

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Henderson, R.W. 1993. *Corallus caninus*.***Corallus caninus* (Linnaeus)**

Boa canina Linnaeus, 1758:215. Type-locality, "America." Holotype, Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (NRS) Lin. 8, collector and date of collection unknown, sex and age status unknown (not examined by author).

Boa Hipnale Linnaeus, 1758:215. Type-locality "Asia." Holotype, not traced.

Boa thalassina Laurenti, 1768:89. Substitute name for *Boa canina* Linnaeus.

Boa aurantiaca Laurenti, 1768:89. Type-locality, "America." Holotype, not traced.

Boa exigua Laurenti, 1768:89. Substitute name for *Boa bipnale* Linnaeus.

Xiphosoma araramboya Wagler in Spix, 1824:45. Type-locality, "aquis flumini Negro, Amazonum laterali." Holotype, Zoologische Staatssammlung, Munich, 1365/0, collector and date of collection unknown, adult, sex unknown (not examined by author).

Xiphosoma canina: Fitzinger, 1843:24.

Chrysenis batesii Gray, 1860:132. Type-locality, "Upper Amazon." Holotype, British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) 59.12.28. 12., collector and date of collection unknown, sex and size unknown (not examined by author).

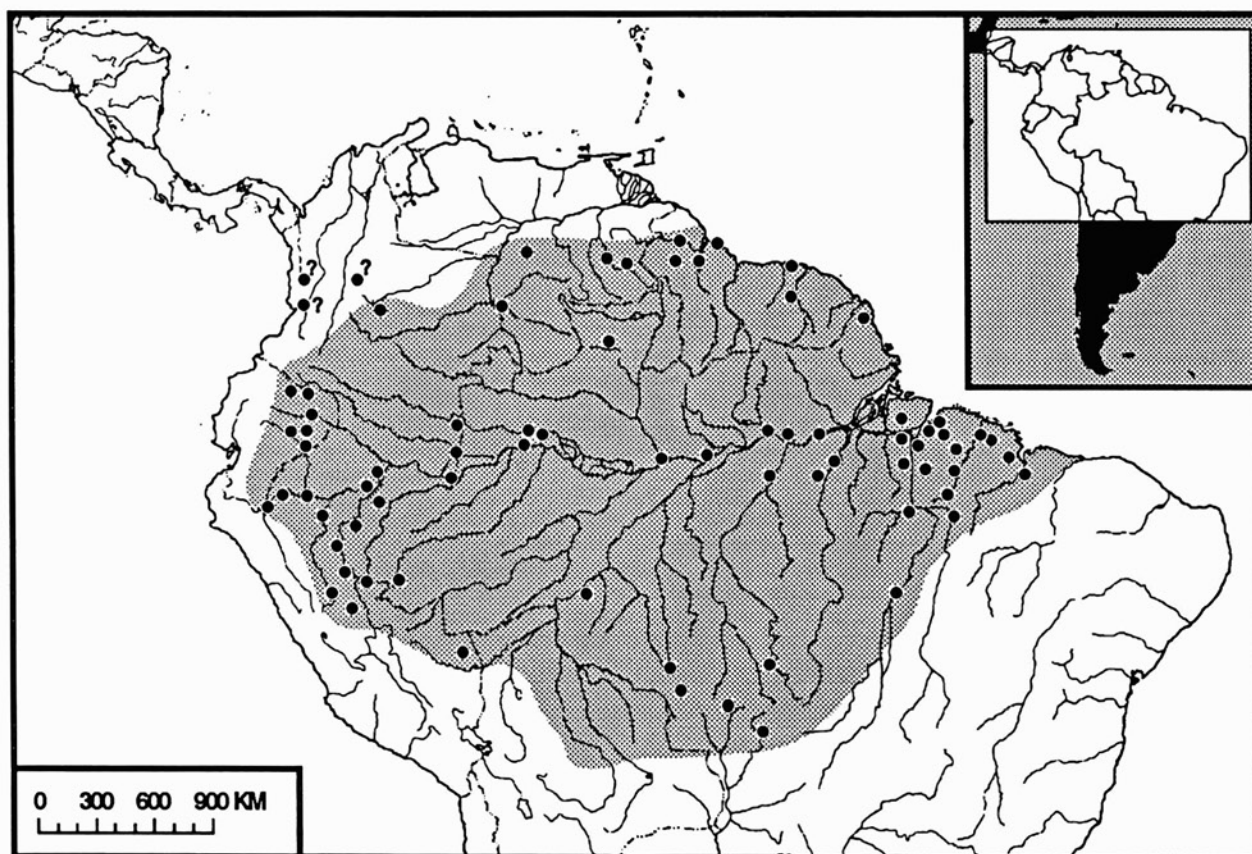
Corallus caninus: Boulenger, 1893:102.

• **Content.** *Corallus caninus* is monotypic.

