

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: BOIDAE

EPICRATES FORDII

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Henderson, R.W. and R. Powell. 2004. *Epicrates fordii*.*Epicrates fordii* (Günther)

Pelophilus fordii Günther 1861:142. Type locality, "Western Africa," restricted by Sheplan and Schwartz (1974) to the "vicinity of Port-au-Prince, Dépt. de l'Ouest, Haiti," but Wetherbee (1987, 1989) argued that it should be "República Dominicana." Holotype, British Museum of Natural History (BMNH) 1946.1.1.55 (formerly 1862.3.10.4), snout-vent length 570 mm, tail length 117 mm; sex unconfirmed, but given as female by Boulenger (1893); date of collection and collector are unknown (not examined by authors).

Chilabothrus fordii: Jan 1865:87.

Chilabothrus maculatus Fischer 1888:33, pl. 3, fig. 7. Type locality, "Cap Hayti" and "Gonaives," Haiti. Syntypes, Zoologisches Museum, Hamburg (HZM) 52 (others destroyed), at least the largest was an adult (TL = 780 mm), sexes unknown, date of collection unknown, collected by H. Rolle (not examined by authors).

Epicrates fordii: Boulenger 1893:98. First use of present combination.

Epicrates inornatus fordii: Stull 1935:397.

Epicrates fordii: Schwartz and Thomas 1975:184.

• **CONTENT.** Three subspecies are currently recognized: *Epicrates fordii fordii*, *E. f. agametus*, and *E. f. manototus*.

• **DEFINITION.** *Epicrates fordii* is a small boa with known maximum SVL of 860 mm in males and 730 mm in females. Dorsal scale rows are 28–35 on the neck, 31–39 at midbody, and 18–23 anterior to the vent. Ventrals are 231–261 in males and 236–259 in females; subcaudals are 69–85 in males and 70–89 in females; ventrals + subcaudals are 308–343 in males and 312–341 in females. Other features of scutellation are supralabials 11–15 (usually 13, with usually 2 bordering the orbit) and infralabials 12–16 (usually 14); circumorbital scales 8–13 (usually 10); loreals 1–4 (usually 2); head scale formula (Fig. 50 in Schwartz and Henderson 1985) usually 3–1–3.

The dorsal ground color is pale gray to grayish tan with 58–92 ovate or subcircular body blotches that are pale milk chocolate



FIGURE 1. Adult male *Epicrates fordii* from 10.4 km NW a'Soleil (130 m), Dépt. l'Artibonite, Haiti (SBH 160769)(photograph by S.B. Hedges).

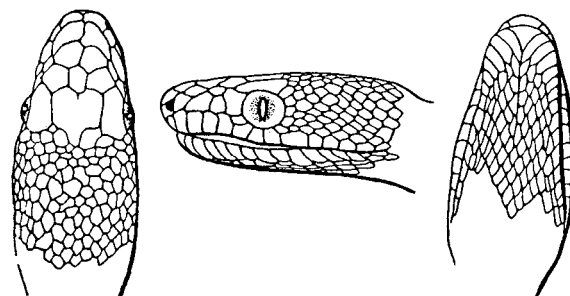
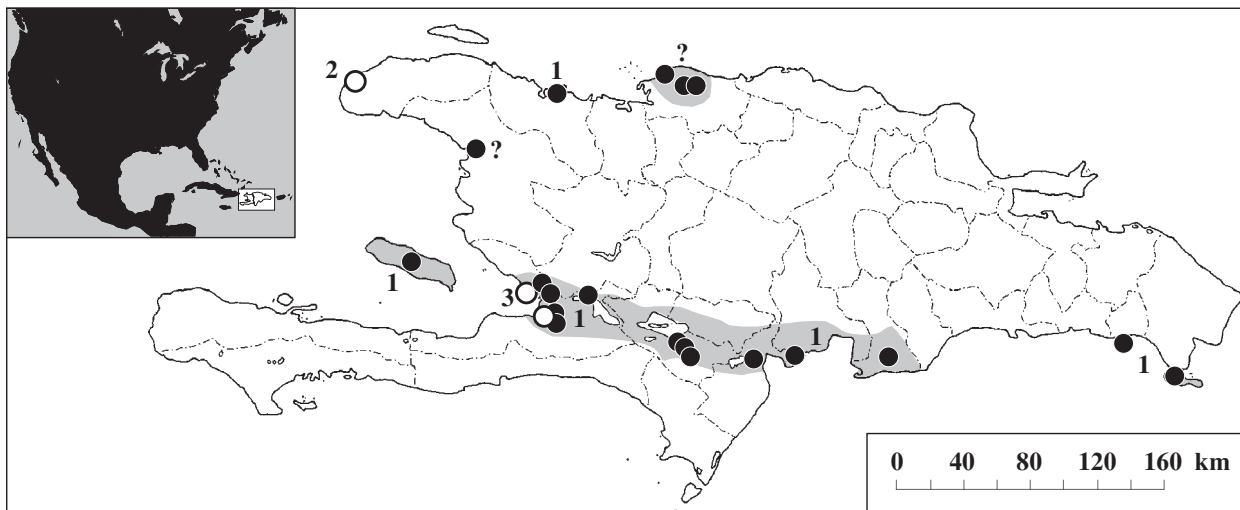


