

BOTHROPS JARARACUSSU (Jararacussu). **SEXUAL DICHROMATISM.** Sex differences in coloration have been reported in several snake species including pitvipers (Shine 1993. *In* Seigel and Collins [eds.], *Snakes: Ecology and Behavior*, pp. 49–86. MacGraw-Hill, Inc. New York). For instance, adult males of the Brazilian lancehead, *Bothrops moojeni*, have less defined dorsal markings than females, and bear spotted labials, whereas the labials of females are yellow-white (Leloup 1975. *Acta. Zool. Pathol. Antverp.* 62:173–201). Sex differences in color may also occur in juveniles. A yellow tail tip persists for 18 months from birth in males, whereas in females the yellow fades within six months (Leloup 1975, *op. cit.*). Sexual dimorphism or dichromatism is also reported for juveniles of the terciopelo, *Bothrops asper* (as *B. atrox*). Males have yellow tail tips, whereas females lack yellow tail tips (Burger and Smith 1950. *Science* 112:431–433).

We report herein on an additional instance of sexual dichromatism in Neotropical pitvipers. Newborns of *Bothrops jararacussu* consistently show differences related to sex in both dorsal and ventral color. Ground dorsal color of newborn males is darker (Fig. 1) and yellowish to grayish brown, whereas that of females is yellowish to pinkish brown. Moreover, the dark brown lateral markings on the body are more broken in males than in females. Like in *B. moojeni*, this feature is retained by some adult individuals (see figures in Marques et al. 2001. *Serpentes da Mata Atlântica: Guia Ilustrado para a Serra do Mar*, Ed. Holos, Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo. 184 pp.). The ventral side of newborn *B. jararacussu* males is yellowish to brownish gray, whereas that of females is yellowish to pinkish beige. Additionally, the chins of males bear distinct dark gray markings, whereas in females such markings are less pronounced and lighter (Fig. 1). In addition to the 19 photographed newborns from a litter with no locality data, housed in the collection of the Instituto Butantan (IB), we examined 16 newborns from a litter from Cachoeirinha, Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil (IB 8687), and 54 newborns from a litter from Curitiba, Paraná, southern Brazil (IB 26326–26394). All individuals from the three examined litters consistently showed the differences described above, which strongly indicate that dichromatism is a characteristic of newborn *B. jararacussu*. We suspect that sexual dichromatism in newborns may be present in other snake species as well, as this kind of dimorphism may be misinterpreted as individual color variation within the litter and thus would remain undetected.

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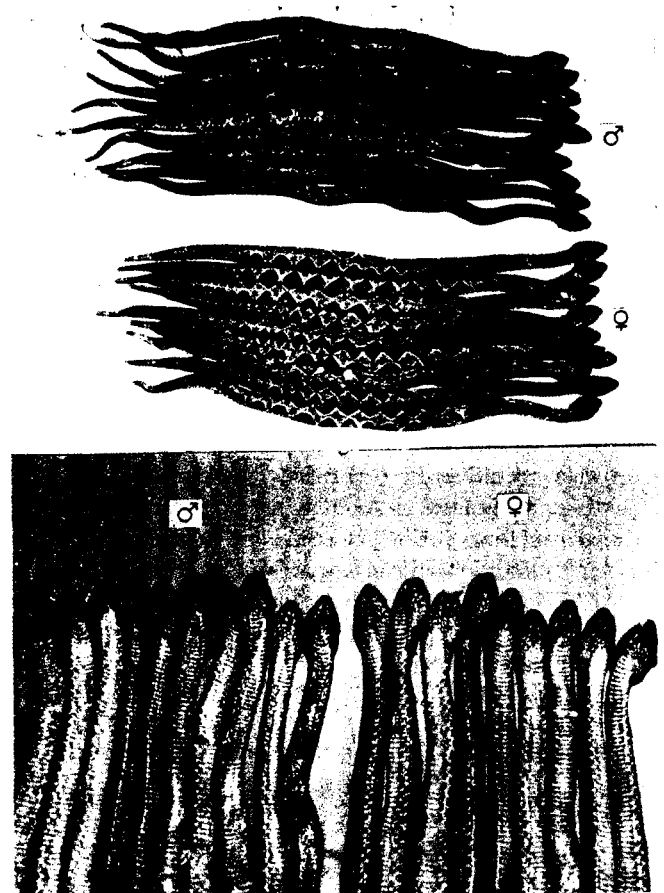


FIG. 1. A freshly-preserved newborn litter (10 males, 9 females) of *Bothrops jararacussu* showing sexual dichromatism in dorsal and ventral views.

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