

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: BOIDAE

EPICRATES ANGULIFER

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

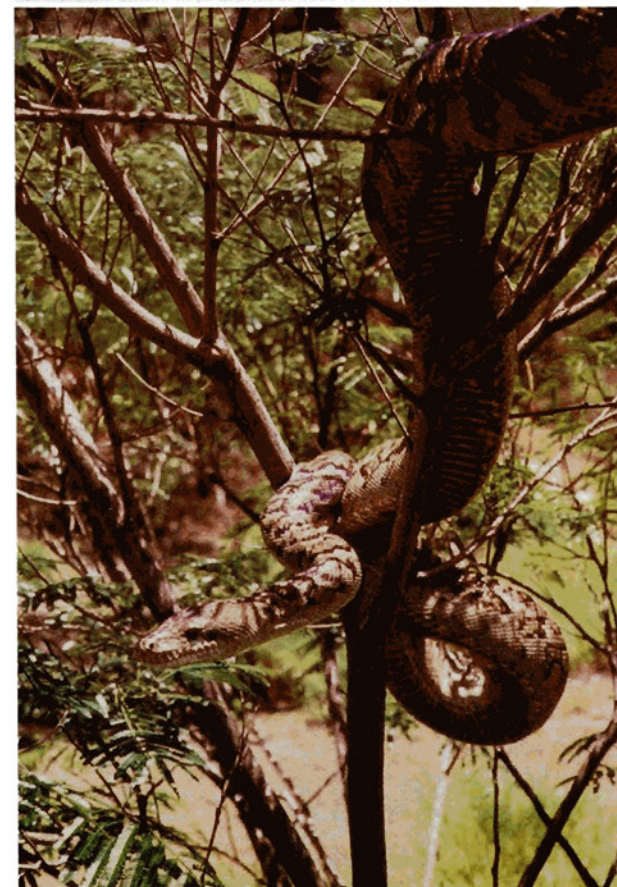
Henderson, R.W. and A. Arias B. 2001. *Epicrates angulifer*.

Epicrates angulifer Bibron
Cuban Boa

Epicrates angulifer Bibron 1843:129, pl. 25. Type locality, "Cuba." Holotype, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) 3292, male (726 mm SVL, 807 mm TL), collector and date of collection unknown (not examined by authors).

• **CONTENT.** No subspecies have been described.

• **DEFINITION.** *Epicrates angulifer* is a large boid with a maximum SVL approaching 4000 mm. In 1989, a large female (TL = 4851 mm) was killed on a road on the U.S. Naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Gundlach (1880) reported specimens of "5–7 yds" in total length; see also Barbour and Ramsden (1919) and Sheplan and Schwartz (1974). Dorsal scales on the neck are in 44–54 rows, at midbody 53–69 rows, and just anterior to the vent 28–38 rows. Ventrals number 272–292 in males and 268–290 in females. A slight west (low) to east (high) cline exists in the number of ventrals in both sexes. Subcaudals number 45–55 in males and 46–54 in females; ventrals + subcaudals total 321–347 in males and 316–339 in females. Other features of scutellation are: supralabials 12–16 (usually 13–14) and usually separated from eye; infralabials 13–19 (usually 16–18); circumorbital scales usually 8–9, occasionally 10; loreals usu-



FIGURES. *Epicrates angulifer*: (above) from Pinar del Río and San Vicente, Pinar del Río Province (photographs, from top, by Chris Mattison and W.H. Gehrman, the latter courtesy of the Albert Schwartz estate); (right column) from the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Guantánamo Province (photographs, from top, by Peter J. Tolson, S. Blair Hedges, and Jeff Lemm).

ally 1, but occasionally 2–3; head scale formula (Figure 50 in Schwartz and Henderson 1985) usually 3–3–4.

Two distinct color patterns occur. In Pinar del Río Province, the dorsal pattern consists of a series of appressed faded dorsal angulate markings with a ventrolateral row of irregularly shaped secondary blotches. Snakes from this general region lack dark brown-to-black pigments in the dorsal pattern; therefore, pattern details often are difficult to distinguish; even when occasional snakes from this area are darker, the pattern is still obliterated because of the absence of dark-blotch boundaries. In La Habana Province, the pale pattern begins to be replaced with one characterized by more well-defined dorsal angulate markings and secondary lateral blotches, and this trend is even more evident in Villa Clara and Camagüey provinces. Dorsal ground color is yellowish tan to brown, and an apparent cline exists, with pale snakes most common in the west and dark snakes in the east. On Isla de la Juventud, snakes exhibit both patterns.