• **Definition.** Maximum SVL is at least 1530 mm. The general habitus is with a large, chunky head, long anterior maxillary teeth, slender neck, strongly laterally compressed body, and prehensile tail. Dorsal scale rows at midbody number 60-84; ventrals 186-218; subcaudals 62-84; ventrals + subcaudals 256-285; supralabials (with deep labial pits) 9-13, infralabials (with deep labial pits) 11-16; scales

between supraorbitals 4-15; loreals 2-5; sublorels 2-10; loreals + sublorels 2-14; circumorbital scales 9-19; nasals usually in contact with 3-12 scales bordering nasals. Virtually no sexual dimorphism exists in traditional meristic characters.

The dorsal ground color in juveniles is yellow (rarely retained in adults), brick red-brown, or, rarely, green; in adults ground color is some shade of green. The transition from juvenile to adult coloration (based on wild-caught specimens) is gradual and usually occurs in snakes 550-600 mm SVL, although they may be as small as 450-500 mm SVL. The ventral ground color in juveniles usually is beige or dingy yellow and usually immaculate. In adults, the ventral ground color is off-white, cream, or some shade of yellow (dingy to bright); ventrals and subcaudals usually are immaculate, but may occasionally be flecked with some shade of green. The underside of the head usually is some shade of yellow, immaculate or flecked or washed with green (sometimes quite heavily). The labials are some shade of yellow and are frequently flecked or washed with green. The ventral ground color encroaches onto the dorsal scale rows, with more anterior than posterior scale rows affected. The encroaching yellow is usually flecked with green, sometimes heavily. Enamel white markings usually are present laterally and dorsally. The dorsalmost markings usually are triangular in shape, with the base of the triangle on the dorsal midline; the triangles may be connected by a middorsal line or not connected. The triangles are often absent anteriorly (resulting in no anterior pattern or just a middorsal stripe, either continuous or broken), becoming prominent and elongate at midbody (to the point of losing the triangular shape and appearing as white lines perpendicular to the dorsal midline); posteriorly, triangles are shorter and broader. Frequently the dorsal ground color surrounding the triangles is heavily stippled with dark green to black in adults, and brown in yellowish juveniles. Lateral blotches may be absent or greatly reduced anteriorly, becoming more prominent at midbody and posteriorly. Considerable geographic variation exists in the extent of the lateral white blotches: snakes from eastern Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and northeastern Brasil (Roraima) frequently lack lateral markings or have them much reduced; snakes from western Brasil (Rondônia, Matto Grosso) also may lack lateral white markings. In extreme cases (snakes from Guyana), the dorsum is devoid of any



Map. Distribution of *Corallus caninus*. The type-locality is undetermined. Questionable locality records are noted by question marks.



Figure 1. Juvenile *Corallus caninus* from Santa Cecilia, Napo, Ecuador. Note the presence of lateral white markings. Photograph by W.E. Duellman.

white markings. In contrast, snakes from Amazonia (exceptions noted) have conspicuous lateral white blotches, especially pronounced in snakes from the the easternmost region of Amazonia (Maranhão) and the upper Amazon of Ecuador and Peru, but with frequent exceptions. In extreme cases, the normally dorsoventrally oriented elongate blotches (1-2 scales wide x 4-10 scales long) are almost round and may be 4 x 4 scales in dimension.

The hemipenis (based on a specimen from Brasil) is shallowly forked, extending to the 9th subcaudal, the organ dividing at the 7th subcaudal and the sulcus dividing at the 6th subcaudal. The basal one-third is nude with prominent sulcal folds. Distally, six flounces fuse with the sulcal folds and are most prominent on the sulcal surface; the flounces occur before the bifurcation. The most proximal flounce is reduced in size and extended into a small papilla on the asclate surface. The sulcal folds extend to the tips of the short arms (which bear only a few papillate flounces) (Branch, 1981).

• **Diagnosis.** *Corallus caninus* is characterized by 186-218 ventrals, compared to >250 in *C. annulatus* and *C. enydris*. Dorsal scale rows number 60-84 at midbody, compared to 37-57 in *C. annulatus* and *C. enydris*. *Corallus cropanii*, the sister species of *C. caninus* (Kluge, 1991), has only 29-30 dorsal scale rows at midbody. Juvenile (yellow) *C. caninus* bear a superficial resemblance to yellow phase *C. enydris*, but scale characters easily distinguish the two taxa.

• **Descriptions.** General descriptions are many and vary in usefulness; arranged by country: Colombia (Dunn, 1944; Pérez-Santos and Moreno, 1988), Venezuela (Roze, 1966, 1970; Lancini V., 1979), Guyana (Beebe, 1946), Suriname (Moonen et al., 1979), French Guiana (Chippaux, 1986), Ecuador (Duellman, 1978; Pérez-Santos and Moreno, 1991), Peru (Carrillo de Espinoza, 1966, 1970; Dixon and Soini, 1976, 1986), Brasil (Wagler, in Spix, 1824; Amaral, 1976; Cunha and Nascimento, 1978; Santos, 1981).

• **Illustrations.** Many photographs of this spectacular snake have been published, and no useful purpose would be served in attempting to list them all. Black and white photographs appear in Ditmars (1942), Beebe (1946), Carrillo de Espinoza (1966), Cunha and Nascimento (1978), and Duellman (1978). Color photographs appear in Schmidt and Inger (1957), Roze (1970), Moonen et al.

