

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles 931

Newman, B. C., S. E. Henke, and R. L. Powell. 2023. *Chilabothrus subflavus*

Chilabothrus subflavus (Stejneger 1901)
Jamaican Boa

Boa inornata: Reinhardt 1843:253, Tab. 1, Figs. 21–23.

Chilabothrus inornatus: Duméril and Bibron 1844:563.

Cheilabothrus inornatus: Haliday et al. 1857: 47. *Lapsus*.

Chilabothrius inornatus: Günther 1858:279. *Lapsus*.

Chilabothrius inornatus: Günther 1860:30. *Lapsus*.

Chilabothrius inornatus: Günther 1864:123. *Lapsus*.

Epicrates inornatus: Boulenger 1893:97.

Epicrates subflavus Stejneger 1901:469. Type locality, “Jamaica” (no further locality information). Holotype, Museum of Natural History (USNM) 14507, unsexed adult

~153 cm snout–vent length (not examined by authors).

Epicrates inornatus: Amaral 1930:141.

Epicrates subflavus: Stull 1931:39.

Epicrates inornatus subflavus: Mertens 1939:74.

Epicrates subflavus: Cochran 1961:178.

Apicrates subflavus: Ferri and dell’Acqua 1997:24. *Lapsus*.

Chilabothrus subflavus: Reynolds et al. 2013a:468.

Epicrates subflavus: Wallach et al. 2014:274.

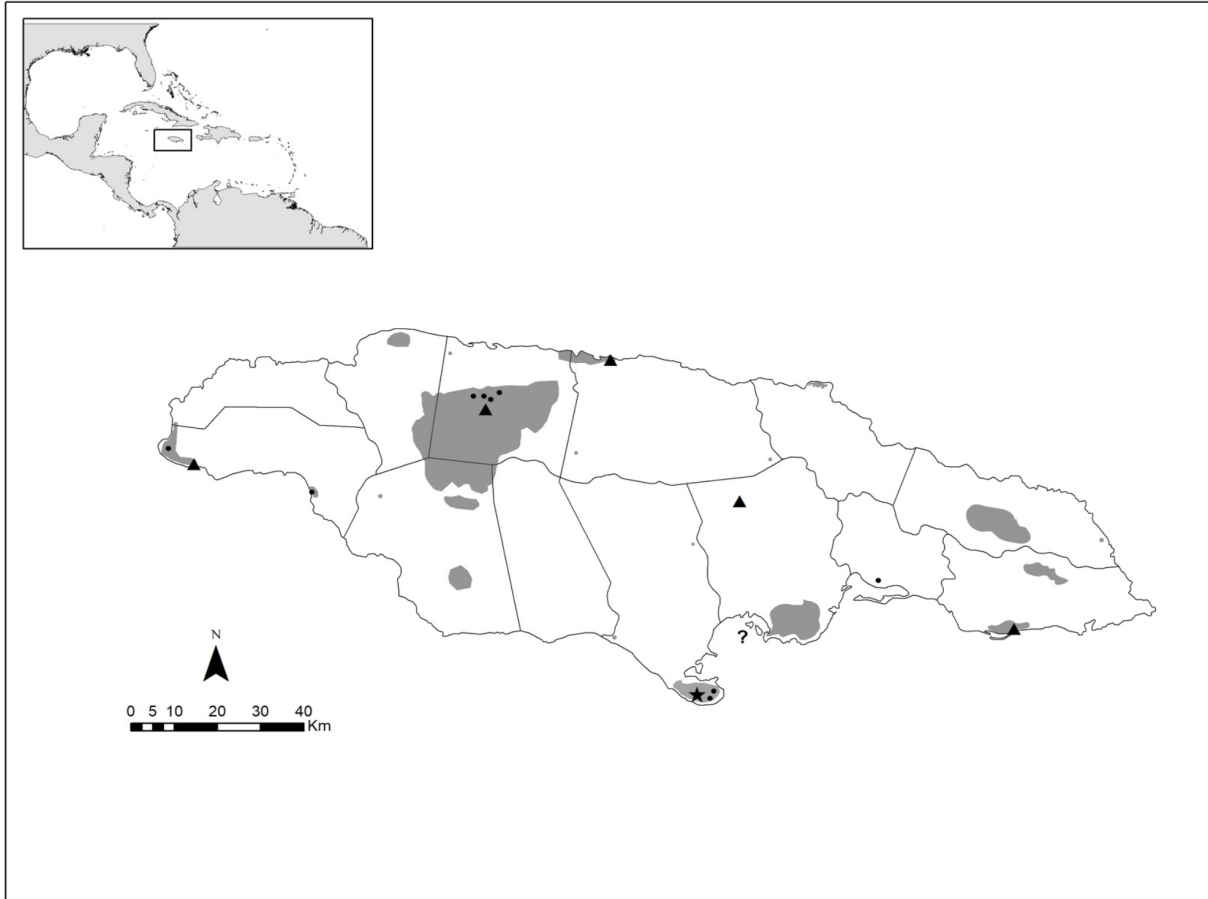
Chilabothrus subflavus: Reynolds and Henderson 2018:15.

