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## ***Ophiotaenia ophioidex* and *Ophidascaris* sp. in a Spotted Night Adder (*Causus maculatus*) from Cameroon, West Africa**

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**ABSTRACT:** A new host and geographic locality record is reported for a proteocephalid cestode (*Ophiotaenia ophioidex*) and an ascarid nematode (*Ophidascaris* sp.) recovered from a spotted night adder (*Causus maculatus*) from Cameroon, West Africa.

**Key words:** Cestoidea, *Ophiotaenia ophioidex*, Nematoda, *Ophidascaris* sp., *Causus maculatus*, Cameroon, night adder, Viperidae.

The spotted night adder, *Causus maculatus* is a medium-sized viperid snake that ranges from Senegal east to Chad and south through Zaire to Angola (Welch, 1982). Although a great deal of information is available on parasites of the related rhombic night adder (*C. rhombeatus*) (Daubney, 1923; Southwell and Adler, 1923; Southwell and Lake, 1939; Fantham and Porter, 1950; Mettrick, 1960, 1963; Schad, 1962; Sprent, 1985; Baker, 1987), nothing, to our knowledge, has been published on helminths of *C. maculatus*. We report new host and locality records for a cestode and nematode parasite of *C. maculatus* from Cameroon, West Africa.

Two *C. maculatus* were collected during March 1991 from the village of MUYUKA (4°10'N, 9°25'E) and imported into North America to be housed at the Houston Zoological Gardens, Houston, Texas (USA). As part of routine quarantine, both snakes were treated by stomach tube with 10 mg/kg Benzelmin® (Oxfendazole, Syntex Animal-Health Incorporated, West Des Moines, Iowa, USA) once each week for 5 wk. Parasites were collected from expelled feces, and stored in 70% ethanol. Tapeworms were stained with Semichon's acetocarmine, dehydrated in a series of ethanols, cleared in xylene, and mounted in damar (Meyer and Olsen, 1975). Nematodes were transferred to vials containing

glycerol and examined as temporary mounts. Identification of parasites were based on keys and morphological characters provided in Wardle and McLeod (1952), Mozgovoi (1968), Hartwich (1974), and Schmidt (1986). Parasites are deposited in the USNM Helminthological Collection (United States Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, Maryland, USA).

Following 1 wk of treatment, one of the snakes (subadult female, snout-vent length = 300 mm) passed feces containing helminths; the other snake was negative. Two kinds of helminths were recovered: proteocephalid cestodes (*Ophiotaenia ophioidex*, USNM 82212) and ascarid nematodes (*Ophidascaris* sp., USNM 82070). No additional helminths were expelled.

Specimens of *O. ophioidex* recovered in the present study possessed 110 to 128 (mean = 118.5) testes and 23 to 42 (mean = 32.5) uterine branches. These values accord well with those reported by Mettrick (1960). Mettrick (1960) originally described *O. ophioidex* from the lower intestine of *C. rhombeatus* from Zimbabwe. A colubrid snake, the three-lined grass snake (*Psammophylax tritaeniatus*) was also listed as a host (Mettrick, 1960, 1963). This is the first report of *O. ophioidex* from Cameroon; however, other ophiotaeniids have been reported previously, including *O. adiposa* and *O. amphiboluri* from puff adders (*Bitis arietans*) (Rudin, 1917; Hughes et al., 1941). In addition, *O. punica* and *O. theileri* are known from *C. rhombeatus* from Sierra Leone and central Africa (Southwell and Adler, 1923; Southwell and Lake, 1939; Mettrick, 1963).

Nematodes of the genus *Ophidascaris* infect a variety of snakes; *O. radiosus* in-

fecting *C. rhombeatus* in Africa (Baker, 1987). Unfortunately, only female *Ophiodascaris* were recovered from *C. maculatus* during the present study and specific identification was not possible. However, the nematodes possessed quadrangular lips not clearly divided into anterior and posterior regions and without deeply indented anterior margins, genital tubes confined to the posterior region of the body, and two uterine branches (Hartwich, 1974). Interestingly, *O. striata* was reported from a bushpig (*Potamochoerus porcus*) from Cameroon (Baker, 1987), but is probably a pseudoparasite that was just passing through the digestive tract; the true host may be a reptile.

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