

REDERSCRIPTION OF AND LECTOTYPE DESIGNATION FOR
CALAMARIS FUSCA BLYTH, 1854
[SERPENTES : COLUBRIDAE]

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ABSTRACT

The lectotype designation for *Calamaria fusca* Blyth, 1854 has been redescribed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

During the course of our studies on the snakes of the family Colubridae, we came across a series of eleven well-preserved specimens of *Calamaria fusca* Blyth. It seems that this species has not been well described nor adequately illustrated. The species has, therefore, been redescribed here. Since some confusion exists in respect of the primary type designation by Blyth, this opportunity was also taken to designate a lectotype for this species.

LECTOTYPE DESIGNATION

Blyth (1854) described *Calamaria fusca* from Darjeeling based on a series of eleven examples (198 to 365 mm in standard length). Later Günther (1860) after a critical examination of these specimens synonymised the species with *Trachischium fuscum* (Blyth). Boulenger (1890, 1893) agreed with Günther. Annandale (1904) while preparing a list of the ophidian collections accumulated after 1891 in the Indian Museum also confirmed these snakes as *Trachischium*

fuscum. Wall (1909) redescribed it from a series of collections he made from Darjeeling, Kurseong and Pashok. He further observed "In the vicinity of Darjeeling this is by far the commonest species to be met with between about 5000 ft. and 7500 ft." Shaw *et al* (1939) also included this species in their comprehensive list of snakes of Northern Bengal and Sikkim.

Smith (1943) who examined the entire collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta called attention to the fact that the type of *Calamaria fusca* [later synonymised with *Trachischium fuscum* (Blyth)] were lost. During the course of our examination we found that the types which Smith reported as lost, are presently lodged in the collections of the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.

All the eleven original specimens from Darjeeling on which Blyth based his description were catalogued in volume I of the Register of presentations to Indian Museum on August 12, 1860 with the registration numbers 7043 to

7053 (15c ASB). Among the syntypes nine are adult and two are juvenile specimens. All the eleven specimens are fairly in a good state of preservation. The head and tail of the specimen bearing the registration number 7052, is partly damaged.

Blyth's description is unfortunately rather generalised and too inadequate. From the published data none of the eleven specimens can be determined as the typical one. Therefore, of the eleven specimens, the one which is 305 mm in standard length and of an iridescent dull-black colour throughout and the ventrals being slightly margined paler and other characters are clearly discernible and not at all damaged, is hereby designated as the lectotype, whereas the remaining ten specimens are designated as para-lectotypes. The species is redescribed hereunder. The description is based on all the eleven specimens, unless otherwise stated.

Trachischium fuscum (Blyth)
(pl. II. A,C)

Calamaria fusca Blyth, *Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal*, 23 (1) : 288, 1854 (type locality ; Darjeeling).

Trachischium fuscum, Günther, *Proc. zool. Soc.*, 1860, p. 161 (name only).

Specimens studied.—Lectotype, one example, 305 mm in standard length, tail 49 mm ; loc : Darjeeling, (Darjeeling District, West Bengal, India) ; *Coll Capt. W. S. Sherwill* ; ZSI Regd. No. 7044.

Para-Lectotypes, ten examples, 198 to 365 mm in standard lengths, tail 36 mm to 57 mm ; loc : same data as above ; ZSI Regd Nos. 7043, and 7045 to 7053.

Description.—Maxillary teeth 18-20, sub-equal. Head not distinct from neck ; eye moderate, with rounded or vertically sub-elliptic pupil ; nostril between two nasals, directed forwards and outwards ; body cylindrical ; scales smooth, keeled in sacral region, without apical pits ; ventrals rounded ; tail short, subcaudals paired. Rostrals as broad as high or a little broader than high ; internasals much shorter than the prefrontals ; frontal twice or nearly twice as broad as the supraoculars, much shorter than parietals ; loreal twice as long as high ; a single prefrontal ; one postocular ; one long anterior temporal followed by two very short posterior temporals ; 6 supralabials ; 1st smallest, 6th largest, 3rd and 4th touching eye ; 4 infralabials in contact with anterior genials ; anterior genials twice or nearly twice as long as the posteriors. Scales in 13 rows, those on the sides of the posterior part of body and base of tail distinctly keeled in males, feebly or smooth in females. Ventrals 155-157 ; caudals 30-34 ; and anal undivided.

Colour.—After preservation for about 125 years in alcohol the specimens are still in fairly a good State. The adults are more or less iridescent dark brown or dull blackish above and slightly margined paler below, and with or without indistinct light longitudinal streak above ; the young are light brown, obscurely striated above with dark longitudinal rows of pale dots.