CONTENT. No subspecies are recognized.

DESCRIPTION. *Chilabothrus subflavus* is a medium- to large-sized (125–180 cm total length; 218 cm maximum length [Lynn and Grant 1940; Schwartz and Henderson 1991]), moderately stout-bodied arboreal snake. As compared to other West Indian boas within the genus *Chilabothrus*, *Chilabothrus subflavus* is considered a large-bodied species (Harrington et al. 2018). Adults exhibit sex-



FIGURE 1. Adult *Chilabothrus subflavus* (sex unknown) from Trelawny Parish, Jamaica. Photograph by Matthew Emrich.



MAP. Distribution of *Chilabothrus subflavus* on Jamaica. Gray shading represents the hypothesized distribution and highlights appropriate habitat for this species adapted from Newman et al. (2016). The black triangles denote cave systems from which *Chilabothrus subflavus* have been observed, the black dots show localities from which *Chilabothrus subflavus* are reported, the star denotes a fossil site, and the question mark denotes an uncertain occurrence on the Goat Islands.

ual dimorphism; males possess pelvic spurs lateral to the cloaca and tend to be slightly smaller than females (Lynn and Grant 1940; Miersma 2010; Newman et al. 2019; Reynolds et al. 2016b; Schwartz and Henderson 1991; Tolson and Henderson 1993). Mean adult female snout-vent length (SVL) is ~155 cm and weight ~1,900 g; mean adult male SVL is ~152 cm and weight 1,725 g (Miersma 2010; Newman et al. 2020). Scale morphology is as follows: dorsal scales smooth (unkeeled); dorsal scale counts 33–41 (head length behind occiput), 41–47 (mid body), 23–26 (head length anterior to cloaca); ventral scales = 277–283; anal plate and subcaudals undivided; subcaudals = 78–79 (Lynn and Grant 1940; Schwartz and Henderson

1991; Tolson and Henderson 1993). Head scales (counts for paired scales listed for one side only): 12 supralabials; 13–15 infralabials; no labial pits; loreal scale present; 1–2 preoculars (superior scale greatly enlarged); large supraocular; 3–4 postocular scales (Lynn and Grant 1940). Frontal scale present along with double pair of parietal scales. Eye with elliptical pupil. Adult *Chilabothrus subflavus* coloration varies, with yellow, tan, cream and dark orange on the dorsal scales, greenish-yellow on the chin, orange on the venter with occasional black spots, and irregular black banding that occurs along the dorsal scales expanding posteriorly on the body to form an almost completely iridescent black tail that is stippled with yellow (Lynn and Grant 1940;



FIGURE 2. Adult *Chilabothrus subflavus* (sex unknown) from Trelawny Parish, Jamaica. Photograph by Matthew Emrich.

