



Taxonomy of the Cuban blind snakes (Scolecopidia, Typhlopidae), with the description of a new large species

MICHEL DOMÍNGUEZ^{1,2} & LUIS V. MORENO¹

¹División Colecciones Zoológicas y Sistemática, Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática (IES), A.P. 8029, Carretera Varona Km 3½, Capdevila, Boyeros, C. P. 10800, Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba

²Present address: Avenida de Niza 3, 6º A, Alicante, 03540, Spain. E-mail: micdom2002@yahoo.es

Abstract

Typhlops golyathi **sp. nov.** is described from Pinar del Río Province, Western Cuba. It is characterized by its large size, sharp-pointed to rounded snout, broad rostral in dorsal view, broader than long, preocular in contact with second and third supralabials, greater number of middorsal scales than any other West Indian scolecophidian (629), and 26 longitudinal scale rows anteriorly reducing to 22 posteriorly at 42 % total length. It can be placed within the *T. biminiensis* species group and a key to the Cuban species is presented.

Key words: Serpentes, Scolecophidia, *Typhlops biminiensis* species group, Cuba, West Indies

Introduction

The Cuban scolecophidian fauna is poorly studied. For a long time, many *Typhlops* populations throughout Cuba were assigned either to *T. biminiensis* Richmond, 1955 or *T. lumbricalis* (Linnaeus, 1758), which have evident morphological differences between them. Thomas and Hedges (2007) described seven new species from Cuba, previously identified as *T. biminiensis*, and restricted *T. biminiensis* only to the Bahama Islands. However, several new Cuban taxa still remain undescribed because during the examination of Cuban specimens under the names "*T. biminiensis*" and "*T. lumbricalis*" deposited in the herpetological collection of Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática, Cuba, the authors found diverse populations attributable to different species. Some of them correspond to Thomas and Hedges (2007) recently described species from Cuba, but others are probably new species. Therefore, our objective is to carry out an exhaustive study in order to elucidate the taxonomic status of these populations. This paper is the first result of our revisionary work describing one new giant species within the *T. biminiensis* species group. Several new taxa, mainly within the *T. lumbricalis* species group, will be described in future papers (M. Domínguez, R. Díaz, and L.V. Moreno, in prep.).

Material and methods

The specimens were examined under a binocular stereomicroscope MBC–10 and measurements were taken following Thomas (1989), Wallach (1998) and Thomas and Hedges (2007) (exception: abbreviation with an asterisk). Total middorsal scale counts were made in dorsal view from rostral to tail tip. Longitudinal scale rows were counted anteriorly (at neck level, 10 scales posterior to the rostral) and posteriorly (10 scales anterior to the vent). If reductions in the number of longitudinal scale rows were seen, then we located the exact body regions where these phenomena occurred. These regions are visible ventrally, each reduction