

The Thread Snake, *Leptotyphlops macrorhynchus* (Reptilia: Leptotyphlopidae) as a presumed prey item for the racer *Coluber rhodorachis* (Reptilia: Colubridae)

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Abstract. The detailed inspection of a preserved Jan's Desert Snake, *Coluber rhodorachis*, revealed an interesting case of predation, viz. on a Hookbilled Thread Snake, *Leptotyphlops macrorhynchus*.

Kurzfassung. Die Untersuchung einer konservierter Jan's Pfeilnatter, *Coluber rhodorachis*, enthüllte eine interessante Beutewahl, nämlich eine Hakenschnabel-Schlankblindschlange, *Leptotyphlops macrorhynchus*.

Key words. Ophiophagy, Jan's Desert Snake, Hookbilled Thread Snake, Iran, Middle East.

Introduction

During a field trip across Iran in spring 1996, a 'road pizza' was scraped off the asphalt surface by the author in the southwestern corner of the country, Khuzistan province. The flat, heavily damaged snake specimen was apparently crushed under the pressure of one or more vehicles. Skin, backbone and soft body parts had been shifted sideways, lying side by side. Identification of the several racers of this region is not always easy at first sight, especially in the case of severe damage. The specimen was collected and deposited in the Natuurmuseum Rotterdam. No further attention was paid to the specimen for a long time. At a subsequent and closer examination in 2001 an effort was made to identify the species, which led to the discovery of an interesting case of ophiophagy.

Material and methods

On 11.5.1996, a dead racer was found on the asphalt as a traffic victim on the road between Masjid-i-Suleiman and Shushtar, approximately 4 km south-east of Durān (32°02'54''N, 49°11'30''E), 250 m a.s.l., in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains, Khuzistan province, Iran. Immediate fixation and preservation was made with in formalin, which was later changed for 70% ethanol. The specimen was deposited in the herpetological collection of the Natuurmuseum Rotterdam under the provisional name *Coluber* cf. *najadum* (NMR 9994-00368).

Results

Due to its bad state, species identification was difficult at first sight. In the Middle East, the genus *Coluber* is represented by several taxa, but overall appearance and distributional data