Tolson and Henderson 1993). Ventral scales of *Chilabothrus subflavus* are yellow, tan, and cream and change to iridescent black toward the lower quarter of the body to the tail. Two black stripes are present on each side of the head at the temporal scales starting at about 5 mm behind the eye(s).

DIAGNOSIS. *Chilabothrus subflavus* can be distinguished from other congeners by a greater ventral scale count, a large superior preocular scale that in contacts with the prefrontal, two pairs of parietal scales, and an iridescent black tail.

PHYLOGENETIC RELATIONSHIPS.

Once part of the genus *Epicrates* Wagler 1830, West Indian Boas were considered congeners of the *Epicrates cenchria* complex from mainland Central and South America (McDiarmid et al. 1999; Rodríguez-Robles et al. 2015). Based on sequence data from mitochondrial cytochrome b genes and nuclear loci, strong support for the paraphyly of *Epicrates* in relation to *Eunectes* Wagler 1830 was provided by Burbrink (2005), Campbell

(1997), and Noonan and Chippindale (2006). Environmental niche models presented by Rivera et al. (2011) similarly supported the paraphyly of *Epicrates* in relation to *Eunectes*. Molecular data published by Reynolds et al. (2013a) supported a taxonomic revision for the West Indian boa clade to *Chilabothrus* Duméril and Bibron 1844 and restricted the genus *Epicrates* to the five mainland boa species endemic to Central and South America (Pyron et al. 2014; Rodríguez-Robles et al. 2015). A mean divergence time of 30.2 Mya between *Chilabothrus* and mainland *Epicrates* + *Eunectes* was estimated by Reynolds et al. (2013a). This and additional evidence presented by Reynolds et al. (2013a) resulted in the change in nomenclature from *Epicrates subflavus* to *Chilabothrus subflavus*. *Chilabothrus angulifer* represents the most basal lineage of the West Indian radiations of *Chilabothrus* and *Chilabothrus subflavus* split from the clade at an estimated mean divergence time of 17.3 Mya (Reynolds et al. 2013a).

CONSERVATION STATUS. Populations of *Chilabothrus subflavus* are in peril due to



FIGURE 3. Plate IV presented by Gosse (1851) illustrating *Chilabothrus inornatus* (= *Chilabothrus subflavus*) and *Dactyloa edwardsii* (= *Anolis garmani*).

habitat loss and fragmentation (Beckford and Barker 2003; Berglund and Johansson 2004; Durán et al. 2013; Evelyn and Camirand 2003; Headley and Evelyn 2000; D. Lewis 2009; National Environment and Planning Agency 2007; Newman et al. 2016; Schneider-Maunoury et al. 2016; Wilson 2011). In addition, predation by invasive species coupled with habitat degradation, has played a significant role in altering prey-base, distribution, and abundance of *Chilabothrus subflavus* throughout Jamaica (Bennett et al. 2011; Espeut 1882; Hodgson 1836; C. Lewis 1949; Mertens 1966; Newman et al. 2016, 2020; Powell and Henderson 2008; Tolson and Henderson 1993, 2006; Wilson et al. 2011). *Chilabothrus subflavus* is listed as a Protected Animal under the Wild Life Protection Act of Jamaica (Anonymous 2016), an Endan-

gered Foreign Species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Anonymous 1974, 1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1982, 1986c, 1987; Behme 1981; Russell 1970), an Appendix I species by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Anonymous 1993a, 1993b; 1998a; 2003; Behme 1981; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 2017; Frank and Ramus 1994; Large 1995; Lehto 1995; Martens et al. 1997; Vergner 1992; Zelená and Kučera 1993), and a Vulnerable species by the IUCN in need of research to determine its present status (Gibson 1996a; McLain 1992; Mertens 1966; The IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre 1988)

PUBLISHED DESCRIPTIONS. The first morphological diagnosis for *Chilabothrus*

subflavus was provided by Stejneger (1901), with other detailed descriptions by Kluge (1991), Lynn and Grant (1940), Newman et al. (2020), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), and Tolson and Henderson (1993). Physical descriptions were presented by Gibson (1996b), Oliver (1982), and Tolson and Henderson (1993). Genetic and systematic descriptions were published by Reynolds and Henderson (2018), Reynolds et al. (2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016a, 2016b), and Tzika et al. (2008, 2009).

