

3. Descriptions of the Amphisbænians and Ophidians collected by Prof. I. Bayley Balfour in the Island of Socotra. By Dr. A. GÜNTHER, F.Z.S.

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(Plates XL., XLI.)

The Reptiles described in the present paper are of considerable interest. We might have expected, from the geographical position of Socotra, that the species would show a close affinity to, if not identity with, those of the nearest portion of the mainland of Africa; but in fact this affinity is overbalanced by that to the Arabian fauna, at least as far as the few species enumerated here are concerned. The most singular fact is that three out of the four species seem to be peculiar to the island, two being so much differentiated as to deserve generic distinction.

1. The Amphisbæna belongs to a distinct genus, the nearest allies of which inhabit Eastern and Western Tropical Africa.

2. The Coronelline Snake, *Ditypophis*, belongs to a distinct genus, apparently approaching the circum-Mediterranean *Tachymenis vivax*.

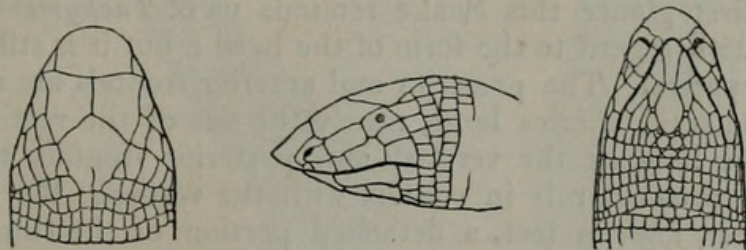
3. The Socotran species of the circum-Mediterranean or Central-Asiatic genus *Zamenis* is most nearly allied to the Arabian *Z. elegantissimus*.

4. Finally, the Viper of Socotra is identical with a species hitherto found in Arabia and on the shores of the Dead Sea.

A. AMPHISBÆNIDÆ.

PACHYCALAMUS, g. n.

Allied to *Baikia* and *Geocalamus*¹. Head very short, with de-



Head-shields of *Pachycalamus brevis*.

pressed snout. Rostral large, with cutting anterior edge. Two large frontals form a suture together behind the rostral, and are succeeded by a single very large shield, which represents the vertical and occipitals. Nasal small, above the first and second labials, com-

¹ Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. ser. 5, vol. vi. p. 234 (1880).

posed of two scutes ; nostril inferior ; præocular above the third and fourth labials ; a small ocular, with the eye very indistinct ; an infraocular between the ocular and fifth labial. Five upper labials. Temporals small, in two transverse series. Mentale much longer than broad ; three lower labials ; gulars small. No enlarged sternal scutes. Præanal scutes very narrow, elongate, in four pairs. Two pairs of præanal pores. Lateral line none. Extremity of the tail depressed.

PACHYCALAMUS BREVIS, sp. n.

One verticillus consists of 48 scutes. Upper parts slate-coloured, lower white.

This must be a common species, as many specimens were collected. One of the largest is $7\frac{1}{3}$ inches long, the tail being $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Probably the species remains within these dimensions.

B. OPHIDIA.

1. *TYPHLOPS*, sp.

This specimen is young, and too small for identification.

DITYOPHIS (g. n. Coronellid.).

Body stout, rounded, covered with smooth scales. Head depressed, not very distinct from neck. Eye rather small, with vertical pupil. One loreal ; two anterior and two posterior oculars ; nasal undivided above, but divided below the nostril. Subcaudals undivided. Posterior maxillary tooth longest, grooved.

