

VIII. THE TAENIATUS GROUP OF WHIPSNAKES A. I. ORTENBURGER

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A study of the new world snakes of the genus recently known as *Coluber* has shown that this genus is made up of two natural groups which are of generic distinctness. The differences which separate these two natural groups are of a fundamental nature. They are: differences in dentition, in method of reducing scale rows, and in the structure of the penis. Moreover the new genus which retains the old name *Coluber* is much more nearly like and more closely related to another genus, *Drymobius*, than it is like the other natural group (*Masticophis*) which has been included in the old genus *Coluber*.

The name which must be given to the whipsnakes is *Masticophis*; in general these snakes can be distinguished from the racers by the fact that the scales are in 17 or 15 rows and when 17 they are reduced to 13 or 12 by the loss of both lateral and dorsal rows; if only 15 they are usually reduced to 12 or 11 by the same method or if reduced only to 13 the fifth lateral row is lost.

The racers of the genus *Coluber* have 17 or 15 rows but when 17 they are reduced to 15 by the loss of lateral rows only; when 15 no reduction takes place.

It was found that the Genus *Masticophis* could be easily divided into 2 natural groups, the striped forms of the *taeniatus* group and the unicolor or cross banded forms of the *flagellum* group. The *taeniatus* group shows a very nice evolutionary series in color pattern and structural characters such as number and proportions of head plates, and numbers of ventral and caudals.