



Notes on specimens of the Glossy Mangrove Snake (*Gerarda prevostiana*) in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata along with past records from India

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Abstract

Based on six specimens of the Glossy Mangrove Snake (*Gerarda prevostiana*) present in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata the species is redescribed with scalation and morphometric measurements and compared with data of six other specimens lodged in other museums.

Keywords: Infra-labial, Loreals, Post-ocular, Pre-ocular, Sub-caudals, Supra-labial

Gerarda prevostiana was described as *Coluber (Homalopsis) prevostianus* Eydoux and Gervais (1837) based on a specimen (currently untraced) from “Manile” (=Manila, 14°37’N, 120°58’E, Luzon, Phillipines). The species is secretive and is known from isolated localities (mainly mangrove swamps of estuaries and tidal rivers) along both the coasts of India (Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal and Andamans), coastal Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra and also the Phillipines (Tweedie, 1983; Murphy, 2007).

Its dietary habits, unique amongst snakes, include tearing out bite-sized pieces of recently molted soft-shelled crabs (Murphy, 2007). Small fishes and shrimps are also eaten (Das, 2002). They appear to co-occupy mounds of mud lobsters, *Thalssinia anomala* and *T. Gracilis* (Murphy, 2007) that also form part of their diet. However, there are few published records from India. One reason for the absence of records and the apparent rarity of this species within its overall distribution range may be due to its difficult to sample mangrove habitats (Das *et al.*, 2013).

We examined all the specimens of this species present in the collection of the Reptilia Section at Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata and based on that provide here a description of the species along with its morphological details and also mention about past records from India.

Description based on specimens in ZSI, Kolkata (Registration Numbers: 13659, 22653, 23179, 24212, 25351 and 26145).

Description

Body is cylindrical with smooth scales. Head is slightly distinct from neck. Eyes are small situated high on the head with vertical pupil. Frontal scale much broader than supra-oculars. Loreal scale not in contact with the inter-nasal; a single inter-nasal separates the nasals. Seven supra-labials present, the eighth when present is very small, the fourth supra-labial touches the eye. Eight infra-labials present, the ninth when present is very small, the fourth infra-labial contacts the first chin shield, which is much larger than the posterior chin shield. Anal divided. Tail short and terminating in a sharp tip.

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PLATE 1



Figure 1. *Gerarda prevostiana*.

Scalation

The scalation of the ZSI specimens are given below in left/right order as follows:

Registration Number	ZSI 13659	ZSI 22653	ZSI 23179	ZSI 24212	ZSI 25351	ZSI 26145
Locality	Howrah near Kolkata	Digha beach, East Midnapur district, West Bengal	Uppetera, Salt Canal, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh	Kakdwip, South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal	Cheepoo, North Andaman	Bichitrapur mangroves, Balasore district, Odisha
Date of Collection		04.ix.1964	22.xi.1964	07.xi.1980	29.vi.2011	24.ix.2014
Name of Collector	Murray	A.K. Dutta	N.V. Subba Rao	N.C. Banerjee	Sameer Ghodke	Kaushik Deuti
Number of mid-body scales	17	17	17	17	17	17
Number of ventral scales	152	151	157	150	150	148
Number of sub-caudal scales	35	34	34	31	32	33
Loreals	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Pre-oculars	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Post-oculars	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2
Anterior loreals	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Posterior loreals	2/2	2/2	3/3	2/2	2/2	2/2
Supra-labials	8/8	8/8	7/8	8/8	7/7	8/8
Infra-labials	9/9	9/9	8/8	9/9	8/8	9/9

Colour

Dorsum unpatterned brown in four of our specimens preserved in alcohol, only specimen numbers ZSI 24212 and ZSI 26145 are with grey dorsum. Ventrums creamish.

Measurements

Measurements of specimens in Zoological Survey of India are given below (all measurements in millimetres):

Registration Number	ZSI 13659	ZSI 22653	ZSI 23179	ZSI 24212	ZSI 25351	ZSI 26145
Snout-vent length	445	466	467	332	380	365
Tail length	66	66	84	54	54	64
Head length	10.31	11.98	12.04	9.40	9.33	9.81
Head width	8.54	10.92	12.02	8.03	8.65	8.99
Snout length	4.31	6.38	6.20	4.67	4.78	5.32
Eye-nostril length	2.55	3.58	3.53	2.65	2.52	2.73
Nostril-snout tip length	1.62	2.84	2.39	1.40	1.98	1.97
Eye diameter	1.99	2.48	2.56	1.84	1.53	2.05
Inter-narial length	2.06	2.76	3.13	2.13	2.31	2.08
Inter-orbital length	4.63	6.35	6.10	4.77	5.02	5.20

Details of specimens with past records from India (all measurements in millimetres):

Registration Number						
Locality	Bandaora, Bombay coast, Maharashtra	Cannanore (now Kannur), Kerala	Backbay, Bombay, Maharashtra	Versova, Salsette, Maharashtra	Chaupati Sands, Bombay	Sion, Bombay
Date of Collection		08.xi.1903	1923	1923	1923	1923
Name of Collector	H.M. Phipson	Ferdinand Wall	J. Mann		J.P. Mullan	J.P. Mullan
Lodged in Museum	British Museum, London		Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai			
Reference	Boulenger (1896)	Wall (1905)	Prater (1924)			
Number of mid-body scales	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of ventral scales	154	151	146-158			
Number of sub-caudal scales	33	31	31-34			
Snout-vent length		498				
Tail length		63.5				

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