

The second specimen of the Iranian *Eirenis rechingeri* EISELT, 1971

The genus *Eirenis* JAN, 1863 consists of a group of dwarfish colubrids, occurring mainly in the Near East. Their principal characteristics are: small head, eye with round pupils, one preocular, and in most species a loreal, dorsal scales smooth, in 15 or 17 rows at midbody, anal and subcaudal scales divided (LEVITON et al. 1992). Seven (valid) species of the genus *Eirenis* sensu NAGY et al. (2003) have been reported from Iran, namely *E. collaris* (MÉNÉTRIÉS, 1832), *E. coronella* (SCHLEGEL, 1837), *E. medus* (CHERNOV, 1940), *E. modestus* (MARTIN, 1838), *E. persicus* (ANDERSON, 1872), *E. punctatolineatus* (BÖTTGER, 1892) and *E. rechingeri* EISELT, 1971. Most of the Iranian species are described or depicted by SCHMIDTLER & EISELT (1991) or LATIFI (2000). The Iranian specimens of “*Contia decemlineata*”, first recorded by WALL (1908) from “Maidan Mihaftan, E of Shustar in SW Persia”, and later on cited by others, this species also being listed by RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. (2008), most probably represent *E. punctatolineatus* (for an explanation of this interpretation see below).

In 1971 EISELT described a new species, *Eirenis rechingeri* from Dashte-Arjan, in the Zagros Mountains, West of Shiraz, Fars province, southern Iran, on the basis of a single male specimen. This species was rarely mentioned up to now. In 2008, after a review of more than 200 formalin fixed snakes from Fars province, deposited in the Natural History and Technology Museum of Shiraz University (NHTMSU), the authors identified a specimen of *E. rechingeri* labeled “from Fars province in the year 2000”. The exact locality and collector(s) are unknown. Since its original description no more information on this species became available. This may be due to its limited distribution, low density population or restricted collection activities there. The presence of a further specimen of *E. rechingeri* in Fars province is not surprising, because the Arjan area (Type locality) is located there. Nevertheless this specimen has provided the first information on the morphological variation in this species. The present

specimen (Fig. 1) may be characterized as follows: Head distinct from neck, eye large, pupil round, nostril directed laterally, nasal not divided and rectangular (large and elongated), rostral broader than high, slightly visible from above and large, one quadrate loreal, one large preocular, two postoculars, seven supralabials on both sides, third and fourth touching the eye, top of first, second and third supralabial are dark, eight infralabials on both sides, first, second and third touching anterior chin shield, posterior pair of chin shields shorter than anterior pair and separated from each other by one scale, 1+2 temporals on both sides, parietal large with some dark spots, total length 275 mm (340 mm in the type), tail length 60 mm (80 mm in the type), body scales smooth and in 15 rows at midbody, 167 ventrals (157 in the type), 51 pairs of subcaudals in two rows (58 or 59 in the type). Compared with the usual variation in other *Eirenis* species, the numbers and relations of ventrals and subcaudals indicate that this specimen is a female. Color in the formalin fixed specimen: light brown dorsum, yellowish lower sides without spots, two clear bands on dorsum that extend from head to tail and on tail (where it is faint), every band consists of two close parallel lines; two bands on the flanks which are fainter than the two bands on dorsum, ventral scales with dark spots at their margins (obvious in the anterior and unclear in the posterior part of the body), sides of neck with a short dark line. This specimen is now deposited in the collection of the Biology Department of Shiraz University (CBSU, R005).

Despite its very characteristic banded dorsal pattern, resembling obviously the eastern Mediterranean *Eirenis* (*Eoseirenis*) *decemlineatus* (DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1854), this species is not a member of the subgenus *Eoseirenis* NAGY, SCHMIDTLER, JOGER & WINK, 2003. The apparently restricted total length, the small size of the posterior inframaxillaries (separated by a scale), the 15 dorsals, the low ventral and subcaudal counts, indicate its affiliation to the subgenus *Pediophis* FITZINGER, 1843 and closer relationship with the three Iranian species *E. (Pediophis) collaris*, *E. (Pediophis) medus*, and *E. (Pediophis) punctatolineatus* (see NAGY et al. 2003). These three species are



Figs. 1-3: *Eirenis rechingeri* EISELT, 1971 (CBSU, R005 from Fars, SW Iran), head seen from above (1), right side (2), and below (3).

distinguishable from *E. rechingeri* by their dorsal pattern: Plain and light gray in *E. collaris*; dark crossbars in *E. medus*; no dark lines in the anterior part of *E. punctatolineatus*, if there is any pattern at all (the latter species also exhibits 17 dorsals at mid-body); the interrupted dark dorsal lines in the anterior part (if at all present) also differentiate between *E. punctatolineatus* and *E. decemlineatus*, the latter probably not occurring in Iran.

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AUTHORS: Ali GHOLAMHOSSEINI, Department of Biology, College of Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz 71454, Iran; Josef F. SCHMIDTLER, Oberföhringer Straße 35, 81925 München, Germany <josef@schmidtler.eu>; Halimeh ZAREIAN and Hamid Reza ESMAEILI, Department of Biology, College of Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz 71454, Iran.

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