ILLUSTRATIONS. Line drawings of *Chilabothrus subflavus* were presented by Duméril et al. (1870), Etheridge and Pieters (2015), Jan and Sordelli (1864, 1961a, 1961b, 2012), Kluge (1991: lateroventral view of the left side of the palate), Reinhardt (1843), Savage and McDiarmid (2018), Sloane (1725), Underwood (1952: head; 1967: visual cells of eye), and Ziswiler (1976: visual cells of eye).

Color illustrations were published by Gosse (1851) as well as on postage stamps showing *Epicrates subflavus*: Jersey, January 1984 “The 25th Anniversary of the Jersey Zoo” (20.5 P coiled around tree branch; illustration of stamp incorrectly titled as “Jamacian Boa” {sic}, Stanley Gibbons 2022); Jamaica, October 1984 “World Wildlife Federation: Wildlife of Jamaica Edition” (25c head, 55c basking, 70c female with neonates, \$1 coiled on tree limb) (Figure 5); République du Bénin, July 1999 “Snakes” (300f head). **Black-and-white photographs** were published by Areste and Cebrián (2003: ventral and lateral body and head), Cardiff (1996: captive neonates), Gibson (1996b), Kluge (1989; dorsal and lateral view of skull/upper mandible adult female and neonate sex unknown), Koenig and Schwartz (2003: consuming bat), Koenig et al. (2007: constricting Black-billed Parrot, *Amazona agilis*), Nielsen (2001), Oliver (1986), Prior and Gibson (1997: foraging at cave), Stafford (1986), and Tolson (1987). **Color photographs** were published by Bartlett (1990), Bender (n.d.), Coborn (1991, 1994),

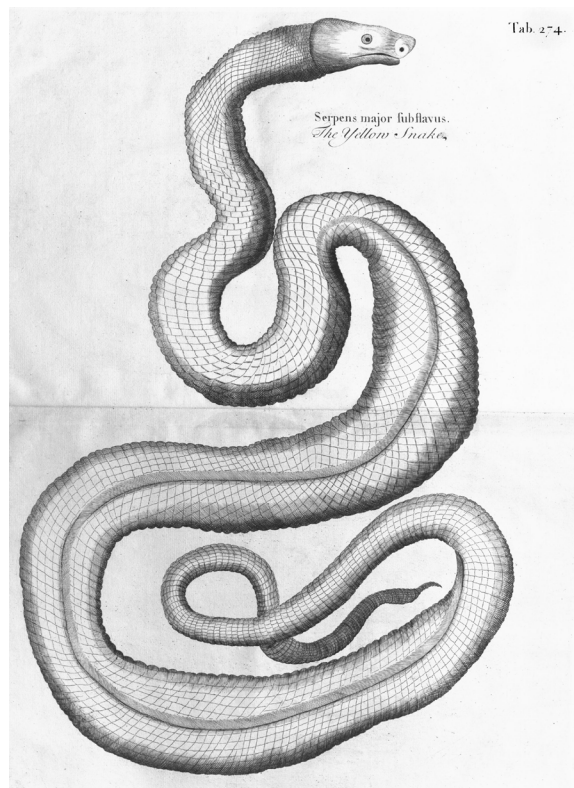


FIGURE 4. Illustration [Tab. 274] published by Sloane (1725) of *Serpens major subflavus* (= *Chilabothrus subflavus*).

