

## BOOK REVIEW

## VENOMOUS SNAKES OF ASIA. GIFTSCHLANGEN ASIENS

By Gernot Vogel.

2006. Terralog, Volume 14.

Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main (www.chimaira.de).

148 pp. + 1 folding table.

Hardbound. ISBN 3-89973-364-9. Price: 44.80 €.

This attractive book is an atlas illustrating the terrestrial and freshwater elapids, viperines and crotalines of eastern, southern and south-eastern Asia. It includes a summary and list of taxa (pp.3-6), a short introduction, mainly expressing the taxonomic views of the author on the taxa presented (pp.7-13), and a short list of references (pp.14-16), followed by the main part of the book: a taxonomically/alphabetically-arranged succession of colour pictures of all taxa and respective colour distribution maps (pp.18-148). At the end a folder are captions of symbols associated with the pictures, mainly concerning ecology, and also brief indications for captive care. The book has been printed on solid glossy paper, with good quality hardbound. The main text is presented both in English and German; picture and map captions are given in English only. Common names in these two languages are given for each taxon.

Taxonomic opinions of the author are conservative, and may be unacceptable for some readers concerning the non-recognition of the splitting of the genus *Trimeresurus* as recently proposed by Malhotra and Thorpe (2004), while it is true that this latter arrangement needs refinement. The author, though, follows the synonymization of various taxa under *Calliophis maculiceps* by Cox (2000); fortunately, several colour morphs are presented, stressing the surprising heterogeneity for a single taxon and will hopefully encourage some authors to investigate further.

Each of the 168 presented taxa is illustrated by one or more high-quality colour pictures – there are in total 532! Only 11 taxa (ca. 7%) could not be illustrated in life (*Bungarus lividus*, *Calliophis beddomei*, *C. bibroni*, *C. b. bivirgatus*, *C. gracilis*, *C. intestinalis philippinus* and *C.*

eated in the caption of the first picture of *Echis carinatus multiquamatus* (p. 144), "Southeast Turkmenia", is largely outside the range shown for this taxon on the map p:143. The presentation of several species ranges on a single map makes that the map and the picture of a given species are sometimes far from each other, and there is no reference to the pages where they are shown. The *Ophiophagus hannah* depicted on p:50 (photo RS00901-4), indicated as originating from Thailand, is more precisely a captive-born issued from parents caught in Phetchabun Province in central Thailand (Chanhome, pers. comm.).

I could detect only one misidentification. A "*Trimeresurus kanburiensis*" illustrated on p:98 (photo. RS02572-4) presents all characters typical of *T. venustus* (internasals in contact, 12 cephalic scales, unkeeled occipitals, bottle-green colour with reddish-brown crossbands, etc.) and out of the known variation range for *kanburiensis*. Both species were erroneously regarded as synonyms by many authors for a number of years, although well distinct. Vogel (pers. comm.) indicated us that the picture is older than the clarification of the characters separating *venustus* from *kanburiensis* published by David et al. (2004), and that the locality "Kanchanaburi Province", still the only locality known for *kanburiensis*, might have been automatically added to the picture that was still labeled under *kanburiensis*. This individual actually most probably originates from southern Thailand.

Only two references mentioned in the text are not listed in the literature cited: Lenk et al. (2001) and Liang and Liu (2003); the first is listed here below. The second, referring to the authorship of *Ceratimeresurus shenlii*, is actually included in Liang (2003). The complete authorship for the latter species is thus "Liang & Liu in Liang, 2003". The gender of the genus *Calliophis* being masculine, the epithets "*bivirgata*", "*tetrataenia*", "*bilineata*", "*lineata*", "*philippina*" should be accorded and thus end with "*-us*". At the contrary, *Calliophis melanurus* should be corrected to *Calliophis melamura*, the latter word being a noun in apposition meaning "black tail". The nominal form of the Russell's Viper is written *Daboia russellii russellii*, thus alternating spellings with one or two "*r*". The current agreement is however to spell it *russellii*

(Adler et al., 2000). The caption folder gives the caption but not its symbol for the protected species; this symbol, a stop sign, is however put at the right place under the pictures of these species (*Naja* spp. and *Ophiophagus hannah*).

Most interestingly, several species undescribed when the book was printed are illustrated. Among them a colourful *Calliophis cf. intestinalis* from the Cameron Highlands and "*Trimeresurus* sp. A", "sp. B" and "sp. C". "*Trimeresurus* "sp. C" from Pulau Tioman in West Malaysia was since described under *Popeia buriniana* (Grismer et al., 2006). The *Calliophis*, the *Trimeresurus* sp. A (probably a *Cryptelytrops*) and *Trimeresurus* sp. B (also more recently illustrated by David et al., 2006, with scalation details; a member of the genus *Parias*), are still undescribed to date.

