

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Reptilia, Serpentes, Colubridae, *Heteroliodon fohy*: Distribution extension

Steven Megson¹
Polly Mitchell¹
Neil D’Cruze²

¹Frontier: The Society for Environmental Exploration,
50-52 Rivington Street, London, EC2A3QP, United Kingdom.

²The World Society for the Protection of Animals,
89 Albert Embankment, London SE17TP, United Kingdom. E-mail: cruzecontrol@gmail.com

Heteroliodon is an aglyphous, terrestrial and poorly known snake genus endemic to Madagascar (Glaw and Vences 2007). *Heteroliodon fohy* can be identified by its dark brown dorsal coloration, whitish venter, yellowish nuchal band and whitish upper lip (Glaw et al. 2005). Its appearance is similar to *Heteroliodon lava* but the two can be readily distinguished as *H. fohy* has much fewer ventral scales (136 versus 214-224) (Nussbaum and Raxworthy 2000). *Heteroliodon fohy* was previously only known from the single type specimen found in the calcareous massif of *Montagne des Français* (Glaw et al. 2005; D’Cruze et al. 2007).

On 25 October 2006 we found an adult specimen (total length 252 mm), in the region of Bobaomby in the extreme north of Madagascar, approximately 20 km north of the town of Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) and approximately 30 km north of the type locality in *Montagne des Français* (Figure 1). Bobaomby is a remote region and subsequently to date no prior information regarding the herpetofauna of this location has been made available. We collected the specimen two hours after nightfall at 20:30 h on a path in secondary forest (12°05'36" S, 049°19'34" E; 28 m). We found it beneath a large hollow tree, approximately 30 m from a river close to the village of Ampombofofo.

The specimen is now housed in the *Zoologische Staatssammlung München* (ZSM 1624/2008) (Figure 2). It is characterized as follows: snout-vent length 192 mm, tail length 60 mm, loreal

scale single, supralabials 7-7, third and fourth in contact with eye; dorsal scales smooth, in 17-17 rows along body; prefrontals 3, ventrals 133; anal plate divided; subcaudal pairs 58, a single spine at tail tip. This data shows that it closely resembles the holotype.

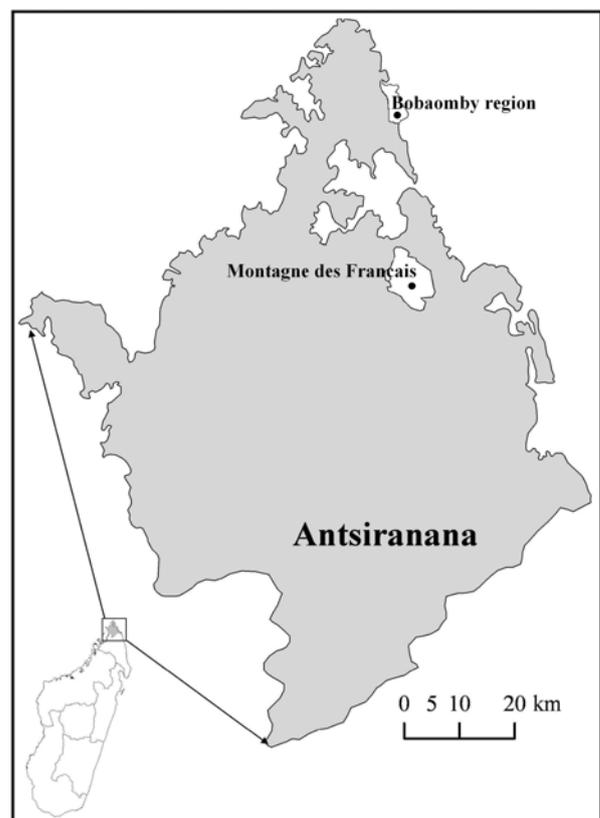


Figure 1. Map of the Antsiranana region, the northern most tip of Madagascar, showing the Bobaomby region and *Montagne des Français*.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

During an intensive survey of the area between October 2006 and December 2007 we recorded two additional individuals of *H. fohy*. On 11 November 2006 at 20:15 h we discovered a second adult (total length 267 mm) at the same location as the specimen described above. On the 12 April 2007 we observed another adult individual (total length 290 mm) on a path amongst trees belonging to the genus *Mangifera* at 20:50 h (12°05'44" S, 049°19'37"E; 26 m), located approximately 8 m from a river. We measured these two individuals but released them afterwards.

These records represent only the second known locality for this species and may indicate the

northern limit for its distributional range. Importantly, with regards to habitat preferences, we can also confirm that this species is not restricted to the karst limestone formations present within *Montagne des Français*. The discovery of this species in Ampombofofo may also be viewed as positive evidence towards the hypothesis that the Bobaomby region was once connected to *Montagne des Français* and may have been included in the larger bioregion that has been suggested to have covered key sites such as Analamera, Ankarana, Daraina, Orangea, *Montagne d'Ambre* and *Montagne des Français* prior to anthropogenic invasion (Ramanamanjato et al 1999; D'Cruze et al. 2006).



Figure 2. *Heteroliodon fohy* discovered at Ampombofofo in the Bobaomby region of north Madagascar (ZSM 1624/2008).

Acknowledgements

We thank Charles Marsh, Sally Eaton, Amanda Martin, the village of Ampombofofo and all Frontier staff and volunteers who were part of the research team from October 2006 to December 2007.

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Literature Cited

- D'Cruze, N. C., K. E. Green, J. E. Robinson, and C. J. Gardner. 2006. A rapid assessment of the amphibians and reptiles of an unprotected area of dry deciduous forest in north Madagascar. *The Herpetological Bulletin* 96: 17-25.
- D'Cruze, N., J. Sabel, K. Green, J. Dawson, C. Gardner, J. Robinson, G. Starkie, M. Vences, and F. Glaw. 2007. The first comprehensive survey of amphibians and reptiles at Montagne des Français, Madagascar. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 2: 87-99.
- Glaw, F., M. Vences, and R. A. Nussbaum. 2005. A new species of *Heteroliodon* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae) from Montagne des Français far northern Madagascar. *Herpetologica* 61: 275-280.
- Glaw, F. and M. Vences. 2007. A field guide to the amphibians and reptiles of Madagascar, Third edition. Cologne: Vences and Glaw Verlag. 496 p.
- Nussbaum, R. A. and C. J. Raxworthy. 2000. Revision of the Madagascan snake genus *Heteroliodon* Boettger (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae). *Herpetologica* 56(4): 489-499.
- Ramanamanjato, J. B., R. A. Nussbaum, and C. J. Raxworthy. 1999. A new species of *Mabuya* Fitzinger (Squamata: Scincidae: Lygosominae) from northern Madagascar. *Occasional Papers Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan* 728: 1-22.

Received October 2008

Accepted September 2009

Published online September 2009