A recent rapid assessment survey of the herpetofauna of the proposed Tanintharyi National Park confirmed the presence of approximately 23 species of amphibians and 25 reptiles (Myint Kyaw Thura et al., 2014). Among the reptiles were three species of snakes that had not been reported previously as occurring in Myanmar or at the same northern latitude in adjacent Thailand (Keang Krachan National Park and Phetchaburi Province; Pauwels et al., 2009).

The survey occurred in 2014 from June 6th to 16th at the southern edge of the park near the village of Yeybu (12.39431ºN 99.10039ºE; Fig. 1), about 170 km east of Myeik. The village is on the eastern edge of the Tanintharyi River (formerly Tenasserim River). On June 6th, the survey team with porters and cooks walked to the first camp (12.43446ºN 99.14418ºE, 93 m asl) (Camp 1) alongside Yeybuchaung-ngal [= “small stream of Yeybu”]. The search for amphibians and reptiles was conducted within a 500 m radius of the camp, principally along the creek and its smaller feeder streams owing to the absence of trails through the dense forest. The team moved upstream to a second camp (12.44779ºN 99.16213ºE, 116 m asl) (Camp 2) on June 10th. The preceding two camps were in primary evergreen forest with numerous bamboo stands. Exceptionally heavy monsoonal rain on the 12th and rapidly rising stream level forced the team to return to the eastern edge of Yeybu village for the remainder of the survey period.

Three newly discovered snakes are: *Ahaetulla mycterizans* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Boiga dendrophila* (Boie, 1827), and *Boiga drapiezii* (Boie, 1827). We offer brief morphological descriptions of each species below and follow these descriptions with comments on the biogeographic significance of their discoveries. All specimens are cataloged in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (USNM) herpetological collection.

*Ahaetulla mycterizans* (Linnaeus, 1758) Malaysian Vinesnake (Fig. 2)

*Specimen examined.* Adult female (USNM 587040) collected at 10:00 hours by Myint Kyaw Thura, Thaw Zin and Daniel G. Mulcahy near Yeybuchaung-ngal, approximately 100 meters downstream from Camp 1.
Description. 745 mm snout-vent length (SVL), 385 mm tail length (TailL in life); dorsal scales in 15-15-13 rows (one head length behind head, midbody, and one head length in front of vent), ventrals 190, 148 paired subcaudals with undamaged tip; unpaired precloacal (anal) scale. Snout is blunt, rostral scale truncate anteriorly; two loreal scales on right, one left, each a small lanceolate scale, isolated in suture between the supralabials and internasal and prefrontal scales; internasals (dorsal surface of snout) flat anteriorly and convex posteriorly. In preservative, the head and nuchal area are bright green dorsally and laterally; trunk gradually become darker green and at about one-third length is olive to tip of tail; laterally trunk pale green to narrow white ventrolateral edge of upturned ventral scales (forming longitudinal stripe), then bordered medially by narrow dark green longitudinal stripe; white stripe becomes yellow by midbody and continues yellow onto base of tail; green stripe disappears 15-20 ventrals anterior to the vent; remainder of venter is white from tip of chin to about midbody then becoming greenish yellow continuing onto tail.

**Boiga dendrophila** (Boie, 1827) Mangrove Catsnake (Fig. 3)

*Specimens examined.* Adult female, adult male (USNM 587041-042, respectively) collected at 19.15-21.00 hours by Myint Kyaw Thura, Thaw Zin and Daniel G. Mulcahy in a small tributary to Yeybuchaung-ngal downstream from Camp 1.

Description. Adult female 1450 mm SVL, 362 mm TailL in life; dorsal scales in 21-21-17 rows, ventrals 225, subcaudals 96 with unpaired precloacal scale; eight supralabials, 3rd, 4th & 5th touch eye; 44 lateral yellow bars on trunk from neck to vent, venter becomes entirely black at ventral 126. Adult male 1440 mm SVL, 350 mm TailL in life; dorsal scales in 21-23-17 rows, ventrals 211, subcaudals 91 with single precloacal scale; 8 supralabials, 3rd, 4th & 5th touch eye; 42 lateral yellow bars on trunk from neck to vent, venter becomes entirely black at ventral 84.