Distribution.—In India the species restricts its distribution to Loharganj, Garwhal district, Darjeeling and Assam. Elsewhere it is confined to Gilgit in Pakistan.

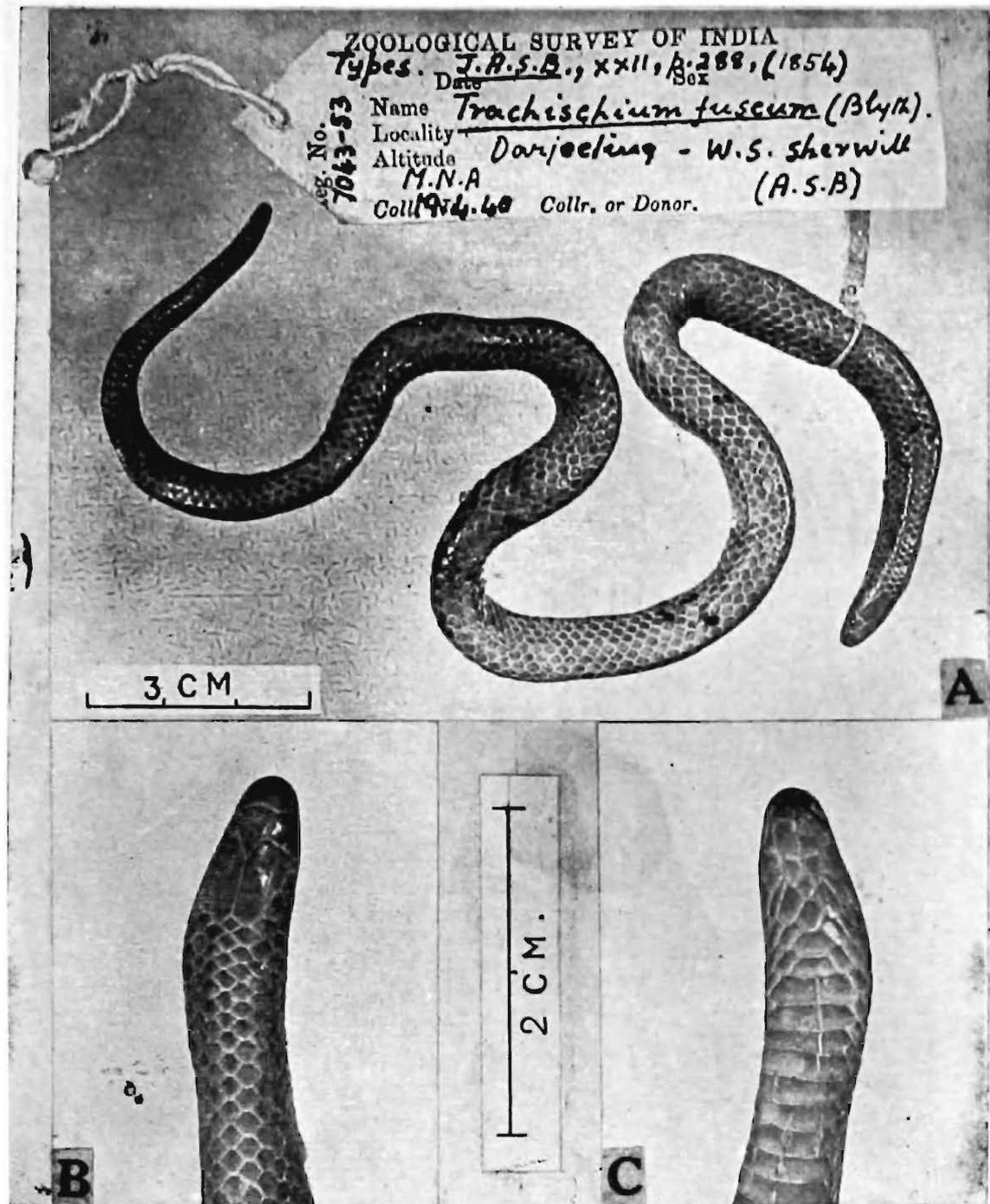
Wall (*loc. cit.*) attributed this species to be very common in the neighbourhood of Darjeeling at altitudes between 1604 m to 2246 m.

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A. Showing the lactotype of *Trachischium fuscum* (Blyth)
B. Dorsal aspect of the head of the lactotype.
C. Ventral aspect of the head of the lactotype.