

## The blunt-headed vine snake, *Imantodes cenchoa* (Linnaeus, 1758), in Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil

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### Resumo

A cobra-cipó *Imantodes cenchoa* (Linnaeus, 1758) em Minas Gerais, sudeste do Brasil. A cobra-cipó *Imantodes cenchoa* possui ampla distribuição, ocorrendo da costa leste do México à Argentina. No Brasil, é registrada da Amazônia ao norte, à Santa Catarina ao sul. No Estado de Minas Gerais, sudeste do Brasil, há apenas dois registros de *I. cenchoa* na literatura. No presente estudo, foi realizado um levantamento de *I. cenchoa* provenientes de Minas Gerais, nas principais coleções herpetológicas brasileiras, revelando um total de 13 localidades com registros desta espécie.

**Unitermos:** Cerrado, Dipsadidae, distribuição, Mata Atlântica, Serpentes

### Abstract

The blunt-headed vine snake, *Imantodes cenchoa*, has a large distribution, occurring from the east coast of Mexico to Argentina. In Brazil, it is found from the Amazon in the north, to Santa Catarina in the south. In the state of Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil, there are only two records of *I. cenchoa* in the literature. In the present study, a search for *I. cenchoa* from Minas Gerais was conducted in the main Brazilian herpetological collections, revealing a total of 13 localities with records of this species.

**Key words:** Atlantic Forest, Cerrado, Dipsadidae, distribution, Serpentes

The genus *Imantodes* currently comprises six species of highly arboreal to nearly terrestrial dipsadid snakes with attenuated dorso-laterally compressed body and conspicuous head with big eyes (Myers, 1982). Occurring along the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, from Mexico through Central and South America to Argentina, these snakes inhabit a variety of environments, such as rainforests and savannahs, mainly below 1,500m. above sea level, but up to 2,000m. (Zug et al., 1979; Myers, 1982).

Two species are found in Brazil: *Imantodes lentiferus* (Cope, 1894) and *Imantodes cenchoa* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Myers, 1982; Bérnils, 2010). The former is distributed in lowland rainforests of the Amazon basin and Guyana region, while the latter has the widest geographical range among its congeners, from the east coast of Mexico to Argentina (Myers, 1982). Although it occurs in a large area of the country's territory, from the Amazon region in the north to the state of Santa Catarina in the south (Cunha and Nascimento, 1978; Bérnils et al., 2007), *I. cenchoa* has only recently been discovered in the Atlantic Forest of southeast Brazil (Marques, 1996).

The state of Minas Gerais, in southeast Brazil, has an area of more than 58 million hectares, three different morphoclimatic domains (Atlantic Forest, Cerrado and Caatinga) and a great variety of reliefs and climates, from the valleys of rivers in the lowlands to the highlands of mountain ranges (Drummond et al., 2005; Bérnils et al., 2009). Although Minas Gerais was visited by several naturalists throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Papavero, 1971; 1973), and despite the increase of herpetological studies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (mainly in the last decades), our knowledge of the snake diversity of the state remains scarce (Bérnils et al., 2009).

We were able to find just two published records of *I. cenchoa* from Minas Gerais, both in ecotones of Atlantic Forest and Cerrado domains: the municipality of Ouro Branco (São-Pedro and Pires, 2009) and the Estação Ambiental de Peti, between the municipalities of São Gonçalo do Rio Abaixo and Santa Bárbara (Bertoluci et al., 2009). However, this species is more widely distributed in Minas Gerais than currently reported. Since an effort to diagnose and increase the knowledge of

the state's biodiversity has already begun (Drummond et al., 2009), we consider mapping the known distribution of *I. cenchoa* in Minas Gerais a relevant action. Thus, we present in this note a revision of the distribution of *Imantodes cenchoa* in Minas Gerais, based on registers from the following Brazilian herpetological collections: Fundação Ezequiel Dias (FUNED) and Museu de Ciências Naturais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (MCN-R), in Belo Horizonte, MG; Laboratório de Zoologia dos Vertebrados, Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (LZV-S), in Ouro Preto, MG; Museu de Zoologia João Moojen, Universidade Federal de Viçosa (MZUFV), in Viçosa, MG; Instituto Butantan (IBSP) and Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MZUSP), in São Paulo, SP; Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (MNRJ), in Rio de Janeiro, RJ. We also consulted the curators of the herpetological collections of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), in Belo Horizonte, MG, and the Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU), in Uberlândia, MG, where no records were found.

As a result of our survey, it was possible to sample records of *I. cenchoa* from 13 localities in Minas Gerais (Figure 1). *Imantodes cenchoa* has a broad distribution in Minas Gerais, from the centre-east part of the state in transitional areas of Atlantic Forest and Cerrado, to the centre-west region in typical Cerrado formations, and to the southeast region in typical Atlantic Forest formations. The gaps between registers may be a result of the low number of appropriate inventory surveys, added to a possible low density of this species in the state, making it difficult to find it in the wild.

