

THE SNAKES OF SURINAM, PART IX: SUBFAMILY XENODONTINAE (GENERA HYDROPS, IMANTODES AND LEIMADOPHIS).

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THE GENUS *HYDROPS* WAGLER, 1830

This genus includes two species, with two and six subspecies respectively. In Surinam two subspecies occur.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head gradually merges into the body, the eyes are small with round pupils. A remarkable feature of this genus is the presence of only one internasal scale.

Body: The body is cylindrical with smooth scales. They are small snakes resembling coral snakes (the genus *Micrurus*) in colour and markings.

Behaviour: These snakes are subterrestrial, aquatic and usually nocturnal.

Food: Food consists of worms, worm snakes, worm salamanders, elvers, fish and frogs.

Habitat: They live mainly in swampy areas, rice fields and bushy areas near streams and rivers.

Breeding: They probably lay eggs (oviparous).

Hydrops triangularis fasciatus (Gray, 1849).

Dutch name: Witgeringde hoekbandige waterslang

English name: Red-sided Water snake, Red-and-black banded false Coral snake.

Surinam name: Watra krara sneki.

Maximum length: Approx. 80 cm.



Fig. 1. *Hydrops triangularis fasciatus*. Foto: M.S. Hoogmoed.

Scalation: 1 internasal; dorsals in 15 rows (smooth); 150-176 ventrals; 42- 63 subcaudals; anal scale divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; loreal absent; 7 sometimes 8 supralabials; 7 or 8 sublabials; 1+1 temporals.

Colouration: The back of the snake is red-brown to yellow-brown with black cross bands. Over the rear of the head (parietals) runs a narrow white cross bar. The first black band (round the neck) is the broadest. With the other black bands being narrower and not always forming a complete ring being broken at the middle of the back or on the middle of the belly. Some bands touch each other at an angle, while on the belly the black bands are wider and form a contrasting pattern on the white belly.

Remarks: This species is slow moving and not aggressive.

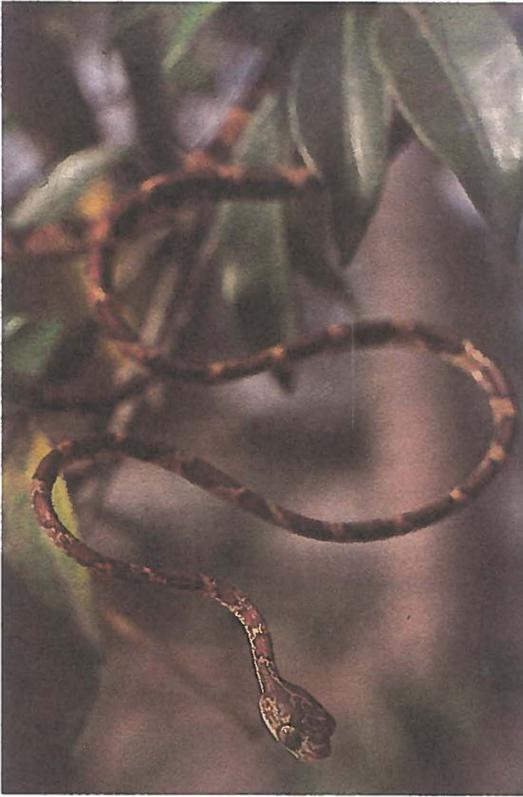
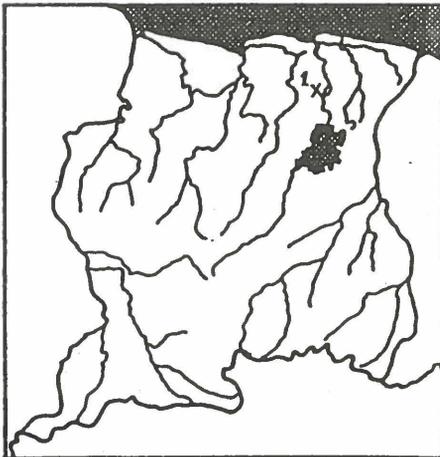


Fig. 2. *Imantodes cenchoa cenchoa*. Foto: A. Abuys.



Distribution: It can be found along the Essequibo river in British Guyana and in Surinam. Locality records in Surinam: 1. Bush camp at Zanderij.

Hydrops triangularis neglectus Roze, 1957.

Dutch name: Gewone hoekbandige waterslang.

Maximum length: Approx. 80 cm.

Scalation: 1 internasal; dorsals in 15 rows (short smooth scales); 159-168 ventrals; 47-51 subcaudals; anal scale divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; loreal absent; 8 supralabials; 1+1 (sometimes 1+2) temporals.

