

Some Observations on a rare Japanese Snake, *Dinodon orientale*

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## シロマダラの習性二・三について

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(with 1 Text figure)

*Dinodon orientale* is a snake peculiar to Japan, being distributed over the islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. It has been thought to be relatively uncommon and scarce in numbers throughout its range.

The author has often had occasion to collect and observe specimens of this snake on the Miura Peninsula, and sets forth a few of his observations.

HABITAT: On the Miura Peninsula, *D. orientale* is often found inhabiting dry and rocky zones, such as the crevices in crumbling sedimentary cliffs, among concrete fragments piled up in empty lots, or under concrete blocks stacked in the open. In the summer of 1954, the author collected three specimens under a stack of such blocks on a concrete floor on the south side of the Yokosuka City Museum. In 1958, while clearing away the ruins of an old Navy factory at Uchikawa-Shinden, a labourer collected specimens on five or six different occasions. He called them "Benten-Mamushi" (dialectic name for a type of Viper) and claimed they had medicinal value.

Several times during August and September of 1960, Mr. Takashi Saito observed two adults and three young of the species in a rocky area near his house at Koyabe, Yokosuka. He collected one of the adults, which turned out to be a female.

Judging from these facts, it would seem that *D. orientale* aggregates in small numbers in rather restricted areas.

NOCTURNAL HABITS: *D. orientale*, like *Achalinus spinalis*, seems to be almost completely nocturnal in habit. Kept in a terrarium, specimens remain hidden under stones during the day, doing all their moving around and feeding at night. In the wild, they are never seen abroad during the daytime, except perhaps in the very early morning, but are always to be found hidden under rocks or bricks. (perhaps this is why they are considered rare)



Fig. 1. Typical habitat of *Dinodon orientale* in Uchikawa-shinden, Yokosuka.

横須賀市内川新田におけるシロマダラの棲息環境  
(旧海軍工場跡)

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FOOD HABITS: Maki (1931) and Schmidt (1927) reported that the snakes of the genus *Dinodon* feed on reptiles and fishes. Fukada (1957) succeeded to feed this species for six months by compulsorily feeding it frogs. However, little is known of the food preferences of *D. orientale*. Since 1956 the author has taken every occasion to offer captive specimens food. On Aug. 18, 1960, he obtained from Mr. T. Saito an adult female (total length 671 mm, weight 60 gr., tip of tail missing), to which a Grass-runner, *Takydromus tachydromoides* (total length 120 mm), was given on the afternoon of Sept. 16. The snake ate the lizard during that night, and excreted twice between Sept. 18-20. On Sept. 25, the same snake was offered a Five-lined Skink, *Eumeces latiscutatus* (total length 100 mm), which was likewise eaten during the night; excretion followed on Sept. 27.

During the autumn of 1957, another specimen that was being kept in a terrarium together with an *Achalinus spinalis*, suddenly seized the *Achalinus* at the middle of the body and shook it fiercely, in an apparent attempt to eat it.

Fukada (1957) reported that a Grass-runner, *Takydromus tachydromoides*, was found in one stomach while examining nine stomachs of this species.

So far the stomach contents of specimens in the wild have been indistinguishable, but judging from the above experiences, and from the fauna to be found in the immediate vicinity of the habitats of this snake, the author thinks that the diet of *D. orientale* is restricted almost entirely to reptiles, and in particular to Skinks.

In conclusion the author wishes to express his obligation to Mr. Richard Charles Goris for having given him much valuable advice and to Mr. Takashi Saito who kindly sent material for the author's use.

### Summary

- 1) On the Miura Peninsula, the habitat of *Dinodon orientale* is restricted mainly to dry, stony areas, where aggregations of several individuals are usually found.
- 2) *D. orientale* is almost entirely nocturnal.
- 3) The food of *D. orientale* is restricted mainly to Skinks.

### 抄 録

三浦半島におけるシロマダラ *Dinodon orientale* は比較的限られた場所に数個体が同時に棲息し、その環境は多くの場合、石塊やコンクリートブロックが堆積した乾いた場所である。飼育下における本種は殆んど夜行性を示し、その食性はトカゲ、カナヘビなどの爬虫類である。

### References

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