

MISCELLANEA

REPTILES.

MAJOR WALL ON SOME FORMS OF *Dipsadomorphus*.—In the last part of the *Records of the Indian Museum* (vol. iii, p. 151) a paper was published by Major F. Wall, I.M.S., on some forms of *Dipsadomorphus*, in which several so called new species were described. Major Wall's accuracy of observation renders the statistics he provides of special value, but I feel bound to differ from him in the views he expresses.

After acknowledging that "Many of the forms now recognized as species in the genus *Dipsadomorphus* exhibit extremely close affinities" and stating that he has "examined no less than thirteen of the twenty-three known," he goes on to say, "I have for a long time thought that the species *ceylonensis* and *hexagonotus*, as regarded by Mr. Boulenger in his Catalogue (1896), comprise more than one form fit to rank as a species." He then proceeds to describe four of these forms which have been "identified as *ceylonensis*." Without defining in any way the old species *ceylonensis*, he gives as a description of each of these four "species" merely the number of rows of scales and of the ventrals and subcaudals. We might take it therefore that these points provide, in his opinion, all that is necessary to distinguish the four species from one another or from any of the remaining twenty odd species belonging to the genus, ten of which he has not seen. Would that the identification of snakes were so easy a matter! But perhaps he assumes Mr. Boulenger's description of *D. ceylonensis* as axiomatic.

Major Wall has examined at least six specimens of each of his four "species," and in one case as many as twenty-one; the range of ventrals and subcaudals, in the whole series, is very considerable. The rows of scales, however, only vary from 19 to 21, and if they are disregarded, the numbers of the ventrals and subcaudals overlap in the different "species." Moreover, Major Wall himself provides evidence that his different species cannot be regarded even as local races, such as we might almost expect to find in an isolated group of islands like the Andamans. I would much rather regard several of the admittedly allied forms in the genus as forms of one species than accept the four species into which *D. ceylonensis* has been divided by Major Wall.

Major Wall's views as to the question "What is a species?" appear to be those now held by so many zoologists that I do not think I would have been justified as editor of these "Records" in refusing to publish his paper. His enthusiasm is worthy of all praise. I feel, however, that some protest is necessary, not so much

against Major Wall's views as to the species of *Dipsadomorphus* (which are based on a great deal more material than is often the case) as against the tendency they illustrate. If every little difference between individuals or sets of individuals is to be regarded as of specific value, "philosophical" zoology must cease to exist, and all zoologists must busy themselves in searching for such differences as diligently as the stamp-collector counts the number of perforations on his specimens.

N. ANNANDALE.

BATRACHIA.

Notes on Indian Batrachia :—

1. *Rana vicina*, STOLICZKA.—*Rana vicina* was described in 1872 by the late Dr. F. Stoliczka, and the type specimen, which came from Murree, is still in the Indian Museum, its registered number being 9147.

Mr. Boulenger in his volume on the Reptiles and Batrachia in the "Fauna" (1890) queried the species as a synonym of *R. liebigii*, Günther, but Mr. W. L. Sclater, in his list of the Batrachia in the collection of the Indian Museum (1892), regarded it as distinct. In 1905 Mr. Boulenger suggested that the form was identical with the species he had described in 1882 as *Rana blanfordii*, a view which he confirmed in 1907 after examining specimens of *R. blanfordii* from the neighbourhood of Naini Tal. Accepting this view, I described (1908) the tadpole of the form common at Naini Tal as that of *R. vicina*, pointing out the characters in which it differed from the larva of *R. pleskii* and *R. liebigii*. Having recently, however, had occasion to compare considerable numbers of specimens from the Western Himalayas with the type of *R. vicina*, I detected what appeared to be constant differences. Besides the type there was one other specimen in the collection from the Western Himalayas identified by Mr. Sclater as *R. vicina*, namely, a large individual from Simla presented many years ago by Lieut. A. Newnham. A careful comparison between these two specimens convinced me that they represented the same species, and that this species differed from the form common at Naini Tal. The only difference that I could detect between the two specimens was that the type of *R. vicina* was considerably smaller than the specimen from Simla. I therefore sent the latter to Mr. Boulenger, who agrees with me that it is not his *R. blanfordii* and regards it as a specimen of *R. liebigii*. Without seeing the type he naturally prefers not to express an opinion as to its identity, but he has courteously asked me to publish a note on the subject. The following is a summary of what can be discovered about the two forms; for I think that there can be no doubt that *R. vicina* is distinct from *R. blanfordii*.

R. blanfordii is distinguished from *R. liebigii* (1) by its smaller size, its maximum length without the limbs being 49 mm. while *R. liebigii* grows at least 90 mm. long; (2) by the fact that the males