A specimen recently collected by two of us (ABB and LRS) was found crossing a dirt road in the Parque Nacional da Serra da Canastra (20.317°S, 46.521°W) at 20:30h. Although its morphological characteristics may indicate a strictly arboreal dweller, Henderson and Nickerson (1976) showed that *Imantodes* frequently descend to the ground to forage and to access another arboreal site, sometimes moving as far as 10-15 m. A similar observation of *I. cenchoa* on the ground was made by Marques and Sazima (2004), in the Atlantic Forest of the state of São Paulo, southeastern Brazil.

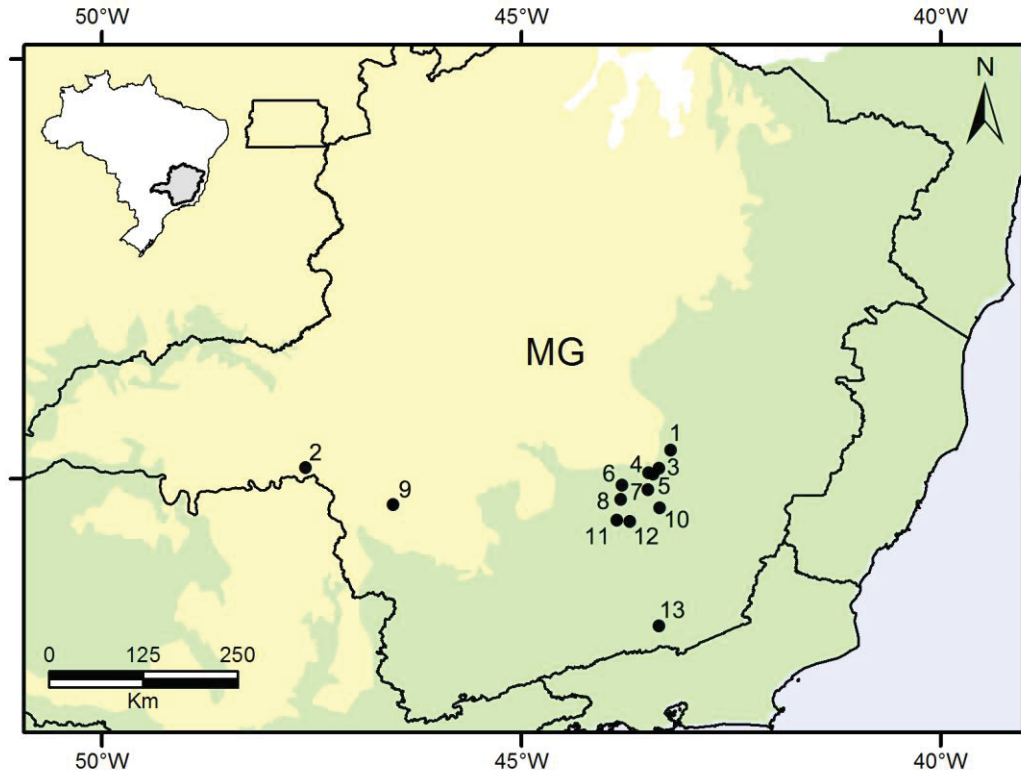


FIGURE 1: Records of *Imantodes cenchoa* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the state of Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil, with approximate coordinates. Green = Original distribution of the Atlantic Forest biome; Yellow = Original distribution of the Cerrado biome. 1) Itabira (MCNR 1901): 19.666°S, 43.212°W; 2) *Estação Guaxima*, Conquista (IBSP 4416, 5873): 19.873°S, 47.563° W; 3) *Estação Ambiental de Peti*, São Gonçalo do Rio Abaixo (MNRJ 6675, 6676): 19.883°S, 43.350°W; 4) *Córrego Pedra Vermelha, Serra do Baú*, Barão de Cocais (MCNR 3280): 19.937°S, 43.472°W; 5) Santa Bárbara (IBSP 2125, 2126): 19.955°S, 43.422°W; 6) *Riacho Fazenda Velha*, Rio Acima (MCNR 3424): 20.086°S, 43.790°W; 7) *Serra do Caraça* (MNRJ 17862): 20.136°S, 43.481°W; 8) Itabirito (FUNED 1131): 20.253°S, 43.809°W; 9) *Parque Nacional da Serra da Canastra* (MZUFV 1784): 20.317°S, 46.521°W; 10) Mariana (MZUSP 410 [specimen lost], FUNED 1144): 20.357°S, 43.345°W; 11) Congonhas (IBSP 164): 20.500°S, 43.858°W; 12) Ouro Branco (LZV-S 312): 20.517°S, 43.700°W; 13) Juiz de Fora (IBSP 42811): 21.764°S, 43.350°W.

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