

**ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *TRIMERESURUS MONTICOLA*  
IN SUMATRA**

**Confirmation of a century doubtful snake record**

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**Abstract:** This report confirms the occurrence of *Trimeresurus monticola* in Sumatra, as has been reported by Boulenger in 1896, doubted by most herpetologist.

The occurrence of *Trimeresurus monticola* in Sumatra was based on the account of Boulenger (1896, 1912). Most leading herpetologist after him who worked with Southeast Asian snakes like de Rooij (1917), Kraus & Werner (1931), Smith (1931) Bourret (1936) and de Haas (1950) consider this record as one of the most doubtful record of snake in Sumatra as no definitive specimen in the major European museums is known. No specimens have been recorded among the collections of E. Jacobson and de Bussy who worked for a long time at Sumatra before the second worldwar. For this reason, I have inquired sumatran specimens at the BMNH collection in 1976. Mr. A. F. Stimson kindly informed me that no sumatran *T. monticola* specimens are present in their collection. It is quite possible that the record of Boulenger was based on a specimen seen by him in another museum. At this point we believed that this species is not present at all in this island.

When passing over the snake collection at Museum Zoologicum Bogoriense, an unidentified *Trimeresurus* specimen came to our attention. This specimen (MZB

Oph. 878), collected in June 1941 by a native collector, was simply identified as *Trimeresurus* sp. (by M. A. Liefinck, judging from the handwriting on the label). This specimen is in a perfect state of preservation, and even its colour has not faded at all. Apparently de Jong and Kopstein who worked at this institution were already deceased before having the opportunity to examine this specimen. On the other hand, we were almost sure that de Haas must have overlooked this specimen.

There is no doubt that this specimen really comes from Sumatra, for the catalog entry and the label accompanying with this specimen clearly indicate that it was collected from Pakantan, Mandailing, North Sumatra. Pakantan is not easily found in any map, because this village is now completely abandoned. According to the people who comes from Mandailing, this region is in the Bukit Barisan Mts. on the border between North and West Sumatra, near Padangsidempuan, at more than 1000 m alt. The surrounding is a tropical rainforest. People from North Sumatra called it Pekantan. Slight differences in

spelling the name of the locality is simply a matter of Minang language usage, so it is possible that the collector does not come from Mandailing, but from West Sumatra.

This specimen is a female, has 27-23-17 scales around the body, 130 ventrals and 17 subcaudals. Supranasals widely in contact above the rostral, three scales on a line between supraoculars, three preoculars, two series of suboculars. Eight supralabials, first completely separated from nasal, second bordering anterior border of the loreal pit, third largest. Eleven infralabials, first three in contact with anterior chinshields, posterior chinshields very small, slightly larger than gulars. Three gulars and three incomplete ventrals. Total length 635 mm., tail 36 mm. Ratio of tail to total length 0.0567.

Colour dark brown with indistinct darker blotches scattered on the dorsum, smaller ones on the sides. Ventral cream, powdered with tiny brown pigments, and a series of dark brown spots along the edges of the ventral scutes (Fig. 1).

*Trimeresurus monticola* has 21-25 scales



Fig. 1. Dorsal aspect of *Trimeresurus monticola* from North-Sumatra.

around the body, 129-158 ventrals and 21-57 subcaudals. Many subspecies of *T. monticola* are known. Leviton (1968) recognize *T. m. monticola* from Nepal, Burma and South China (Yunnan & Szechwan), *T. m. meridionalis* from Indo-china and Malayan Peninsula, *T. m. orientalis* from China (Chekiang & Fukien), and *T. m. makazayazaya* from Formosa island. Recently another subspecies, *T. m. zayuensis* was described from Xixiang region (Djao & Jiang, 1977). Besides there are other close related species in Southeast and eastern Asia, as *Trimeresurus chaseni* (with 19 body scales, 130-143 ventrals and 19-31 subcaudals), *T. tonkinensis* (with 27 body scales, 133 ventrals and partly divided subcaudals) and *T. okinavensis* (with 23-21 body scales, 126-135 ventrals and 41-55 subcaudals). These are good examples from the *monticola* species group in Southeast Asia (Brattstrom, 1964; Koba, 1973), are quite similar in many aspects such as body scales and colouration and might be derived from it.

Judging from the description and colouration of our specimen, we came to a conclusion that our specimen is most closely related or even matches with *T. monticola meridionalis*, however several characters are slightly outside the range of this form. The most distinctive character of this specimen is of its low ventral scale number, the short tail and of its dark colour.

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#### 要約

スマトラで発見された *Trimeresurus monticola* について

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スマトラにおける *T. monticola* の存在は Boulenger の報告にもとづいているが、その後いろいろな研究者の採集ではスマトラに *T. monticola* の生息は確認されなかった。ところがある博物館に保存されていた未確定の *Trimeresurus* sp. に注目して採集地をしらべたところ北スマトラのベカンタンであることがわかった。この標本は雌のヘビで計測の結果、この標本は *T. monticola meridionalis* に最も近いことを確認した。

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