

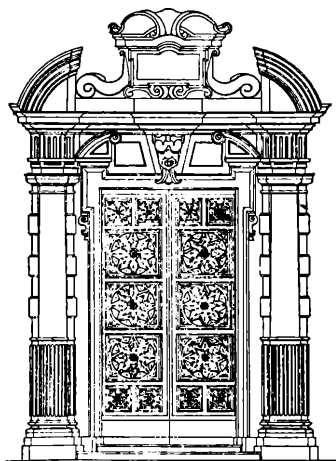
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A new species of the genus *Atractus*
from the Northwestern Argentina
(Serpentes, Colubridae)

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ABSTRACT

A new species of *Atractus* from the western subtropical region of the Jujuy and Salta provinces (Argentina) is described. The similarities of its morphological features with the species of the *Atractus elaps* group from eastern alto-Amazonian slopes of Perú and Ecuador are reported.

INTRODUCTION

The neotropical genus *Atractus* is widespread from the Atlantic slopes of the Colombian mountains to eastern Brasil, through the Orinoco Basin and the high Amazonian territories of Ecuador, Perú and Bolivia. In Argentina *Atractus badius* Boie, 1827 from Chaco and *A. taeniatus* (Griffin, 1916) from Entre Rios and Misiones were reported (Williams and Francini, 1991). These reports have not been subsequently confirmed. Recent findings of some specimens of this genus in northwestern Argentina (Jujuy and Salta) show clear-cut differences with any described form from southern South America. These specimens appear to represent a new species, which is described as:

Atractus canedii sp. nov.

Diagnosis – A median-sized species of *Atractus*, showing some relationships with the Ecuadorian forms of the *elaps* group, characterized by black square blotched or a banded dorsal pattern, black-edged ventral scales, short tail, and a peculiar, whitish-black network on the lower lateral region, mainly on the scale rows 1-5. This new taxon is easily distinguished by its distinctive

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color pattern from *badius*, with which it shows few similarities, and from *balzani*, *boettgeri*, *emmeli*, *taeniatus* and *torquatus*, which occur in the neighboring Chacoan region of Bolivia and Paraguay. Major differences in lepidosis together with its distinctive color pattern also distinguish this new form from species that occur further to the north in Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil. From *A. elaps* to which it bears the greatest resemblance, it may be distinguished by its distinctive color pattern and a different number of scale rows.

Description of the holotype - FML-01082. Departamento Anta, between Anta and J.B. Gonzalez, Salta, summer 1986, Coll. by Museo Hist. Nat. Univ. Nacional de Salta, Argentina. A short-tailed, medium-sized male snake. Head small, not distinct from the body; snout rounded, slightly truncated on the tip; rostral rather large, broader than deep, the portion visible from above a fourth as long as its distance from the frontal (a half in *elaps*, just visible in *badius*); internasals nearly twice as broad as long; prefrontals slightly broader than long; frontal a little broader than long, as long as its distance from the end of the snout, shorter than parietals; loreal once and half as long as deep (slightly longer than deep in *elaps*, twice and half to thrice and half in *badius*); parietals once and half longer than broad; two postoculars; temporals 1+2 (1+1 on the right); 6 upperlabials, third and fourth entering the eye (7 or 8, third and fourth, or fourth and fifth, entering the eye in *badius*; 6, fourth and fifth entering eye in *elaps*, fide Savage, 1960); 7 infralabials, four in contact with the single pair of large chin-shields, separated from the symphyisial; dorsal scales in 17-17-17 scale rows (15 in *elaps*, 17 in *badius*); ventrals 166 (144-167 in *elaps*; 143-160 in *badius*); anal entire; subcaudals 51 (28-37 in *elaps* ♂ fide Savage, 1960; 20-47 in *badius*).

Coloration (preserved specimens): head blackish, with upper scales bordered with white, upperlabials creamish, spotted with black at their junctions; throat creamish speckled with scattered black dots. Dorsally creamish or reddish with symmetrical squarish black blotches, altered or fused in bands on the vertebral line; the first pair of blotches larger and rounded. Lateroventrally speckled with irregular black marks, extending on the scale rows 1-5. Belly regularly barred with black and creamish (Fig. 1, A,B). Snout-vent 268 mm; tail 56 mm.

Description of the paratype - MRSN. R. 106 Western subtropical zone of the Jujuy province: collected January 1990 in the neighbor of San Salvador de Jujuy by members of the Station of Ethology, National University of Jujuy. A female specimen, similar to the male: snout/vent 341 mm, tail 57 mm, indicating a shorter tail in the ♀♀. No remarkable differences in lepidosis and coloration. One postocular. Whitish borders on the upper scales of head broader than in male. Superlabials irregularly speckled with minute black dots. Ventrals 164; subcaudals 39 (16-24 in *elaps* ♀ fide Savage, 1960).



A - *Atractus canedii* sp. nov. Holotype, male, FML-01082, Departamento Anta, between Anta and J. B. Gonzalez. Salta, Argentina - Dorsal view.



B - The same data - Ventral view.

Etymology – The taxon is dedicated to Dr A. Canedi, from the Station of Ethology, Universidad Nacional de Jujuy, Argentina, for his sustancial aid in the collection of this rare species.

OBSERVATIONS

Color pattern illustrates similarities of the new species with the *elaps* group of *Atractus*, but the dorsal rows number is 17 in *canedii*, and 15 in *elaps* specimens. Differences with all neighboring species of *Atractus* were indicated in the diagnosis. No data on biology or ecology were available for this rare, probably fossorial species. The locality of the holotype lies in the western district of the Chacoan region, characterized by xerophilous woods, with high summer temperatures and rainfalls. Apparently that is the first original description of a member of the genus *Atractus* in Argentina.

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RIASSUNTO

Si descrive una nuova specie di *Atractus* della regione subtropicale occidentale delle provincie di Jujuy e Salta (Argentina). Si evidenziano rassomiglianze morfologiche generali con specie del gruppo *A. elaps* delle pendici orientali altoamazzoniche del Perù e dell'Ecuador.

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