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KEY WORDS: Reptilia: Testudines: Testudinidae: *Testudo graeca*, distribution, Serbia and Montenegro, new country record

SUBMITTED: April 19, 2004

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### Range extensions of *Lycodon capucinus* BOIE, 1827 in eastern Indonesia

The colubrid snake *Lycodon capucinus* BOIE, 1827 is widely distributed throughout Southeast Asia, southeastern

China, the Philippines, and Indonesia (DE ROOIJ 1917; DE HAAS 1950; BOSCH 1985; ISKANDAR & COLIJN 2001). A recent colonization of Christmas Island, about 320 km south of Java, was reported by L. A. SMITH (1988). In eastern Indonesia, *L. capucinus* has been known from central, southwestern, and southeastern Sulawesi (DE ROOIJ 1917; ISKANDAR & TJAN 1996) and from the Lesser Sunda Islands of Sumbawa, Sumba, Savu, Roti, Timor, Flores, Lomblem, Alor, Lembata, and Wetar (DE ROOIJ 1917; How et al. 1996). Recent new island records for *L. capucinus* include Lombok, Moyo, Komodo, Adonara, Pantar, Kisar and Semau in the Lesser Sunda Islands, and Babar and Kai in Southeastern Maluku (How et al. 1996; MONK et al. 1997; ISKANDAR & COLIJN 2001 [politically, the islands of Wetar and Kisar also belong to Southeastern Maluku regency]). Here we report the presence of *L. capucinus* on the islands of Ambon, Seram and Buru (Central Maluku regency) from where we examined a total of six specimens.

Vouchers are deposited in the following collections: Forschungsinstitut und Naturmuseum Senckenberg, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (SMF); Texas Memorial Museum, The University of Texas at Austin, USA (TNHC). On Seram we collected two specimens on 14 April 1998 between 19:00 and 21:00 on the road between the villages Kairatu and Wae Samu on the western coast (SMF 82999), and 28 km NW (by road) of the Kairatu ferry port on the same road (TNHC 59520). On Buru, we collected a specimen (SMF 83000) on 18 April 1998 near the village of Labuan, Namrole, on the south coast. The Buru specimen regurgitated a partly digested, scincid lizard a few hours after capture. Three specimens of *L. capucinus* from the harbour town Waai in northeastern Ambon (SMF, uncatalogued) document its presence on that island as early as 1956.

The six specimens reported herein are the first records of *L. capucinus* and the genus *Lycodon* FITZINGER, 1826 for the islands of Ambon, Seram and Buru, and for the regency of Central Maluku and the northern Maluku biogeographical subregion (sensu HOW & KITCHENER 1997). In their external phenotype, these specimens closely

resemble descriptions of this taxon as provided by DE ROOIJ (1917) and MERTENS (1930).

The Greater Sunda Islands on the Sunda shelf, Sulawesi and the Lesser Sunda Islands harbor a snake fauna originating from Asian genera and species, while the islands of southern and northern Maluku, Irian Jaya and adjacent islands are inhabited by genera and species that are more closely related to those in the Australo-Papuan region (HOW & KITCHENER 1997). Within the snakes of Indonesia, there is in addition evidence for considering the Lesser Sunda Islands and the southern and northern Maluku Islands as three unique biogeographic subregions with differing regions of origin for their assemblages, a relatively high degree of endemism and areas of incipient speciation (HOW & KITCHENER 1997). The currently known distribution of *L. capucinus* in Indonesia is clearly incongruent with these patterns: This species occurs in Sumatra, Java, Karimunjawa, Bawean and Bali, but had never been reported from Borneo until the discovery of a single specimen in a residential area (apparently in Sabah [STUEBING & INGER 1999]; ISKANDAR & COLIJN [2001] also list this species for Kalimantan). From Bali it ranges east across Wallace's line and well into the southern and northern Maluku biogeographical subregions (HOW et al. 1996; this paper). Throughout this biogeographically unlikely range, morphological differentiation in *L. capucinus* is remarkably low. Among four snake species from the Lesser Sunda Islands studied by How et al. (1996), *L. capucinus* showed the least morphological variation, with most populations overlapping considerably. These authors noted no variation in body colour or pattern in the specimens collected for their study, a fact also commented on by MERTENS (1930) and confirmed by the specimens from Ambon, Buru and Seram, which are very similar to *L. capucinus* from western Indonesia (e.g., urban Jakarta). The extensive distribution of *L. capucinus* indicates that it has good dispersal abilities. This is confirmed by its (re-)colonization of Moyo Island, which had been obliterated by ash during the eruption of the nearby Gunung Tambora on Sumbawa in 1815, and more recently, its colonization of Christmas

Island (L. A. SMITH 1988), and is thought to account for the lack of morphological differentiation of populations through the Lesser Sunda region (HOW et al. 1996). Similarly, in the Philippines LEVITON (1965) demonstrated that *L. capucinus* is widely distributed but showed no apparent tendency to evolve morphologically distinct populations on different islands. He attributed these findings to a presumed recent arrival and dispersal in the Philippines, where *L. capucinus* was mainly associated with human habitations.

