On the identity of *Amphisbaena hugoi* Vanzolini, 1990 (Reptilia: Squamata: Amphisbaenidae)

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Key words: Reptilia; *Amphisbaena hugoi*; *Amphisbaena vanzolinii*; Brazil; Amazonia.
The taxonomic status of *Amphisbaena hugoi* Vanzolini, 1990, is discussed. It is concluded that it is a new junior synonym of *Amphisbaena vanzolinii* Gans, 1963.
Palavras chave: Reptilia; *Amphisbaena hugoi*; *Amphisbaena vanzolinii*; Brazil; Amazonia.
O validade taxonômica de *Amphisbaena hugoi* é discutida. Conclue-se que *A. hugoi* Vanzolini, 1990, é um sinônimo júnior de *Amphisbaena vanzolinii* Gans, 1963.

Amphisbaena hugoi Vanzolini, 1990

Vanzolini (1990) described a new species of small *Amphisbaena* from the area of Balbina, northeast of Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil, based only on a single specimen. Vanzolini based his description mainly on the number of preanal pores, on the high number of annuli and segments and on the striking colour pattern as differentiating his new taxon from other taxa in the area. Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires (1991), when describing *A. cunhai* Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires, 1991, presented an overview and a distribution map of the small species of *Amphisbaena* known from Amazonian South America at that time. They did not include *A. hugoi* in this overview, because at the time of writing its description (according to a stamp on the paper published June 28, 1990 and not in 1989) was not yet available to them (the manuscript of the Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires paper was submitted on June 18, 1990).

One of us (TM) now has been able to study the holotype (MZUSP 68644) of *A. hugoi* and compare it with other species. We both had the opportunity to study specimens of *A. vanzolinii* from Balbina, the type locality of *A. hugoi*.

Vanzolini (1990: 526), when discussing *A. vanzolinii* states: "…has also an overlapping number of annuli with *hugoi*, 225-228. The number of caudal annuli is not known, as the type, and only published specimen, has a mutilated tail". Thus, giving the impression that only data for one specimen (= the type) had been published. This is a rather strange remark, as the original description of *A. vanzolinii* was based on two specimens (both with autotomized tail), the holotype and the paratype from Marudi, Guyana (AMNH 60975 and AMNH 60778). However, from the fact that Vanzolini (1990) mentions 225-228 annuli and 12-13/16-17 segments it also is quite clear that data for at least two specimens had been published previously, and

indeed, they actually are the values for the type specimens. In the meantime Gonzalez Sponga & Gans (1971) reported three other specimens (one without locality, but most likely from Brazil, and two from Rupununi District, Guyana), and Hoogmoed (1973: 385) provided meristic data for another 13 additional specimens from Suriname and Guyana. Thus, the total number of specimens of *A. vanzolinii* for which meristic data were available at the time of publication of *A. hugoi* was 18. Since then one more specimen from Suriname (RMNH 24474) and three more from Balbina, Brazil (MPEG 14804, 14829, 14931) have become available (Hoogmoed & Avila Pires, 1991). These recent specimens were discussed by Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires (1991), who concluded that, as Hoogmoed (1973: 387-388) already supposed, there might be variation between specimens from western Guiana (Brazil and SW Guyana) and eastern Guiana (SE Guiana and Suriname). According to Starace (1998) *A. vanzolinii* has not (yet?) been found in French Guiana. There is variation in a number of meristic characters, which Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires (1991) list. We here might add that also the number of caudal annuli in the western population seems to be slightly higher than that in the eastern population. The number of supralabials and infralabials of *A. hugoi*, is stated to be three. Careful study of the specimen and the drawing of the head of the holotype shows this statement to be incorrect: there are only two large supralabials and one and a half infralabials, of which the first is very large. This is exactly the character that sets *A. vanzolinii* apart from all other species of small *Amphisbaena* in Amazonian South America. The colour characters mentioned by Vanzolini (1990) as distinguishing *A. hugoi* from *A. vanzolinii* are not distinctive either. Balbina specimens of *A. vanzolinii* differ slightly from the Guyanan and Suriname specimens by having a head that is lighter than the body. Vanzolini (1990) described this as "a white cap on the head, dorsally extending onto the neck". Our own observations are that the head is almost completely cream or has a wide, cream collar. From Hoogmoed (1973: 387) it is clear that the belly of Surinam *A. vanzolinii* is white and the back light- to dark-brown, exactly the same as in *A. hugoi*. All meristic and other characters mentioned by Vanzolini (1990, 2002) for *A. hugoi* completely fall within the range of variation known for *A. vanzolinii* (Gans, 1963; Gonzalez Sponga & Gans, 1971; Hoogmoed, 1973: 385; Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires, 1991; Vanzolini, 2002). It should be noted here that Vanzolini (2002) in the table mentions the level of autotomy of the tail to be at annulus 23, whereas in the original description it is said to be at annulus 13**,** which is correct**.** Annulus 13 is characterized by being darker.

Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires (1991) indicate it might be possible to distinguish between western and eastern populations of *A. vanzolinii* on the basis of meristic characters and possibly total length. However, Hoogmoed & Avila-Pires (1991) think that the evidence is too meagre to make any taxonomic decisions, like describing subspecies, yet. Considering that the data for the holotype of *A. hugoi* completely fall within those of the small group of western specimens of *A. vanzolinii*, we have come to the conclusion that *A. hugoi* Vanzolini, 1990, is actually a junior synonym of *A. vanzolinii* Gans, 1963. As both the types of *A. vanzolinii* and that of *A. hugoi* are from the western group, the name *hugoi* would not become available when nominal (sub)species could be described.

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