The few mistakes noted above, as well as a few minor misspellings, are only little criticisms. The opus is indeed highly valuable for all herpetologists and nature lovers who want to have an excellent idea of the diversity of this fascinating group of animals. Such a high quality book was in fact expected from an author who recently contributed other remarkable books on southern Asian snakes, and who is actively involved in the research on the systematics and biology of Asian snakes; he indeed (co-)described not less than five of the species presented in the book. I strongly recommend the purchase of this book for all herpetological and natural history libraries.

I am grateful to Lawan Chanhome (Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute, Bangkok) and Patrick David (National Museum of Natural History, Paris) for constructive discussions.

## Literature cited

- ADLER, K., H. M. SMITH, S. H. PRINCE, P. DAVID & D. CHISZAR. 2000. Russell's viper: *Daboia russellii*, not *Daboia russellii*, due to classical Latin rules. *Hamadryad* 25(2):83-85.  
COX, M. J. 2000. The status of the subspecies of *Calliophis maculiceps*. *Bulletin of the Maryland Herpetological Society* 36(3):76-85.  
DAVID, P., O. S. G. PAUWELS, P. LAYS & G. L. LENGLET. 2006. On a collection of reptiles from southern Mindanao, Philippines. *Bulletin de l'Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique, Biologie* 76:201-227.

- DAVID, P., G. VOGEL, M. SUMONTHA, O. S. G. PAUWELS & L. CHANHOME. 2004. Confirmation of the validity of *Trimeresurus venustus* Vogel, 1991, with an expanded description of *Trimeresurus kamburtensis* Smith, 1943 (Reptilia: Serpentes: Crotalidae). Russian Journal of Herpetology 10(2):81–90.
- GRISMER, L. L., J. L. GRISMER & J. A. MCGUIRE. 2006. A new species of pitviper of the genus *Popeia* (Squamata: Viperidae) from Pulau Tioman, Pahang, West Malaysia. Zootaxa 1305:1–19.
- LENK, P., S. KALYABINA, M. WINK & U. JOGER. 2001. Evolutionary relationships among the true vipers (Reptilia: Viperidae) inferred from mitochondrial DNA sequences. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 19:94–104.
- LIANG, Q. 2003. Reptiles of Guangdong Nanling Nature Reserve. In: Studies on biodiversity of the Guangdong Nanling National Nature Reserve. pp:408–417. X. Pang (Ed). Guangdong Science and Technology Press, Guangzhou.
- MALHOTRA, A. & R. S. THORPE. 2004. A phylogeny of four mitochondrial gene regions suggests a revised taxonomy for Asian pitvipers (*Trimeresurus* and *Ovophis*). Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 32:83–100.
- NABHITABHATA, J., T. CHAN-ARD & Y. CHUAYNERN. "2000" 2004. Checklist of Amphibians and Reptiles in Thailand, Office of Environmental Policy and Planning, Bangkok. 152 pp.
- PAUWELS, O. S. G. & T. CHAN-ARD. 2006. Reptiles of Kaeng Krachan National Park, western Thailand. Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society 54(1):87–106.

**Olivier S. G. Pauwels**

Département des Vertébrés Récents,  
Institut Royal des Sciences naturelles de  
Belgique,  
Rue Vautier 29, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Email: osgpauwels@yahoo.fr

# HAMADRYAD

Journal of the Centre for Herpetology

Subscription form for 2009

Name (in block letters): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Pin Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone/Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Volume / Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Subscription**  
 (inclusive of air mail postage for foreign members)

**Indian\* and other SAARC**  
 (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)  
 Individuals: **INR. 350.00**  
 Institutions: **INR. 550.00**

**ASEAN** (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam)  
 Individuals: **US\$ 35.00**  
 Institutions: **US\$ 45.00**

**All other countries**  
 Individuals: **US\$ 55.00**  
 Institutions: **US\$ 65.00**

Donations: The Centre for Herpetology invites donations to help defray production costs of *Hamadryad* and to support other herpetological activities

Space for communication / Last volume and issue received:

Cheques or Money Orders made out in favour of "Madras Crocodile Bank Trust" should be sent to:

Centre for Herpetology  
 Madras Crocodile Bank Trust  
 Post Bag 4  
 Mamallapuram 603 104  
 Tamil Nadu, India  
 Email: mcbt@vsnl.net  
 www.madrascrocodilebank.org / madrascrocodilebank.blogspot.com

(For Indian subscriptions, a draft from the Indian Overseas Bank is preferable. Our IOB branch is in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu.)