

Dog-faced Water Snake (*Cerberus schneiderii*) in upstream rivers in Negros Island and Catanduanes Island, Philippines

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Photographs by: Philip C. Baltazar, Jake Wilson B. Binaday.

Subjects identified by: Jake Wilson B. Binaday.

Identity of subjects: Dog-faced Water Snake, *Cerberus schneiderii* (Reptilia: Squamata: Homalopsidae).

SIGHTING RECORD : 1

Location: Damutan River, Brgy. Damutan, Municipality of Hinobaan, Negros Occidental Province, Negros Island, Philippines (9.60560°N, 122.64988 °E; WGS 84)

Elevation: 239 metres.

Habitat: River, approx. 15 metres wide surrounded by primary-growth forest.

Date and time: 10 October 2017, 20:50 hrs.

Description of record: One individual was observed swimming at night in a small pool of water in the middle part of the Damutan River, near its junction with the Pagatban River (Fig. 1): most parts of these two rivers have rapids. The area is approximately 40.9 km upstream from the mouth of the river (Fig. 3). Heavy rains occurred on the day when the snake was encountered.



Fig 1. *Cerberus schneiderii* in Damutan River, Negros Island. (ZRC[IMG]2.399)

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SIGHTING RECORD : 2

Location: San Miguel River, Brgy. Progreso, Municipality of San Miguel, Catanduanes Island, Philippines (13.765187°N, 124.271253°E; WGS 84)

Elevation: 75 metres (estimated from Google Earth).

Habitat: River, approx. 8 metres wide near residential areas.

Date and time: 12 June 2015, 21:32 hrs.

Description of record: A few individuals were observed in the San Miguel River at night, an example of which is shown here (Fig. 2). The area is approximately 27.4 km upstream from the mouth of the river (Figure 3).



Fig. 2. *Cerberus schneiderii* in Brgy. Progreso, San Miguel, Catanduanes (ZRC[IMG] 2.400)

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GENERAL REMARKS

Based on the shape of their head, body and tail, the position of the eyes on top of the head, and their distinctive brown colouration with black markings, these snakes are identified as Dog-faced Water Snake *Cerberus schneiderii*.

Cerberus schneiderii inhabits coastal areas throughout the Philippines, particularly mangrove areas (Ferner et al. 2000; Bucol et al. 2011; Devan-Song & Brown 2012; Siler et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2013; Supsup et al. 2016), but no published data appears to exist to show that it occurs in inland rivers in the Philippines, or how far it can go upstream. Radio-telemetry or GPS tracking should be considered.

A closely-related snake, *Cerberus microlepis*, is a freshwater species that occurs in Lake Buhi in the province of Camarines Sur, Luzon Island (Murphy et al. 2012). The relationship between coastal *Cerberus schneiderii* in the Philippines, with the freshwater *Cerberus schneiderii* described here, and with landlocked *Cerberus microlepis* is deserving of further study.

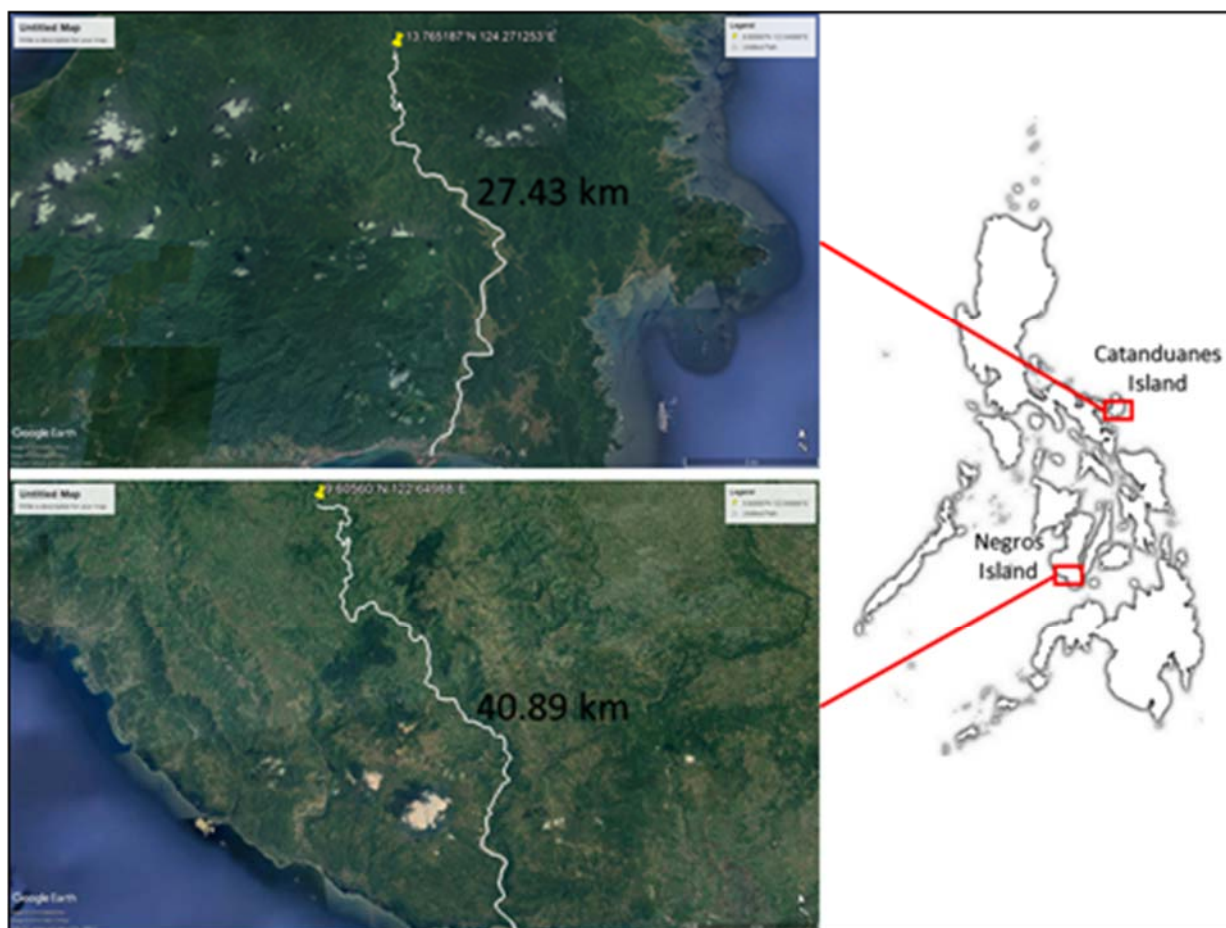


Fig. 3. San Miguel River (top) in Catanduanes Island, and Damutan River (bottom) in Negros Island, showing the distance of *Cerberus schneiderii* individuals from the mouth of each river (as estimated along the course of the river).

Photographic vouchers of these snakes were deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National University of Singapore as follows : ZRC[IMG] 2.399 for Negros Island, and ZRC[IMG] 2.400 for Catanduanes Island. Both photographic vouchers are archived as *Cerberus schneiderii*.

References:

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