Diesel (1992), Mehrrens (1987), Miersma (2010), National Environment and Planning Agency (2007), Newman et al. (2016, 2020), Nielsen (2001), Oliver (1986), O’Shea (2007, 2011, 2018), O’Shea and Halliday (2002, 2009), Schaefer et al. (2019), Smith et al. (2021), Snider (2016), Snider and Andrews (2019), Tolson and Henderson (1993), Tzika et al. (2008), Uetz et al. (2023), Vareschi and Janetzky (1998: foraging for bats), and Voss (1996). **Color photomicrograph** was published by Strick et al. (2007: thrombocyte with intracytoplasmic Inclusion Body Disease).

DISTRIBUTION. Historically, *Chilabothrus subflavus* was found throughout Jamaica (Sloane 1725; A Gentleman...1808; Beckford 1790; Browne 1756, 1789; Gosse 1851; Philippo 1843; Vernon 1848) and nearby outlying islands (Barbour 1910, 1922; Townsend 1893). With the introduction of *Herpestes*

auropunctatus (Small Indian Mongoose), populations of *Chilabothrus subflavus* began a noticeable decline (Barbour 1910; Bennett et al. 2011; Eric 1897; Espeut 1882; Hodgson 1836). Recent accounts suggest that the distribution of *Chilabothrus subflavus* is sporadic and occurs in isolated pockets throughout Jamaica (Areste and Cebrián 2003; Crombie et al. 1983; Diesel 1992; Englemann and Obst 1981, 1982; Gibson 1996b; Lazell 1996; Newman et al. 2016; Oliver, 1982; Wilson and Vogel 2000).

FOSSIL RECORD. Fossil materials from the late Quaternary Period are reported from sediments in caves of Portland Ridge, Clarendon Parish, Jamaica (MacPhee 1997; McFarlane 1997; Morgan 1993; Pregill et al. 1992).

PERTINENT LITERATURE. Relevant citations are listed by topic: **captive care, breeding, longevity** (Anonymous 1864, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1986a, 1986b, 1989; 1991a, 1991b, 1993c, 1998b, 1999, 2010, 2020; Bartlett 1990; Bateman 1897, 1902; Bloxam 1977, 1982; Bloxam and Tonge 1981; Bowler 1977; Buzicky 2005; Che-Castaldo et al. 2019; Conklin 1871; Croudace 1989; Darevskiy and Orlov 1988; DeNardo 1991; Durrell 1978; Etting 1991; D. Ferri 1995, 2000; V. Ferri and dell'Acqua 1992, 1997; Flower 1929; D. Fraser 2008; L. Fraser 1865; Girling and Raiti 2004; Helmisaari and Laaksonen 2007; Herold 2004; Hjarsen 2000; Hopley 1882; Huff 1976, 1979, 1980; Interessengemeinschaft Riesenschlangen 2000; Jones 1962; Laszlo 1984; Matz and Vanderhaege 1978; Mendyk 2022; Mendyk and Rost 2018; Mori 2008; J. B. Murphy 2014; J. C. Murphy 1992; K. Murphy 1991a, 1991b; New York Board of Commissioners of the Central Park 1870; Nielsen 2000, 2001; Petzold 1982, 1984, 2008; Price 1990; Rehák 1993; Rojc 1997; Ross and Marzec 1990; Schulz and Schulz 2010; Sclater 1872, 1878; Slavens 1976, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988,