FIGURE 2. *Epicrates fordii* (USNM 59085) from Haiti (from Cochran 1941).

brown to medium brown or, primarily in young individuals, reddish in color. The blotches are outlined in black and lined with pale gray. The venter is white with the central portion of each ventral suffused with gray. Tail blotches number 13–17.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** *Epicrates fordii* can be distinguished from all other sympatric boids by scale characters. Dorsal scale rows at midbody usually are 48 or more in *E. striatus* and fewer than 40 in *E. fordii*. Ventrals are greater than 270 and subcaudals 90 or more in *E. gracilis*, whereas ventrals are fewer than 262 and subcaudals 89 or fewer in *E. fordii*.



MAP. Distribution of *Epicrates fordii*: circles denote type localities (that of the nominate form as restricted by Sheplan and Schwartz 1974); dots indicate other known records (modified from Schwartz and Henderson 1991). Question marks indicate populations not assigned to subspecies.

• **DESCRIPTIONS.** In addition to the original descriptions, detailed descriptions are in Cochran (1941), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), and Tolson and Henderson (1993).

• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** Color photographs are in Obst et al. (1984), Tolson and Henderson (1993), and Walls (1998). Colored drawings illustrating the head and midbody are in Walls (1998). Line drawings are in Fischer (1888, top and side of head, dorsal view of head and neck, and lateral view at midbody), Zenneck (1898, three variations in markings on top of the head, two of these and a lateral view near the vent also are presented in color), and Cochran (1941, top and side of the head and chin). A color photograph of habitat is in Tolson and Henderson (1993).

• **DISTRIBUTION.** *Epicrates fordii* has a disjunct distribution on Hispaniola and its satellite islands: Plaine de Cul de Sac–Valle de Neiba, Cap-Haïtien, Môle St.-Nicolas, Ile de la Gonâve, Ile à Cabrit, Isla Catalina, and Isla Saona. The range was illustrated by Sheplan and Schwartz (1974), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), Tolson and Henderson (1993), and Walls (1998).

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** None.

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** Relevant references are listed by topic: **biogeography** (Schwartz 1980), **body size** (Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996), **captive husbandry** (Tolson 1994, Walls 1998), **conservation status** (Powell et al. 2000), **distribution** (Henderson and Sajdak 1983, Powell et al. 1999, Schwartz and Henderson 1991), **diet** (Henderson et al. 1987, Henderson and Crother 1989, Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996), **habitat** (SEA/DVS 1990, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **lung anatomy** (Wallach 1998), **natural history** (Tolson and Henderson 1993), **pattern** (Zenneck 1898), **phylogeny** (Kluge 1988, 1989; Tolson 1987; Tolson and Henderson 1993), **reproductive biology** (Murphy and Guese 1977; Murphy et al. 1978; Tolson 1991, 1992; Tolson and Henderson 1993), **systematics** (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996, Crother 1999), and **taxonomic history** (McDiarmid et al. 1999, Powell et al. 1999).

