

A NEW CORAL SNAKE (GENUS *MICRURUS*) FROM SURINAM.

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INTRODUCTION

Up to 1982 the following coral snakes were recorded from Surinam:

- Leptomicrurus collaris* (Schlegel, 1837)
- Micrurus averyi* Schmidt, 1939
- Micrurus hemprichii hemprichii* (Jan, 1858)
- Micrurus ibiboboca* (Merrem, 1820)
- Micrurus lemniscatus lemniscatus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
- Micrurus lemniscatus diutius* Burger, 1955
- Micrurus psyches psyches* (Daudin, 1803)
- Micrurus surinamensis surinamensis* (Cuvier, 1817)

This list is drawn up according to Peters & Orejas Miranda (1970) and in the case of *Micrurus ibiboboca* according to Hoogmoed (personal communication). In 1982 a previously unknown species of *Micrurus* in Surinam was found in a collection of snakes of the animal dealer T. Henzen from Paramaribo. The animal was caught in 1982 in the surroundings of Kwamalasamoetoe (south Surinam).

At first this animal was determined by John de Bruin from Lelydorp, Surinam, as *Micrurus psyches circinalis*, a sub-species which was still only known from Trinidad and north-east Venezuela.

Later he corrected himself and concluded that it was the sub-species *Micrurus psyches paraensis*, which is exalted by Hoge & Romano-Hoge (1978/1979) to specific level. Up to 1982 this species was only found in the extreme north and north-east Para (north Brazil).

DESCRIPTION

The scale information was taken from the live animal by John de Bruin; 15 rows smooth dorsal scales, 210 ventral scales, 34 divided subcaudals, anal scale divided, 7 supra-labials, 7 sub-labials, 1 preocular, 2 postoculars, no loreal scale, 1+1 temporals.

The animal measured about 65 cm.

Making use of photographs I have made the following colour description. The base-colour of the trunk is brownish red. The 19 black bands (triads are missing here), bordered on both sides by very narrow white rings, divide the brown-reddish trunk in 20 parts. Most of the brown-red bands are 8 or 9 scale lengths long, some are 6 or 7 scales long. The black bands are 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ scales long, and the white rings are just about half a scale-length. Each brown-red scale is black-edged or speckled posteriorly. The head is coloured black from the snout up to about half a scale-length behind the parietal scales.

A white spot covers the fourth and fifth supra-labials. In the neck the black of the head is bordered by a scarcely visible, very narrow white ring. The tail has only black bands, which are separated from each other by two narrowly separated white rings. All bands over the whole body form complete rings.

COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

To get more certainty about the (sub)species involved scalation and pattern data is provided for *Micrurus psυχes circinalis*, *Micrurus paraensis*, *Micrurus averyi* (Schmidt, 1939) and the Surinam specimen in Table 1.

Only the differences in scale numbers and characteristics are assimilated in the table. All other



Foto 1. *Micrurus paraensis debruini* n.sp. Foto:
John de Bruin.



Foto 2. *Micrurus paraensis debruini* n.sp. Foto:
John de Bruin.

Table 1. Comparison scalation, colours and patterns.
 Material from: da Cunha & do Nascimento, 1978 and 1982; Roze, 1966; Schmidt, 1939.

Characteristics	<i>Micrurus psyches circinalis</i>	specimen from Surinam	<i>Micrurus paraensis</i>	<i>Micrurus averyi</i>
Ventrals	179-207	210	188-213	210
Subcaudals	31-47	34	30-52	34
White neckring	yes	yes	yes	no
Black bands around the body	22-31	19	11-20	11
Width of red bands in scale lengths	7-9	6-9	9-13	12-18
Ditto, first red band	9	12	15	?
Red scales with black edge or spot	yes	yes	yes	no
Number of black bands on the tail	6-12	6	5-14	?
White rings on the tail	single	paired	single	single
Red rings on the tail	no	no	no	yes

scale counts are the same. In colouration and markings these four forms are at first sight difficult to distinguish. If we look at Table 1 some clear differences will show. The existence of some similar characteristics and the gradual development between the number of scales in width of the bands show us that the animal from Surinam is a transition form between the species from Venezuela (*Micrurus psyches circinalis*) and the species from north Brasil (*Micrurus paraensis*). *Micrurus averyi* has some striking differences from the new form (no white neck band; the red bands are twice as wide as in the new form; only 11 black bands around the body; a black tail with red and white bands as the new form has only small white rings in pairs).

As the animal from Surinam resembles *Micrurus paraensis* most, we have to place it within this species.

Looking at its isolated occurrence, the difference in width between the red bands and the difference of the white rings on the tail, I suggest we should consider the Surinam species as a different sub-species of *Micrurus paraensis*. As the animal was discovered by John de Bruin I call this new sub-species *Micrurus paraensis debruini* Abuys, 1987.

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