Australian highlands (sums of 244-291 v. 212-262 elsewhere). Pilbara specimens are also notable for the dorsal scale rows usually increasing by 4-6 on neck (usually 2-4 elsewhere). Dorsal scale rows are fewest in the Eastern and South West Divisions of Western Australia, all 14 specimens having only 15 rows at midbody.

Material

Kimberley Division (W.A.): Kalumburu (28053, 34077); Mitchell Plateau (56255); Drysdale River National Park (15°16'S, 127°12'E) (50553); Wyndham (13329, 31519); Kimberley Research Station (12214-5, 13604-5, 22349-51, 22364-5); 23 km W of Kununurra (70024); Lake Argyle (52267, 70716); Koolan I. (67331); Lombadina (46417); Beagle Bay (22649); Moll Gorge (17°00'S, 125°59'E) (32289); Kimberley Downs (13878); Mt Anderson (32093); near Halls Creek (26637); McHugh Bore, Dampier Downs (54198); Lagrange (28051).

North West Division (W.A.): Muccan (10750); Mundabullangana (15089-90); Barrow I. (28695, 48954-5, 51633); Mardie (13421); Marble Bar (11338); Mt Edgar (15087-8, 36680); Woodie Woodie (67892); Nullagine (39081) and 5 km E (51720); Tambrey (6478); Millstream (22040); Vlaming Head (19672) and 16 km S (28052, 70715); Yardie Creek (13117); 8 km N of Learmonth (21350); Wittenoom (11843, 18489); Wittenoom Gorge (31368); Marandoo (51100, 52709, 56069); Paraburdoo (58933, 68160); Newman (23992, 29637); 10 km S of Mundiwindi (13879); Marloo (16 km NW of Wurarga) (3782); Yalgoo (4942).

Eastern Division (W.A.): Tobin Lake (63466); 12 km NNE of Well 29 (63949-51); Durba Spring (40354); Warburton Range (31357); 6 km NNW of Erlistoun (62872); Laverton (23912); Cundelee (58714).

South West Division (W.A.): Bencubbin (31155); Mukinbudin (31998, 32037); Mangowine via Nungarin (7841); 7 km E of Merredin (25568).

Northern Territory: Yirrkala (13500a-d); Oenpelli (32449); Darwin, including Parap and Stuart Park (21977, 26222-3, 28412, 30950); Howard Springs (23628-9); Katherine (23891-2, 24941) and 35 km SW (47598); Jasper Gorge (60182); Kildurk (40992-3); Renner Springs (74070); Tennant Creek (21502) and 11 km E (21503); Palm Valley (20865).

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REFERENCE

- MACK, G. and GUNN, S.G. (1953). DeVis' types of Australian snakes. *Mem. Qd Mus.* 13: 58-70.