

XXXIV.—Note on the Ophidian Genus *Emydocephalus*.

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THE genus *Emydocephalus* was proposed by G. Krefft in 1869 for two sea-snakes, *E. annulatus*, Krefft, and *E. tuberculatus*, Krefft, distinguished from *Aipysurus*, Lacep., by the presence of only three labial shields above and below. I regard Krefft's snakes as based on individual differences of the same species, which was described about the same time by Bavay as *Aipysurus chelonicephalus*, and lately by Stejneger as *Emydocephalus ijimæ*. I have now examined a good number of these snakes from the Loyalty Islands and from the Loo Choo Islands, and I have not the slightest doubt that they all belong to one species. In his recent work on the Reptiles of Japan, Stejneger dissents "most emphatically" from this procedure, and maintains his *E. ijimæ* as distinct. However, it will be seen, by referring to his own work, that Major Wall has reported upon six examples from Okinawa, Loo Choo, which clearly show the characters on which he based the distinction to be inconstant.

There is, however, one point in which I now agree with Dr. Stejneger, and that is that the genus *Emydocephalus* should be held distinct from *Aipysurus*, with which I had united it in ignorance of its very marked cranial and dental characters. Stejneger has already pointed out that, contrary to the definition of *Aipysurus*, the maxillary bone in *Emydocephalus* is shorter than the ectopterygoid, and that the poison-fangs are not followed by a series of smaller teeth. But this is not all. Having had a skull prepared, I find that the dentition is rudimentary on the palatine, pterygoid, and dentary bones, that the poison-fangs are remarkably small, and that the supratemporal bone (squamosal of most authors) differs from that of all other sea-snakes in being small and not detached posteriorly from the cranium, a condition very similar to that of *Elaps* among the terrestrial Elapines. The postorbital, which is large in *Aipysurus*, is vestigial in *Emydocephalus*.

The validity of the genus *Emydocephalus* is therefore beyond question.



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