

refrain from using the trinomial *dichromaticus* for the Bay Islands specimens, as the only effect would be to simplify and obscure the variational picture.

On Roatán and Guanaja this snake is known as the "water snake" or "culebra de agua."

SPECIMENS EXAMINED.—Isla de Roatán: 0.5-2 km N Roatán (LSUMZ 21160-78; LACM 44417-36); 0.5-1.5 mi N Roatán (LSUMZ 22380, 22383; UF 28454-57, 28502-04, 28505-07, 28538-40); near Gibson Bight (UF 28517-19). Isla de Guanaja: La Playa Hotel (LACM 44438-39); Roatán (LSUMZ 22323-27, 22400).

Micrurus ruatanus (Günther)

Günther (1895) described *Micrurus ruatanus* from eight specimens G. F. Gaumer collected on Isla de Roatán. He made no comparisons with other species but considered *ruatanus* to be "a distinguishable local form." Boulenger (1896) included this form in his inclusive species *fulvius* as pattern type E. Schmidt, in a series of papers on the genus *Micrurus* dating from 1925 to 1958 (Peters 1959), elucidated our understanding of this complex and difficult group of elapids. Schmidt (1933) revived *ruatanus* from the synonymy of *fulvius* and gave it specific status, suggesting that its relationships lie with the "*nigrocinctus* group" and apparently with *M. n. divaricatus* in particular. To our knowledge this is the last published reference to the species (the snake was also mentioned by Barbour (1928), who listed it as a subspecies of *Micrurus fulvius*), except for its comparison to *Micrurus schmidti* (= *M. stewarti*—fide Roze, 1967) described by Dunn (1940) and its inclusion as a distinct species in a checklist of New World coral snakes by Roze (1967).

We secured three specimens (LSUMZ 22320, 22341, 22373) from Isla de Roatán, two of them from near the town of Roatán, the other from a village (Sandy Bay) on the north side of the island. The last specimen gives the first slight indication of the coral snake's distribution on the island. One specimen was found dead, draped over a tree limb at the side of a road, another was found dead on a road, and a third came from beneath a pile of coconut palm fronds.

In addition to these three specimens, we have examined five of the eight syntypes of *Elaps ruatanus* from Isla de Roatán (four from the British Museum and one subsequently deposited in the MCZ collection). The specimen upon which Roze (1967) based his statement that *M. ruatanus* occurs on the mainland of Honduras adjacent to the Bay Islands is not in our opinion *ruatanus*, but *nigrocinctus*. The status of this specimen will be discussed elsewhere.

We consider *Micrurus ruatanus* endemic to the Bay Islands. It has been collected only on Roatán. A 76 year old life-long resident of Utila told us that the coral snake used to occur on that island, but that