1989; Slavens and Slavens 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998; Snider 2016; Snider and Andrews 2019; Snider and Bowler 1992; Stradling 1883, 1892, 1895; Tolson 1982, 1994; Tolson and Henderson 1993; Trutnau 1979; Tzika et al. 2008, 2009; Vergner 1992; Visser 1985; Waite 1996; Witzemberger and Hochkirch 2011; Zwartepoorte 2004), **checklists, catalogs, and keys** (Ahrenfeldt 1954; Amaral 1930, 1932a, 1932b; Barbour 1922, 1930, 1935, 1937; Boulenger 1893; Carus and Engelmann 1861; Cochran 1961; Cope 1868; Crombie 1970; Dehne 1856; Dirksen and Auliya 2001; Duncan 1883, 1894; Emsley 1977; Garman 1883, 1884a, 1884b; Gray 1849; Gundlach 1881; Günther 1858, 1860, 1864, 1971; Hallowell 1856, 1857; Hedges et al. 2019; Hutchins et al. 2003; Maclean et al. 1977; Müller 1865; Orcutt 1928; Powell et al. 1996; Reinhardt 1860; Richardson 2023; Schwartz and Henderson 1985, 1988, 1991; Schwartz and Thomas 1975; Stephenson and Wilson 2023; Stimson 1969; Stull 1931, 1935; Tipton 2005; Troschel 1853, 1858; Vogel 1994; Welch 1994; Werner 1901, 1921; Wilson et al. 2012; Zenneck 1898), **conservation status and threats** (Aide et al. 2013; Anonymous 1970, 1971, 1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1986c, 1994, 1995, 1996b, 2003; Beckford and Barker 2003; Bennett et al. 2011; Berglund and Johansson 2004; Cawley et al. 2020; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 2017; Dodd 1987; Durán et al. 2013; Espeut 1882; Evelyn and Camirand 2003; Eyre 1987; Frank and Ramus 1994; Gibson 1996a, 1996b; Groombridge 1983, 1988, 1993; Headley and Evelyn 2000; Helmisaari and Laaksonen 2007; Hodgson 1836; King 2009; C. Lewis 1949; D. Lewis 2009; Martins and Nilsson 2008; Mittermeier 1972; Newman et al. 2016; Oliver 1982; Podloucky 1987; Powell and Henderson 2008; Richardson 2023; Russell 1970; Saldarriaga Gómez 2021; Schneider-Maunoury et al. 2016; The IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre 1988; Tolson and Henderson 1993; 2006; Tzika et al. 2008;



FIGURE 5. Series of four postage stamps featuring *Chilabothrus subflavus* issued in 1984 by Jamaica in association with the World Wildlife Fund. Photos by Brent Newman.

Wilson 2011; World Conservation Monitoring Centre 1993), **geographic distribution** (A Gentleman...1808; Areste and Cebrián 2003; Barbour 1910, 1914, 1922; Beckford 1790; Bennett et al. 2011; Browne 1756, 1789; Crombie 1999; Diesel 1992; Eric 1897; Espeut 1882; Gibson 1996b; Gosse 1851; Greene 1997, 1999; Hodgson 1836; Lazell 1996; Newman et al. 2016; Oliver 1982; Phillippo 1843; Townsend 1893; Vernon 1848), **herpetological philately** (Das 1994; Watermolen 1995), **morphology** (Arrigo et al. 2019; Bellairs 1970; Gulliver 1875; Zacharias 1898), **natural history** (Bain and Hurst 1982; Brown and Shine 2002, 2007; Coles 1853; Cruz and Gruber 1981; Darevskiy and Orlov 1988; Dávalos and Eriksson 2004; Diesel 1992; Ettling 1994; Gibson 1996b; Gosse 1847, 1851, 1875; Henderson and Powell 2009; Henderson et al. 1995; Hopley 1893; Koenig 2001; Koenig and Schwartz 2003; Koenig et al. 2007; Kumar et al. 2021; Lorvelec et al. 2021; Lynn and Grant 1940; Maciel et al. 2003; Marques and Puerto

