New record of the Mountain ground skink
Scincella monticola (Schmidt, 1925) (Squamata: Scincidae)
from Cao Bang Province, Vietnam

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Abstract. We report a new record and additional morphological data of the Mountain ground skink Scincella monticola from Cao Bang Province, northern Vietnam. The first record of this species from Vietnam was reported in 2010. This is the second specimen and also the first female of Scincella monticola known from Vietnam.

Keywords. Scincella, morphology, description.

The Mountain ground skink, Scincella monticola, was recorded from Vietnam for the first time based on a single male specimen collected in Mau Son Mountain, Lang Son Province (Nguyen et al., 2010). Outside of Vietnam, this species is known only from China (Schmidt, 1925, 1927; Inger et al., 1990; Zhao and Adler, 1993; also see Nguyen et al., 2010 for the distribution map of the species). During a recent field survey in northern Vietnam, we found an additional specimen of this species from Pia Oac forest, Cao Bang Province and it was subsequently deposited in the collection of the Vietnam National Museum of Nature (VNMN) in Hanoi. This is the second record and also the first female of Scincella monticola known from Vietnam.

Scincella monticola (Schmidt, 1925): Mountain ground skink

The adult female specimen (VNMN 795) was collected by Nguyen Thien Tao and Pham Duc Tien on 8 June 2009 in Thanh Cong Commune, Nguyen Binh District, Cao Bang Province (22°36.250N, 105°52.330E, altitude 1520 m a.s.l.) (Fig. 1). This specimen is identifiable as S. monticola by the combination of the following characters (determination after Schmidt, 1925, 1927; Inger et al., 1990; Nguyen et al., 2010): size small (SVL 45.4 mm); head longer than wide; rostral wider than high; supranasals absent; prefrontals separated by

Figure 1. Map showing the distribution of Scincella monticola in Vietnam: 1) Lang Son Province and 2) Cao Bang Province.
frontal; parietals in contact posteriorly; three pairs of enlarged nuchal scales; two loreals; supraciliaries seven; supraoculars four, followed by a small postsupraocular; primary temporal single; secondary temporals two, upper very large and overlapped by lower one; lower eyelid with a large undivided opaque window, separated from supralabials by a row of small scales; supralabials seven; ear opening nearly rounded, without projecting lobules; tympanum slightly sunk; mental wider than long; infralabials six; postmental undivided; midbody scales in 24 rows; dorsal scales between lateral stripes in four rows, smooth, larger than lateral scales; paravertebral scales 59; ventrals in 58 transverse rows, smooth; precloacals two, enlarged; tail thick at base, tail tip lost, medial subcaudals slightly widened; limbs short, pentadactyl; fingers and toes widely separated when adpressed; subdigital lamellae smooth, numbering 9 under fourth finger and 11 under fourth toe.

Measurements (in mm). Snout-vent length (SVL) 45.4; distance from axilla to groin 24.6; maximum head length (from the tip of snout to the posterior margin of parietal) 7.4; maximum head width 5.1; head height 4.1; snout length 3.8; distance from snout to tympanum 7.5; distance from snout to forelimb 14.2; horizontal eye length 2.1; distance from anterior corner of eye to nostril 2.1; maximum diameter of tympanum 1.1; forelimb length 9.5; hindlimb length 12.8.

Coloration in alcohol. Dorsum and tail base bronze brown with some indistinct dark spots on anterior part; upper lateral zone with a distinct dark stripe from behind the eye to hind limb; infralabials with dark spots; venter and underside of tail base cream. For coloration life see Fig. 2.

Natural history. The skink was found at night (ca. 20 h) on the ground, in the secondary forest. This female specimen contained three small white follicles.

Remarks. Morphologically, the female from Cao Bang Province differs from the male from Lang Son Province (IEBR 3590) in the following features: larger in size (SVL 45.4 mm versus 31.8 mm), more paravertebral scales (59 versus 52), and more ventral scale rows (58 versus 52). Both specimens from Vietnam have 24 midbody scale rows. The number of midbody scale rows varies from 22–24 in the specimens from Sichuan, China and the SVL ranges from 37–49 mm in six males and 44–51 mm in four females (Inger et al., 1990). Schmidt (1925, 1927) reported the largest specimen (AMNH 20998, holotype) with the SVL up to 55 mm.
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References