For those snakes with dorsal patterns that allow blotch counts, variation is 42–65 on the body, and 5–12 on the upper surface of the tail (which is occasionally patternless). The blotches begin on the neck and continue onto the tail (frequently forming complete rings near the tip). Blotches may be centrally pale or uniformly dark. The head is usually tan or yellow-tan and unmarked (occasional dark brown or black suffusions or irregular and indistinct markings may be present). The chin, throat, and anterior ventrals are yellowish to cream, becoming heavily suffused with gray posteriorly, producing tan to brown scales and pale edges.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** *Epicrates angulifer* is the only species of *Epicrates* that occurs in Cuba. It is distinguishable from other West Indian *Epicrates* on the basis of dorsal scale rows at midbody (53–69 in *E. angulifer* versus 35–56 in other species), the number of subcaudals (45–55 in *E. angulifer* versus 66–93 in other species), and by having all supralabials separated from the eye (versus contact of the eye and some supralabials in other species).

• **DESCRIPTIONS.** Descriptions appear in Boulenger (1893), Barbour and Ramsden (1919), Lando and Williams (1969), Sheplan and Schwartz (1974), Garrido and Jaume (1984), Kluge (1989), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), and Tolson and Henderson (1993).

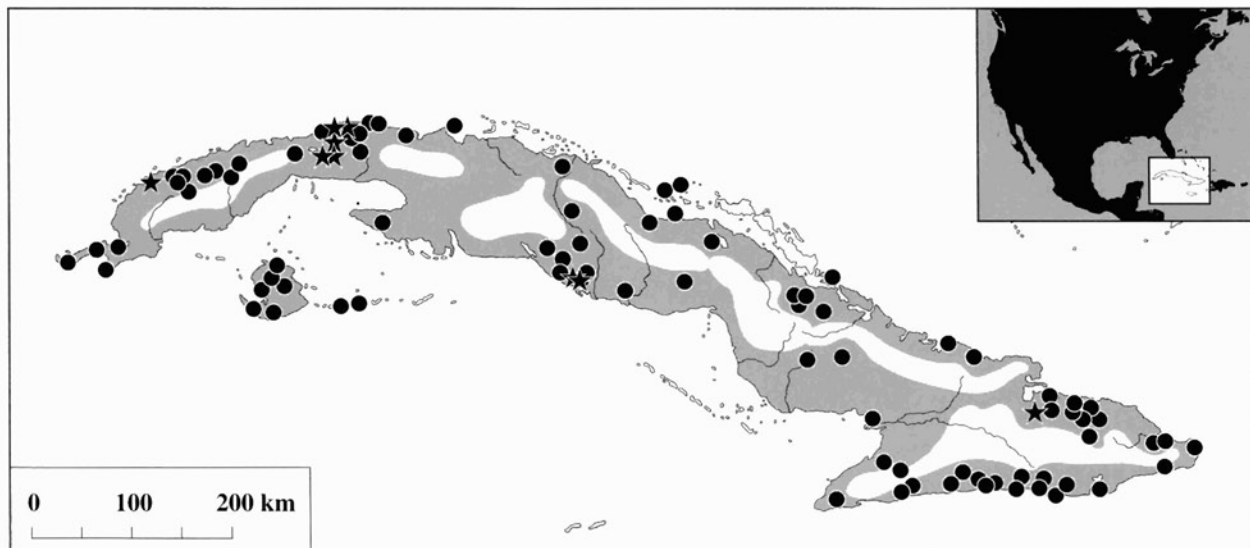
• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** Black and white photographs appear in

Ditmars (1933, 1942), Barbour (1945), Schmidt and Inger (1957), Silva Taboada (1979), Buike (1985), Schwartz and Henderson (1985), Stafford (1986), Tolson (1987), and Tolson and Henderson (1993). Color photographs appear in Obst et al. (1984), Schwartz and Henderson (1985), Stafford (1986), Mehrtens (1987), Tolson and Henderson (1993), Silva Lee (1996), Wagner (1996), Morell et al. (1998), Walls (1998), Crother (1999a), and Stafford (2000). Line drawings are in Barbour and Ramsden (1919, head scalation), Dowling and Savage (1960, hemipenis), Engelmann and Obst (1981, hemipenis), Buike (1986, complete animal), Kluge (1991, portion of the palate), and Walls (1998, lateral and dorsal view of the head and midbody). Engelmann and Obst (1981) included an illustration of a Cuban postage stamp illustrating *Epicrates angulifer*.

