

## A REDESCRIPTION OF *AMPHISBAENA CAECA* WITH A DISCUSSION OF ITS RELATIONSHIP TO *A. BAKERI*

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Stejneger, 1904, redescribed *A. caeca*, using a series of 19. Schmidt, 1928, studied a series of 18 and quotes Stejneger verbatim. In my series of 100, I find a sufficient difference from the description to make it worthwhile to rewrite.

The blind legless lizard of Puerto Rico is well known to the country people who turn it up with the plow or find it under stones or logs. They fancy it bears a strong resemblance to an earth worm or the blind snake, *Typhlops*. The generic name *Amphisbaena* comes from the Greek, meaning a snake able to move in either direction. The specific name *caeca* means blind.

The species was described by Cuvier in 1829.

Type locality: Not known.

Distribution: Confined to Puerto Rico where it had been recorded from Aibonito, Bayamón, Catalina Plantation, Lares, Luquillo, Mayagüez, Río Piedras and Utuado. I have taken it in addition at Humacao, Maricao, Cialitos and Juana Diaz, thus considerably increasing its known range.

Diagnosis: An *Amphisbaena* with 225-235 body rings, usually one temporal scute, 18 or 19 rings on tail.

Squamation based on 100 specimens:

Rostral small, triangular, the portion visible above short, about equalling the suture between the nasals; prefrontals long, suture generally longer than suture between frontals. If not measured prefrontal suture looks much longer due to an optical illusion. Suture between prefrontals or frontals about four to five times as long as the nasal suture; ocular moderate, quadrangular, smaller than either the postocular or the third supralabial. A well developed quadrangular or roughly triangular temporal between and behind the latter two and slightly smaller than the ocular. Eye faintly visible through ocular. A pair of occipitals, broader than long, more often in contact than separated behind the frontals. Three supralabials, the second as long as the other two together. Three lower labials, the second longer than the other two together. Mental followed by a single (50 per cent) or longitudinally creased (40 per cent) or a pair (10 per cent) of post mentals, followed invariably by three postgenials,

followed by four, rarely three, (7 per cent) scales of the first body ring. Below the second and third lower labials, a large malar shield; usually (85 per cent) from 225 to 235 rings on the body and 18 or 19 on the tail. At about the 100th body ring 16 (rarely 14 or 18) rows above the lateral line and 18 (rarely 16 or 20) below. Usually (66 per cent) 2 more rows below lateral line than above, sometimes (33 per cent) equal, but never more above than below. The segments of each ring longer than broad on the back, broader than long on the under side. The two abdominal rows distinctly flat and broad. Anal shields usually and normally 6; preanal pores normally 4. Color: flesh color, with a squarish brown spot, darkest on the back, occupying the middle of each segment, these spots being usually (80 per cent) absent on many of the ventral segments on the posterior half of the body and frequently (50 per cent) absent on the throat in a small spot leaving these areas light flesh color.

When the brown spots are not absent, the underside is a uniform color (20 per cent). I must take exception to Stejneger "... a large median postmental, twice as long as broad". In my specimens, I find it  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{3}$ . Apparently more nearly quadrangular than in *A. bakeri*, judging from the Fig. 136.

Remarks: Stejneger, 1904, Figs. 128, 130 are unusual in that they show a decidedly rectangular temporal. Only very rarely is the temporal in the form of an elongated triangle, the point reaching the angle of the mouth as shown in Stejneger, Fig. 132. This is caused by the fusing of the temporal with a body ring scale. I have specimens with these scales fused on one side only, the other side being normal. The most frequent form of temporal seen is two sharp angles and a rounded end. Stejneger Figs. 128, 130, copied by Schmidt, 1928, Fig. 36, shows four lower labials, but their descriptions do not mention the occurrence of four. I have but one specimen with four lower labials. Stejneger Figs. 127, 129 shows the nasal suture contained 4 and 5 times respectively in the prefrontal suture instead of "... one-fifth or less". I find it  $4\frac{1}{2}$  and rarely 5 times. This tends to lessen the difference between it and the squamation of *A. bakeri*.

Stejneger shows 5 scales following the 3 postgenials in *A. bakeri*. A letter from Miss Cochran states that two of their three specimens have these 5 scales. In my specimens of *A. caeca* from the eastern third of the Island, the uniform 3 postgenials are followed by 4 scales or by 3 in 3 cases. This constitutes an important distinction between *A. bakeri* and *A. caeca* and would tend to show variation away from *A. bakeri*.

Two specimens taken from the vicinity of Juana Díaz are remark-

able in having a low number of scales around the body, namely 14 above the lateral line and 14 and 16 respectively below it and 230 and 226 body rings respectively. The number of rings is average for *caeca*, but less than *A. bakeri*; the low number of scales is divergent from either species. One specimen has five scales following the postgenial which ties it to *A. bakeri*, and one lacks a temporal on one side—a specific point of *A. bakeri*. My opinion is that *caeca* runs truer to form on the eastern part of the island and varies on the western. The specific validity of *A. bakeri* seems dubious.