Colouration: The back is coloured purple-brown, the sides red and the belly white. On the entire body are cross bands, which may widen at the middle of the back and on the belly. The edges of these black bands are more irregular and on the belly they do not widen.

Remarks: Like *Hydrops triangularis fasciatus* this snake is not aggressive and moves slowly. In captivity this snake is difficult to keep alive. I had the same experience with a *Hydrops triangularis fasciatus*.

Distribution: Trinidad, British Guyana and Surinam.

Locality records in Surinam: None, I did not come across this snake in Surinam.

THE GENUS *IMANTODES* DUMÉRIL, 1853.

This genus includes five species, of which two occur in Surinam.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head is small and flat with big eyes with elliptical pupils. The thin neck forms a very clear separation between the head and the body.

Body: The long and slender body has enlarged vertebral scales. The dorsal scales are flattened sideways.

Tail: The tail is the typical prehensile tail of a tree snake: long and thin.

Behaviour: They are arboreal snakes which hunt by

night.

Food: Feeds on treefrogs, lizards, the young and eggs of birds, insects, snails and grubs.

Habitat: these snakes live in thick forests or orchards where they can be found on leaves, in bromelias or behind loose bark of trees.

Breeding: They lay eggs and the young are approx. 18 cm in length.

Specific details: The rear teeth in the upper jaw are strongly enlarged and partially grooved on the front side of the tooth. These teeth (one at each side) are separated from the rest of the teeth by an interspace.

The snakes of this genus are able to reach comparatively long distances from one branch to the other. This is made possible by the fact they can flatten their bodies sideways so that the enlarged vertebral scales and the belly scales stick out giving the body a I-shape. As a result the body gets extra support, and can be held rigid for a remarkable distance.

Imantodes cenchoa cenchoa (Linnaeus, 1758).

Dutch name: Riemboomslang or Stompkoppige boomslang.

English name: Fiddle-string Mapepire, Thread Snake
Chunkheaded Snake.

Surinam name: Swipi.

Maximum length: Approx. 1.50 m.

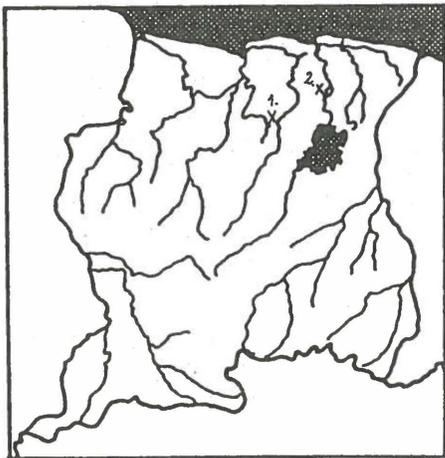
Scalation: Dorsals in 17 rows and smooth; 252-279 ventrals; 160-198 subcaudals; anal scale divided; 2 preoculars; 2 postoculars; loreal present (slender); 8 supralabials; 10 or 11 sublabials; 2+2 temporals.

Colouration: Colour is yellow-brown to light brown with brown to dark brown spots. The spots on the front part of the body are oval shaped and don't touch the ventrals. The spots on the

middle and posterior part of the body are more saddle shaped, pointed on the sides and in contact with the ventrals. On the head is a faint Y-shaped marking. The belly is light grey brown with small irregular dark brown to black spots. Remarks: This species is not aggressive, but will defend itself on being captured by producing the familiar stinking secreta.

Distribution: Panama, the north of South America south to Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentine, and also on Trinidad.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Lok-si Hatti; 2. Bush camp at Zanderij.



Imantodes lentiferus (Cope, 1894).

Dutch name: Ovaalvormig-gevlekte Riemboomslang.

Surinam name: Swipi.

Maximum length: Approx. 1.40 m.

Scalation: Dorsals in 15 rows and smooth; 223-238 ventrals; 143-156 subcaudals (in pairs); a single anal scale; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; loreal tall and slender; 8 supralabials (the 3rd, 4th and 5th are touching the eye); 10 or 11 sublabials; 1+2 temporals.

Colouration: Colour is yellow to beige with dark grey brown oval spots not in contact with the ventrals. The head is beige with brown spots (no Y-markings present). The belly and the under-



Fig. 3. *Leimadophis reginae reginae*. Foto: W. Eriks.



Fig. 4. *Leimadophis typhlus typhlus*. Foto: A. Abuys.

side of the tail have irregular stripes.