The specimens from Seram were collected from an asphalted road in an area used for timber production and related industries. The nearby port of Kairatu is served several times per day by ferries from Waai in Ambon, and has been used by international timber companies as well as by transmigrants arriving from western Indonesia. No specimens of *L. capucinus* had been collected during several biological surveys in Manusela National Park in central Seram in the late 1980s and early 1990s (EDGAR & LILLEY 1993; MONK et al. 1997). The collecting locality of the Buru specimen is near the main port of southern Buru (Labuan) which is several times per week served by supply ships from other Maluku islands, namely Ambon. In view of its recently discovered presence in Buru and Seram, the existence of *L. capucinus* in collections made in Ambon in the 1950s is not surprising. For centuries, Ambon served as the principal regional basis for European colonialization, travel, commerce, and research throughout the Maluku and western New Guinean regions. Ambon's ports continue to connect the region, thus also bearing considerable potential for dispersing introduced fauna and flora in Maluku and beyond. We therefore propose the hypothesis, for testing in a phylogenetic context, that the presence of *L. capucinus* in Ambon is due to human activities, and that this species was introduced to Buru and Seram during the past few decades.

*Lycodon capucinus* attains a maximum length of 76 cm (MANTHEY & GROSSMAN 1997), lays 3-11 eggs in a clutch, possibly breeds twice a year, climbs well on rocks and trees, and lives on a diet of geckos, skinks, and small mammals (DUNN 1927; M. A.

SMITH 1943). These snakes could therefore pose a threat to the autochthonous small vertebrate fauna of the islands where they have been introduced. Although it is presently unknown whether *L. capucinus* will colonize undisturbed habitats on these various islands, the potential consequences of the introduction of such exotic predators on island ecosystems should not be underestimated (FRITTS & RODDA 1998).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: We are grateful to Frank Bambang YUWONO (Jakarta), Bulquiny BAADIL-LA (formerly of Paso, Ambon) and Bapak ELI (Labuan, Buru) for help with logistics and assistance in the field.

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KEY WORDS: Squamata: Serpentes: Colubridae: *Lycodon capucinus*; geographical distribution; new island records; biogeography; invasive species; Ambon; Buru; Seram; Maluku; Indonesia

SUBMITTED: May 7, 2004

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## Record of the Black-striped Snake, *Rhinoplocephalus nigrostriatus* (KREFFT, 1864), from Papua, Indonesia

The genus *Rhinoplocephalus* MÜLLER, 1885 contains six species of small to moderately sized elapid snakes found in the coastal and adjacent regions of Australia (COGGER 2002). Two of these, the Carpentaria Snake *Rhinoplocephalus boschmai* (BRONGERSMA & KNAAP-VAN MEEUWEN, 1964) and the Black-striped Snake *Rhinoplocephalus nigrostriatus* (KREFFT, 1864) also occur in southern New Guinea: The type locality of *R. boschmai* is Merauke in the southeast of the Province of Papua, Indonesia, and this species is suspected to also occur in adjacent parts of Papua New Guinea (O'SHEA 1996), in addition to its more extensive range in eastern Queensland, Australia (COGGER 2002). *Rhinoplocephalus nigrostriatus*, on the other hand, inhabits the coast and adjacent ranges of northeastern Australia from Cape York Peninsula to southern Queensland and has been collected in southern Papua New Guinea (Western Province: southern Trans-Fly, Orinomo River to Bensbach River: O'SHEA 1996), but has so far not been recorded from the Indonesian Province of Papua (DE ROOIJ

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Jahr/Year: 2004

Band/Volume: [17\\_3\\_4](#)

Autor(en)/Author(s): Kuch Ulrich, McGuire Jimmy A.

Artikel/Article: [Range Extensions of \*Lycodon capucinus\* BOIE, 1827 in eastern Indonesia 191-193](#)