

Notes on Mangrove Snake *Boiga dendrophila multicineta* (Boulenger, 1896) in Iwahig River, Puerto Princesa City

Roger G. Dolorosa

College of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences
WPU-Puerto Princesa Campus, Palawan, Philippines

Corresponding author: rogerdolorosa@yahoo.com
<https://doi.org/10.69721/TPS.J.2014.6.1.04>

Date observed: April 13, 2013; around 10:00 AM

Notes:

The genus *Boiga* is composed of about 20-30 species (Rodda et al. 1999) and widespread throughout low elevation and coastal habitats of the Philippines and other Asian countries. A sub-species, *Boiga dendrophila divergens* had been reported from the northeastern Luzon including the Babuyan Islands (see Brown et al. 2013). A Palawan endemic sub-species *Boiga dendrophila multicineta* is locally called 'binturan' (Leviton 1970). The species is commonly encountered in a semi-disturbed river in Iwahig, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines. The one shown in the photo (~2m long) was spotted resting on branches of the mangrove tree *Scyphiphora hydrophyllacea* along the bank of Iwahig River, Puerto Princesa City (Figure 1). Two of the nine transect lines (intended for molluscs) had one mangrove snake at the start; several individuals were subsequently noted resting on branches of mangrove trees along the river banks, suggesting an unusually high population density. The same species is abundant in a semi-disturbed mangrove forest in Sitio Bunuangin, Port Barton, San Vicente (MPG Soniega, pers. comm.) and in a pristine mangrove forest in Puerto Princesa Underground River – one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature. The snake is feared for its tendency to chase intruders (people) once hurt. At night, it feeds on a variety of small vertebrates including birds, frogs, snakes and fishes (Minton & Dunson 1978; Savidge 1988). *Boiga* spp. are both important in the pharmaceutical industry (e.g. Lumsden et al. 2005; Mackessy et al. 2006) and pet trade (Shepherd et al. 2004; Mendizabal 2011). The mangrove snake is one of the many reptilian fauna in Palawan - the so-called "Philippines' Last Frontier". However, mangrove snake and other reptiles are illegally traded from Palawan. In 2011, 25 snakes, including 15 mangrove snakes, 9 vipers and a spitting cobra were seized by officials of the Palawan Conservation for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in El Nido, Palawan (Mendizabal 2011). While record of confiscation is limited, the magnitude of trade could be far higher than this. In addition, the seemingly unabated

widespread habitat degradation in Palawan (Ramirez 2012; Tesorio 2013) could also threaten the existence of these species. Population survey and trade along with education and information campaign, and habitat protection and restoration could help conserve the populations of these mangrove snakes.



Figure 1. *Boiga dendrophila multicincta* resting on branches of *Scyphiphora hydrophyllacea* by the bank of Iwahig River.

References

- Brown RM, Siler CD, Oliveros CH, Welton LJ, Rock A, Swab J, Van Weerd M, Van Beijnen J, Jose E, Rodriguez D, Jose E and AC Diesmos. 2013. The amphibians and reptiles of Luzon Island, Philippines, VIII: the herpetofauna of Cagayan and Isabela Provinces, northern Sierra Madre Mountain Range. *ZooKeys*, 266: 1-120.
- Leviton AE. 1970. Contributions to a review of Philippines snakes, XI. The snakes of the genus *Boiga*. *Philippine Journal of Science*, 97, 291-314.

- Lumsden NG, Fry BG, Ventura S, Kini RM and WC Hodgson. 2005. Pharmacological characterisation of a neurotoxin from the venom of *Boiga dendrophila* (mangrove catsnake). *Toxicon*, 45: 329-334.
- Mackessy SP, Sixberry NM, Heyborne WH and T Fritts. 2006. Venom of the brown treesnake, *Boiga irregularis*: Ontogenetic shifts and taxa-specific toxicity. *Toxicon*, 47: 537-548.
- Mendizabal, B. 2011. Deadly snakes seized in Palawan. ABS-CBN News.com. <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/regions/08/31/11/deadly-snakes-seized-palawan> . August 31, 2011. Accessed on 14 Sept. 2013.
- Minton SA and WA Dunson. 1978. Observations on the Palawan mangrove snake, *Boiga dendrophila multicincta* (Reptilia, Serpentes, Colubridae). *Journal of Herpetology*, 12(1): 107-108.
- Ramirez J. 2012. Environmental destruction in Palawan bared. *Tempo*. <http://www.tempo.com.ph/2012/02/environmental-destruction-in-palawan-bared/#.UjTvt39lyzE> . February 21, 2012. Accessed on 14 Sept. 2013.
- Rodda GH, Fritts TH, McCoid MJ and EW Campbell III. 1999. An Overview of the biology of the brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*), a costly introduced pest on Pacific Islands. Pages 44-80, in Rodda GH, Sawai Y, Chiszar D and H. Tanaka (eds). *Problem snake management: the habu and the brown tree snake*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 534pp.
- Savidge JA. 1988. Food habits of *Boiga irregularis*, an introduced predator on Guam. *Journal of Herpetology*, 22(3): 275-282.
- Shepherd CR, Sukumaran J and SA Wich. 2004. *Open Season: An analysis of the pet trade in Medan, Sumatra 1997 – 2001*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. 67pp.
- Tesorio J. 2013. 200 ha of mangrove destroyed. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2479&dat=20030217&id=OIU1AAAIBAJ&sjid=fCUMAAAIBAJ&pg=1929,8511442>. February 17, 2013. Accessed on 14 Sept. 2013.