**Boiga drapiezii** (Boie, 1827) White-spotted Catsnake (Fig. 4)

*Specimen examined.* Presumed adult female (not dissected) (USNM 587043) collected at 19:00-20:00 hours by Myint Kyaw Thura (MgMyint), Thaw Zin and Daniel G. Mulcahy near Yeybuchaung-ngal, approximately 100 meters upstream from Camp 1 at an elevation of 179 meters a.s.l.

Description- 1340 mm SVL, 380 mm TailL in life; dorsal scales in 19-19-15 rows, ventrals 279, subcaudals 144 with single precloacal scale; 8 supralabials, 3rd, 4th & 5th touch eye. 51 middorsal tan to cream blotches from neck to above vent, venter tan heavily mottled with brownish gray.

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**Figure 2.** Adult female *Ahaetulla mycterizans* (USNM 587040). Photographed by D. G. Mulcahy.

**Figure 3.** Adult male *Boiga dendrophila* (USNM 587042). Photographed by D. G. Mulcahy.
Peninsular Myanmar is the narrow strip of coastal plains and mountains bordering southern Thailand from about 17°N to 10°N and contains the political entities of Mon State and Kayin State, side by side in the northern half and Tanintharyi Division forming the southern half. Only the southern third of Tanintharyi is truly part of Malayan Peninsula and at the northern extreme of the Isthmus of Kra. The Isthmus is considered a major floral-faunal division between mainland Asia and Malaya. It is not a sharp break between these two biogeographic regions as numerous species of plants and animals overlap the isthmus to varying degrees. The significance of the discovery of these three snake species is that all three are southern Southeast Asian or Malayan species, and their occurrences in the Tenasserim Valley near Myeik (formerly known as Mergui or Beik) represents major range extensions beyond their previous most northern Malayan records. The discovery of these snakes and other unexpected components of the herpetofauna in a brief ten-day survey highlights the importance of southern Tanintharyi’s natural habitats for the co-occurrence of Myanmar and Malayan faunas and further reinforcing the necessity of retaining the present evergreen forest habitats of the Tanintharyi National Park to ensure the survival of Malayan forest species.

Previously, the northernmost occurrences of Ahaetulla mycterizans were in the southern Thailand (Chumphon, Krabi, and Trang Provinces; Miralles and David, 2010). These localities are within the Isthmus of Kra and approximately 200 km south of the Myeik region. The previous northernmost Thai records of Boiga dendrophila and B. drapiezii were from Phang-nga Province, Thailand (Pauwels et al., 2002) and roughly 300 km S of these Myanmar records. We checked HerpNet for additional Thailand records of these three snakes, but found none closer to the latitude of Myeik than the published records reported above, except for A. mycterizans specimen (USNM 76091) from Phichit Province (no additional data), Thailand, and two Ahaetulla specimens from the Paris museum (Museum National d’Histoire Naturelle, no. 1893.407-408) from Bhamo [Kachin State], Myanmar. The latter specimens were not examined, but the date of entry suggests that they are Ahaetulla prasina because at that time, which is the time of entry into the museum’s collection prasina was a synonym of mycterizans; however, we note that two MNHN specimens from Kayin were entered as A. prasina. The USNM A. mycterizans is less easily explained (entire precloacal scale, dorsals 15-15-13, ventrals 192, subcaudals 167, truncate snout, internasals convex, supralabials 8, 4th & 5th contact eye both sides). This specimen was collected by Hugh Smith, a fisheries officer, who traveled widely throughout Thailand, and his specimens are not known to have incorrect localities, although this may be the situation with USNM 76091.

A south-central Vietnamese record (14.4400°N, 105.4111°E; Orlov et al., 2003) of Boiga drapiezii is two degrees north of our Myanmar locality and a peculiar record owing to the absence of vouchered specimens in southern mainland Thailand and Cambodia. Additionally the 105°E longitude places the locality in Ubon Province, Thailand; presumably the correct longitude is 108°E, which does place the locality in Gia Lia Province and a forested area (fide Google Earth). The characters of this Vietnamese specimen match those given by Tweedie (1983). We also note our recent discovery of two unreported specimens (California Academy of Sciences 247770, 247864) of B. drapiezii from extreme southern Tanintharyi, approximately 40 to 60 km north of Kawthung.

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References


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