• **DISTRIBUTION.** *Epicrates angulifer* is a Cuban endemic, and is known from much of the main island and many satellites; records exist for Isla de la Juventud, Archipiélago de los Canarreos (Cayo Cantiles), Archipiélago de los Colorados (off the Pinar del Río coast), and Archipiélago Sabana-Camagüey (Cayo Guajaba, Cayo Las Brujas, Cayo Santa María, and Cayo Coco). These snakes probably occur on many other cays and islets. Altitudinal distribution is from sea level to at least 325 m.

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** Acevedo González (1983) reported early Holocene material from nine different localities on Cuba.

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** Considering the large size of *Epicrates angulifer* and its wide distribution in Cuba, surprisingly little is known about this spectacular snake; the following topics have been addressed: **morphology** (Tolson 1987; Kluge 1988, 1989; Tolson and Henderson 1993), **habitat** (Garrido and Schwartz 1969, Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, Sevcik and Sevcik 1988, Schwartz and Henderson 1991, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **diel activity** (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974), **foraging and diet** (Gundlach 1880, Hardy 1957, Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, Mushinsky 1987, Henderson and Crother 1989, Viña Dávila and Armas 1989, Schwartz and Henderson 1991, Tolson and Henderson 1993, Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996, Henderson 2001), **aggregation in caves** (Hardy 1957, Silva Taboada 1979), **defensive behavior** (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, Greene 1988), **parasites** (Barus and Coy Otero 1978, Coy Otero and Lorenzo Hernández 1982, Coy Otero 1999), **reproduction** (Gundlach 1880; Sheplan and Schwartz 1974; Huff



MAP. Distribution of *Epicrates angulifer*: the type-locality is too imprecise to plot; dots mark known modern records; stars mark fossil records.

1976, 1980; Nowinski 1976; Tolson 1980, 1983, 1992, 1994; Tolson et al. 1984, 1985; Tolson and Teubner 1987; Tolson and Henderson 1993), **longevity** (Engelmann and Obst 1981), **biogeography** (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, Tolson 1987, Kluge 1988, Tolson and Henderson 1993, Greene 1997), **phylogenetic relationships** (Tolson 1987; Kluge 1988, 1989; Tolson and Henderson 1993; Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996; Crother 1999b), **conservation status** (Barbour 1937, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **notes, checklists, and guides** (Boulenger 1893; Barbour 1914, 1930, 1935, 1937; Barbour and Ramsden 1919; Amaral (1929 [1930]); Stull 1931, 1935; Alayo 1955; Lando and Williams 1969; Garrido and Schwartz 1969; Stimson 1969; Garrido 1973, 1980; Schwartz and Thomas 1975; MacLean et al. 1977; Silva and Estrada 1982; Garrido and Jaime 1984; Schwartz and Henderson 1985, 1988, 1991; Garrido et al. 1986; Estrada et al. 1987; Abreu et al. 1989; Torres 1989; Estrada 1993a, b, 1994; Rodríguez Schettino 1993; Powell et al. 1996; Fong and Viña 1998; Morell et al. 1998; Estrada and Ruibal 1999; Martínez Rubiet 1999; McDiarmid et al. 1999).

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The specific name is presumably from the Latin *angulus*, meaning "angle," probably in reference to the angular shapes of the main elements of the dorsal pattern.

• **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** We thank Ivan Ineich for information regarding the holotype.

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ROBERT W. HENDERSON, Section of Vertebrate Zoology, Milwaukee Public Museum, 800 W. Wells Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233-1478 (rh@mpm.edu), and **ANGEL ARIAS BARRETO**, Empresa Nacional para la Protección de la Flora y Fauna (ENPFF), "Cubanacán," Villa Clara, Cuba.

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