1998; Miersma 2010; Murphy and Crutchfield 2019; Myhrvold et al. 2015; Newman et al. 2019; 2020; Pizzatto and Marques 2007; Pregrill et al. 1992; Prior and Gibson 1997; Reynolds et al. 2016b, 2023; Rodríguez-Cabrera et al. 2020; Schaefer et al. 2019; Schwartz and Henderson 1991; Sperry et al. 2013; Stanley et al. 2021; Stephenson and Wilson 2023; Tolson and Henderson 1993; 2006; Tzika et al. 2008; Vareschi and Janetzky 1998; Vejvodová 2014; Voss 1996; Wilson 2011; Wilson et al. 2011; Wood 1865, 1871; Wunderle et al. 2004; Zuidema 2002), **parasites and diseases** (Burrige 2011; Chang and Jacobson 2010; Cooper 2000; Dietz et al. 2016; Jacobson 2007; Koch 1844; Lynn and Grant 1940; Olúsolá and Phillips 1996; Schulze 1941; Tagg 1983, 1984; Wilson et al. 2011), **popular accounts** (Anonymous 1996a; Burton 1991, 1996, 1998a, 1998b; Burton and Velenský 1998; Engelmann and Obst 1981, 1982; Grant 1940; Heilprin 1887; Mattison 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2007; O'Shea 2007, 2011, 2018; O'Shea

and Halliday 2002, 2009; Stafford 1986; Trutnau 1986), **reproductive biology** (Bloxam 1977, 1982; Bloxam and Tonge 1981; Cardiff 1996; Carpenter et al. 1978; Darevskiy and Orlov 1988; DeNardo 1991; Ford and Seigel 1989; Frynta et al. 2016; Gosse 1851; Hanlon 1964; Henderson and Powell 2009; Hill et al. 2019; Huff 1976; Lynn and Grant 1940; Madson and Shine 2000; Mattison 2007; Miersma 2010; Rodríguez-Cabrera et al. 2016; Saldarriaga Gómez 2021; Senter 2022; Senter et al. 2014; Smith et al. 2021; Snider and Andrews 2019; Tolson 1992; Tolson and Henderson 1993; Tzika et al. 2009; Vejvodová 2014), and **systematics and taxonomy** (Boundy 2021; Burbrink 2005; Campbell 1997; Duméril and Bibron 1844, 2012; Duméril et al. 1870; Figueroa et al. 2016; Harrington et al. 2018; Jan 1863, 2012; Jan and Sordelli 1864, 1961a, 1961b, 2012; Kluge 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1991; Landestoy et al. 2021; McDiarmid et al. 1999; Noonan and Chippindale 2006; Pyron et al. 2014; Reháček et al. 2022; Reynolds et al. 2013a; Rivera et al. 2011; Rodríguez-Robles et al. 2015; Savage and McDiarmid 2018; Sheplan and Schwartz 1974; Tolson 1987; Wolff and Ronne 1997).

REMARKS. This taxon was recognized as a distinct entity by Sloane (1725:335, pl. 274, as *Serpens major subflavus*) and Browne (1756:461, as *Cenchris*) prior to the adoption of binomial nomenclature.

ETYMOLOGY. *Chilabothrus* derives from the Greek language referring to *cheilos* (lip), *a* (without), and *bothros* (pits), as labial pits are absent in the West Indian boa clade except for the Cuban Boa *Chilabothrus angulifer* (Reynolds et al. 2013a). The name *subflavus* derives from the Latin *sub* meaning “below,” and *flavus* meaning “yellow” in color.

ADDITIONAL VERNACULAR NAMES. Jamaica boa (Çinar 2012), Jamaican yellow boa (Çinar 2012; Koenig and Schwartz 2003),

Nanka (Lynn and Grant 1940; Newman et al. 2020), Yellow-Snake or Yellow Snake (Çinar 2012; Newman et al. 2020; Vareschi and Janetzky 1998), Yellow Jamaica Boa (Bateman 1897, 1902). German: Jamaika-Boa (Dirksen and Auliya 2001; Trutnau 1979), Jamaika-Schlankboa (Vogel 1994), die Gelbboa (=Yellow boa; Friedel 1872); Russian: Черно-желтый гладкогубый удав (= black and yellow smooth-lipped boa; Darevskiy and Orlov 1988); Turkish: Jamaika boası (= Jamaica or Jamaican boa), Jamaika sarı boası (=Jamaican yellow boa), and sarı yılan (Çinar 2012).

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