

DISTRIBUTION OF ZAOCCYS LUZONENSIS (SERPENTES: COLUBRIDAE)
IN THE VISAYAN ISLANDS, PHILIPPINES

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The Philippine endemic snake, Zaocys luzonensis, was found to exist in various regions of the Visayas.

The two species of the Philippine snake Zaocys were recently reviewed by Leviton (1983). Zaocys carinatus is a widely distributed species in southern Asia, but is restricted to the island of Palawan in the Philippines. Zaocys luzonensis is a poorly known Philippine endemic.

Leviton (1963, 1983) questioned the only previous record of Z. luzonensis for the Visayan Islands (Leyte Island, eastern Visayas, Taylor, 1922). Taylor (1922) based this record on a list of material received at the Herpetologische Sektion, Museum der Senckenbergischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft in Frankfurt am Main, from Konsul Dr. O. Fr. von Moellendorff, given in the Bericht über die Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft for June 1889 to June 1890 (Boettger, 1890). This report (Boettger, 1890:LXIII) stated that Moellendorff brought in person a wonderful collection of Philippine species, which includes in particular the spectacular rarities from Leyte Island; a list of species followed. The text does not state unequivocally that all the listed species came from Leyte.

A comparison of the species purportedly from Leyte (Boettger, 1890), and the Senckenberg Museum catalogs (Boettger, 1893 and 1898) suggests that many of the specimens listed, including the single Z. luzonensis, are from other islands in the Philippines.

Leviton's casual, albeit correct, dismissal of the Leyte record for Z. luzonensis led him to conclude that this species is "evidently isolated on the northern islands of Luzon and Polillo" (1983:201). He apparently overlooked reports of Z. luzonensis on Negros Island (Brown and Alcala, 1961, 1964, 1970; Rabor et al., 1958, 1970).

The following records confirm the presence of Z. luzonensis in the western and central Visayan Islands. Its occurrence elsewhere in the Visayas is likely (Brown and Alcala, 1986) and cannot be casually dismissed.

NEGROS ISLAND: Negros Oriental Prov.: Valencia Municipality; Bong Bong Barrio, Camp Lookout, Maite Creek (ca. 16 km W of Dumaguete City). 22 September 1981. C. A. Ross. Verified by R.I. Crombie.

U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution (USNM 228404).

NEGROS ISLAND: Negros Oriental Prov.: Sibulan Municipality; Lake Balinsasayo. 16 October 1977. A.C. Alcala et al. Verified by R.I. Crombie. (USNM 269076). Same locality, 9 November 1982. P. Heideman (head and posterior body only). Verified by R.I. Crombie. (USNM 269077). Same locality, January 1978. T. Batac. Verified by C.A. Ross. Natural History Museum, Silliman University, Dumaguete City, Philippines. (SU-R 1697).

PANAY ISLAND: Aklan Prov.: Libacao Municipality; Jamindang Barrio. 23 February 1987. R.V. Sison. Verified by R.I. Crombie. (USNM 269078).

All of these specimens have squamation typical of this species: a divided anal; 207 to 212 ventrals; 124 to 125 paired subcaudals; 8 supralabials with the 4th and 5th entering the orbit; and 14 or 12 smooth scale rows reducing to 12 or 11 anterior to the anus except the smallest (USNM 269078), a juvenile of 54 cm total length, with weakly keeled scale rows.

Field observations suggest that Z. luzonensis is a secretive species found in areas of primary forest. The Negros Island specimens were taken in the immediate vicinity of water either on bushes overhanging a stream or lake, or in water.

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