Remarks: In general this snake looks a lot like *Imantodes cenchoa cenchoa*. A close observation shows us that the spot pattern differs: the oval spots don't touch the ventrals. Also the body and the head are comparatively bigger. More distinctive is the anal scale, which is single. Finally the lack of a Y-marking on the head gives a clear indication of difference.

Distribution: Brazilian Amazon, Colombian Amazon, Ecuador, Peru, Surinam and French-Guyana.

Locality records in Surinam: I didn't come across this snake in Surinam.

THE GENUS *LEIMADOPHIS* FITZINGER, 1843.

This genus includes a total of approximately 40 species, of which 20 occur on the mainland of South America. In Surinam two species occur.

General data of the genus:

Head: The head has large eyes with round pupils. The head merges gradually into the neck.

Body: They are small, massive snakes

Behaviour: They are terrestrial, (sometimes aquatic) and diurnal. They lie in wait for prey, their neck extending. Large prey is constricted.

Food: Frogs, lizards, fish, reptile eggs, small birds, small mammals and insects (for example ants)

Habitat: These snakes live in high forests and savannah forests, but always in the neighbourhood of a river or a stream. A number of species have special liking for open area with bushes or grass, or the neighbourhood of swamps. Also agricultural areas with ditches or canals are presumed to be their hunting area.

Breeding: They are oviparous laying their eggs in a pile where they stick to each other.

Specific details: This genus is not aggressive.

When caught it may bite. When this snake feels threatened it raises its head and spreads the anterior part of its body like a cobra does.

Terrarium care: Strathemann (1983) describes in an article in "Herpetofauna" the care of *Leimadophis sagittifer* and *Leimadophis viridis*. A description of this article can be found in the column "Literature" of "Litteratura Serpentium" (1983), Vol. 3, No. 6.

Leimadophis reginae reginae (Linnaeus, 1758).

Dutch name: Gele netslang

English name: Reticulated snake.

Maximum length: Approx. 90 cm.

Scalation: Dorsals in 15 or 17 rows and smooth, 136-154 ventrals; 55-79 subcaudals; anal scale divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; loreal present; 8 supralabials (the 4th and 5th entering the orbit); 10 sublabials; 1+2 temporals.

Colouration: With this species many colour and pattern varieties occur. In the surroundings of Nickerie and Wageningen I found samples with the following colour pattern:

The head is brown with small yellow spots and oblong yellow spots behind the eyes. A black stripe runs from the nose under the eye to the back side of the upper jaw. The whole body has yellow to ocre-yellow scales with black spots, creating a diamond shaped pattern. The belly is bright yellow. At Mammadam I obtained a specimen with the following colour pattern: the head had dark brown head scales and a light brown nose end. Behind the eyes again the oblong spots, but now moss-green coloured. Also present was the black stripe underneath the eye creating a sharp separation between the light yellow from the supra and sublabials. A vague moss-green spot at the side of the neck gradual-

ly merged into the purple brown colour of the upper body. The side of the body had little black spots. The belly was yellow with black spots in pairs. The tail had on each side a black stripe.

At Republik (in the Para-creek) a juvenile was found while swimming, it had the following colour pattern: The head grey-black coloured. Around the neck a slender irregular white ring. The upper body was grey brown with black spots. The belly was whitish with many thin cross-bands which were irregular and divided.

Remarks: This species is found in more open areas close to water.

Distribution: The north of South America east of the Andes.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Nickerie; 2. Wageningen; 3. Para-creek near Republik.



Leimadophis typhlus typhlus (Linnaeus, 1758).

Dutch name: Groene bosslang

English name: Pink Ground snake.

Maximum length: Approx. 80 cm.

Scalation: Dorsals in 19 rows and smooth;

131-158 ventrals; 47-60 subcaudals; anal scale

divided; 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; loreal

present; 8 supralabials (the 4th and 5th enter-

ing the orbit); 10 sublabials; 1+2 temporals.
Colouration: The head is coloured moss-green with a bluish hue. The upper body is coloured moss-green, with faint oblique, thin black stripes on the sides. While spreading out its body (when swallowing prey or as act of defence) pink coloured skin between the scales is visible. The belly is coloured yellow to pink red with (sometimes) a little red spot on the edge of every scale. A clear black stripe may be present on the side of the tail.

Habitat: This species is found on bush grounds, savannah forest and higher situated forests.

Distribution: South America, east of the Andes and north of latitude 35° South.

Locality records in Surinam: 1. Surroundings of Paramaribo; 2. Bush camp at Zanderij; 3. the Brownsberg.



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