The species (under various names) was included in **general works, notes, checklists, guides, and keys** by Amaral (1929), Barbour (1914; 1930; 1935; 1937), Boulenger (1893), Cochran (1934, 1941), Frank and Ramus (1995), Henderson (2002), Henderson and Schwartz (1984), Henderson et al. (1984), Incháustegui and Arias (1985), Jan (1865), Kluge (1991), MacLean et al. (1977), Mertens (1939), Powell et al. (1996, 1999), Schmidt (1926), Schwartz and Henderson (1985, 1988, 1991), Schwartz and Thomas (1975), Stejneger (1904, 1905), Stimson (1969), and Stull (1931, 1935).

• **REMARKS.** Populations in western Haiti and the northern Dominican Republic (Valle de Cibao between Monte Cristi and Villa Vásquez) have not been assigned to subspecies (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974). Schwartz and Henderson (1988, 1991) listed but did not map (1991) the Cap-Haïtien population (*Chilabothrus maculatus* Fischer) as *E. f. fordii*.

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The specific name is a patronym honoring G.H. Ford, the illustrator of the plate accompanying the original description (Wetherbee 1989); *agametus* (Greek for “bachelor”) refers to the unique male holotype (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974); *manototus* (Greek for “most rare”) is in reference to the apparent scarcity of these snakes on Ile à Cabrit, Haiti (Schwartz 1979).

1. *Epicrates fordii fordii* (Günther)

Pelophilus fordii Günther 1861:142. See species synonymy.

Chilabothrus maculatus Fischer 1888:33. See species synonymy; see also **Remarks**.

Epicrates fordii: Boulenger 1893:98. See species synonymy.

Epicrates inornatus fordii: Stull 1935:397. See species synonymy.

Epicrates fordii fordii Barbour 1935:132. First use of present combination.

Epicrates fordii fordii: Schwartz and Thomas 1975:184.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** This subspecies can be distinguished from *E. f. agametus* by number of ventral scales (261 in male *E. f. agametus*, 231–255 in male *E. f. fordii*), number of dorsal body blotches (92 in *E. f. agametus*, 58–88 in *E. f. fordii*), and ventrals + subcaudals (343 in *E. f. agametus*, 310–339 in male *E. f. fordii*). It differs from *E. f. manototus* in number of ventrals (257–263 in female *E. f. manototus*, 231–259 in female *E. f. fordii*) and ventral pattern (gray with small, scattered square or rectangular darker gray markings on most scales in *E. f. manototus*; markings absent, reduced, or a midventral darkening of scales in *E. f. fordii*).

2. *Epicrates fordii agametus* Sheplan and Schwartz

Epicrates fordii agametus Sheplan and Schwartz 1974:110. Type locality, “Môle St.-Nicholas, Département du Nord-Ouest, Haiti.” Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 62656, an adult male, collected 26 July 1960 by A.S. Rand and J.D. Lazell (not examined by authors).

Epicrates fordii agametus: Schwartz and Thomas 1975:184.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** This subspecies can be distinguished from *E. f. manototus* by the number of dorsal blotches (72–74 in *E. f. manototus*, 92 in *E. f. agametus*). See also the **Diagnosis** for *E. f. fordii*.

3. *Epicrates fordii manototus* Schwartz

Epicrates fordii manototus Schwartz 1979:253. Type locality, “Ile à Cabrit, Dépt. de l’Ouest, Haiti.” Holotype, Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CM) 60519, an adult female, collected 10 August 1976 by D.A. Daniels (not examined by authors).

Epicrates [fordii]. manototus: Powell et al. 1999:114.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** See **Diagnosis** for *E. f. fordii* and *E. f. agametus*.

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