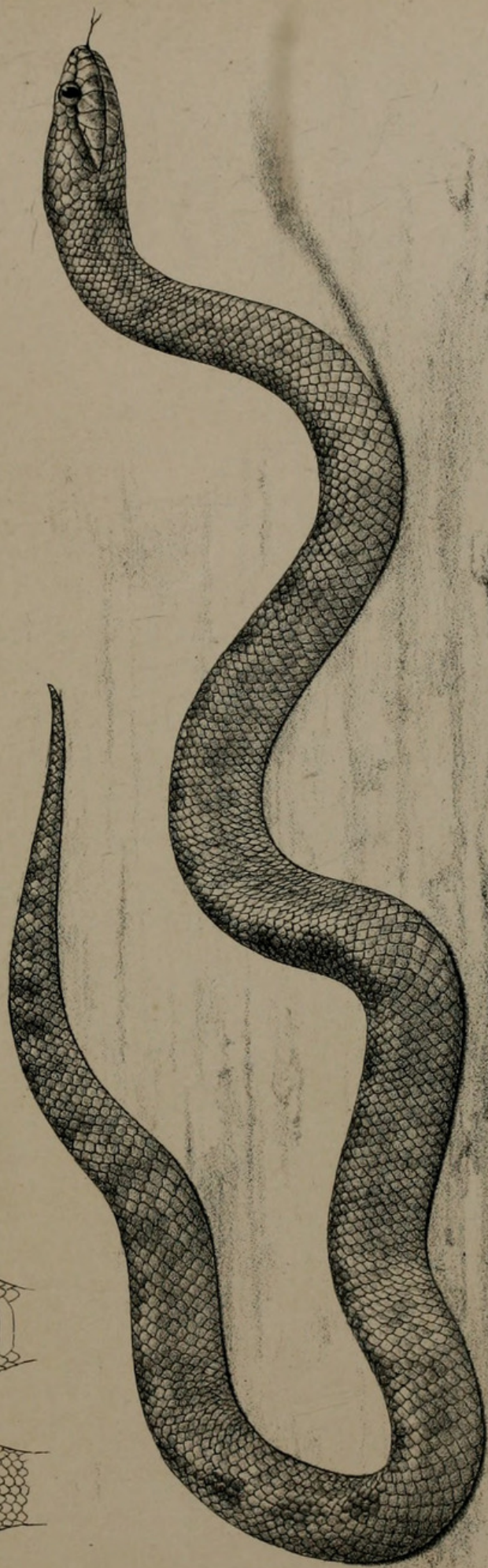
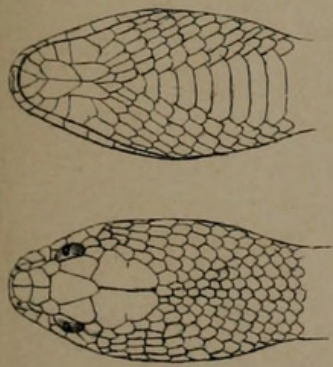
This Coronelline Snake is evidently allied to *Tachymenis*, but has several characters in common with *Dipsadoboa*. From the former it is distinguished by its entire subcaudal shields, from the latter by its much stouter habit.

2. *DITYOPHIS VIVAX*, sp. n. (Plate XL.)

At the first glance this Snake reminds us of *Tachymenis vivax*, especially with regard to the form of the head ; but it is still stouter than that species. The posterior and anterior frontals are subequal in size ; the superciliaries large, nearly the size of the vertical ; the occipitals as long as the vertical and posterior frontals together. The upper præocular is in contact with the vertical ; the lower is much smaller, and, in fact, a detached portion of the third upper labial. Temporals scale-like, 2+3 or 4. Eight upper labials, the fourth and fifth entering the orbit. Four lower labials in contact with the anterior chin-shields.

Scales in 21 series, those of the median series not differing in size from the others. Ventral shields 150 ; anal entire ; subcaudals 39.

The coloration is reddish sandy, with indistinct darker cloudy spots on the back ; lower parts whitish. In a dry sandy locality the colour of this Snake must so much assimilate to that of its surroundings as to render the animal nearly invisible.



R. Mintern del et lith.

DITYOPHIS VIVAX.

Mintern Bros, imp.



A single specimen, 14 inches long, is in the collection; the tail measures 2 inches.

3. *ZAMENIS SOCOTRÆ*, sp. n. (Plate XLI.)

Habit slender; head narrow; eye of moderate size. Rostral shield convex, just reaching the upper surface of the head. The scutes of the upper surface of the head are not subdivided; anterior frontals much smaller than the posterior; vertical large, broad in front, with the lateral margins slightly concave; occipitals truncated behind; a triangular enlarged scale fits into the notch between their ends. Loreal elongate. Ten upper labials, of which the fourth and sixth are transversely divided, so that three præ- and three post-oculars may be distinguished; the fifth upper labial is undivided, and enters the orbit. The posterior chin-shields are extremely narrow, much narrower than the anterior, and are separated by several smaller narrow scutes. Temporals scale-like, 3+3+3. Scales smooth, in 23 rows. Ventrals 225; anal bifid; subcaudals 117. Abdomen with a very obscure ridge on each side.

The head is nearly uniform olive above; there is no spot below the eye, or temple-streak. The ground-colour of the anterior half of the body is pink, with olive cross bands edged with black and about as broad as the interspaces. Towards the middle of the body the pink interspaces become indistinct and mottled with short black lines; and the tail is nearly uniform olive. Lower parts uniform reddish white.

In a variety the black edges to the cross bands are absent, and the pink interspaces are, from the fore part of the trunk, mottled with olive.

Of this fine and very distinct species of *Zamenis* there are three specimens in the collection. The largest measures $32\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the tail taking $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

4. *ECHIS COLORATA*.

This species was characterized by me in the Society's 'Proceedings' 1878, p. 978, from a specimen obtained in Midian. It occurs also on the shores of the Dead Sea, two specimens obtained by Mr. Tristram, and formerly referred by me to *E. carinata*, belonging to it. One rather young example is in the Socotran collection, and of a more uniform coloration than the type. The characteristic of this species consists principally in the much smaller scales and scutes. It may be at once recognized by its very small nasals, which are separated by very small scutes from the rostral; whilst in *E. carinata* the large nasals form a suture with the rostral.



Günther, Albert C. L. G. 1881. "Descriptions of the amphisbaenians and ophidians collected by Prof. J.B. Balfour in the Island of Socotra." *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 1881, 461–463.

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