(1979), Lancini V. (1979), Golder (1985), Mattison (1986), Stafford (1986), Mehrtens (1987), Pérez-Santos and Moreno (1988), Campbell and Lamar (1989), Ross and Marzec (1990), and Pérez-Santos and Moreno (1991). Black and white drawings of the head are in Roze (1966) and full body drawings are found in Wagler, in Spix (1824), Gray (1860), and Pérez-Santos and Moreno (1988). Color drawings are presented in Amaral (1976). Drawings of cranial elements occur in Frazzetta (1975) and Kluge (1991). A drawing of a lung appears in Beddard (1908).

• **Distribution.** *Corallus caninus* is restricted to Amazonian and Guianan South America: Colombia, Venezuela (the record from Caripito, Monagas in Roze [1966] is based on a misidentified *Corallus enydris*), Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brasil, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. A questionable published record from west of the Andes was cited by Niceforo Maria (1942). Altitudinal distribution is from sea level to about 1000 m. The distribution of *C. caninus* is largely coincident with the distribution of lowland tropical rainforest. The species is absent from caatinga and Atlantic coastal forest in eastern Brasil. *Corallus caninus* occurs only in areas that receive >1500 mm of precipitation annually.

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** A comprehensive account of the biology of *Corallus caninus* is not available. Various reports on aspects of the biology of *C. caninus* have appeared as follows: chromosomes (Beçak, 1965; Gorman and Gress, 1970), bile acids (Haslewood and Wootton, 1951; Haslewood, 1967), scent gland lipids (Tolson, 1987), cranial osteology (Frazzetta, 1959; McDowell, 1979; Kluge, 1991), soft anatomy (Beddard, 1908; Underwood, 1967; Kluge, 1991), radiant heat reception (Bullock and Barrett, 1968), hemipenis (McDowell, 1979; Branch, 1981), courtship (Murphy et al., 1978), reproduction (Murphy et al., 1978; Gobels, 1985; Schulte, 1988; Ross and Marzec, 1990), ontogenetic color change (Gobels, 1985; Golder, 1985; Schulte, 1988), habitat (Cunha and Nascimento, 1978; Duellman, 1978; Hoogmoed, 1979; Pérez-Santos and Moreno, 1988, 1992; Duellman, 1989, 1990; Rodriguez and Cadle, 1990; Zimmerman and Rodrigues, 1990), diel activity (Cunha and Nascimento, 1978; Duellman, 1989, 1990; Rodriguez and Cadle, 1990; Zimmerman and Rodrigues, 1990), defensive behavior (Greene, 1988), stereotyped



Figure 2. Adult *Corallus caninus* from the vicinity of Ariquemes, Rondônia, Brasil. Note the lack of lateral white markings and the presence of dark stippling around the white dorsal triangles. Photograph by Carl Taylor.

behavior (Carpenter and Ferguson, 1977), diet (Cunha and Nascimento, 1978; Duellman, 1989, 1990; Rodriguez and Cadle, 1990; Zimmerman and Rodrigues, 1990; Henderson, 1993), population density (Schulte, 1988), phylogeny (Frazzetta, 1975; Kluge, 1991), conservation strategy (Schulte, 1988), captive maintenance and behavior (Osborne, 1984; Gobels, 1985; Golder, 1985; Wagner, 1985; Stafford, 1986; Schulte, 1988; Blody and Mehaffey, 1989; Ross and Marzec, 1990), frequency of shedding and defecation (Gehrmann, 1990).

• **Etymology.** The specific name *caninus* is Latin, meaning "of dogs," and likely refers to the dog-like appearance of the head, including the long anterior maxillary teeth.

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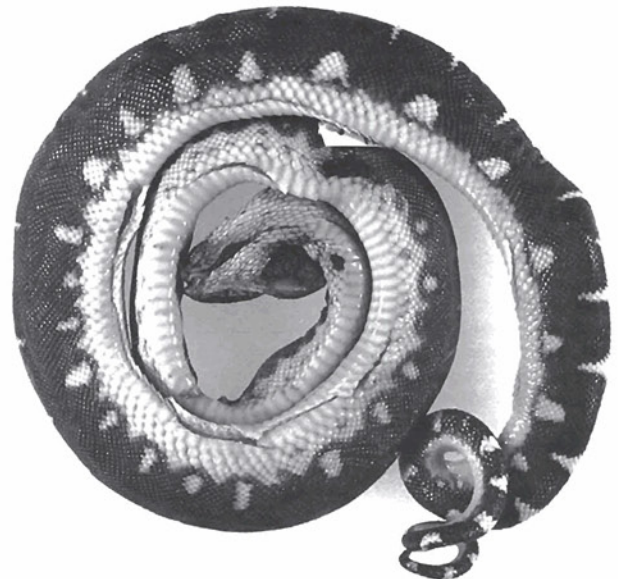


Figure 3. Preserved specimen of *Corallus caninus* from Santa Cecilia, Napo, Ecuador (KU 107037) with large lateral white blotches.

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