

NOTE ON CELESTUS DE LA SAGRA (COCTEAU)

by

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With one textfigure

In his key to the species of the genus *Diploglossus*, Boulenger (1885, p. 284) distinguishes between two groups of species, viz., one group in which the digits terminate in "a large compressed sheath, into which the claw may be entirely or nearly entirely retracted", while in the other group such a sheath is absent. Barbour (1910, p. 297) considers the presence or absence of an ungual sheath as a character of generic value; he separates the species lacking such a sheath from the true *Diploglossus*, and revives the genus *Celestus* Gray for them¹). Burt & Burt (1931, pp. 241-242) also stress the importance of this character. Indeed the sheath is absent in *Celestes occidentus* (Shaw), of which *Celestus striatus* Gray (the type of the genus) is a synonym. Of the other species included in *Celestus* (Barbour, 1937, pp. 138-139) I have examined only *Celestus de la sagra* (Cocteau). Of the two specimens in our collection (Herp. reg. nos. 3626, 3634), one (no. 3626) is a cotype of *Scincus* (*Diploglossus*) *de la sagra* Cocteau (in Cocteau & Bignon, 1839, p. 180, pl. 20).

In both specimens the terminal scale on the upper surface of the digits forms a distinct sheath which encases the small claw (fig. 1); apparently the claw

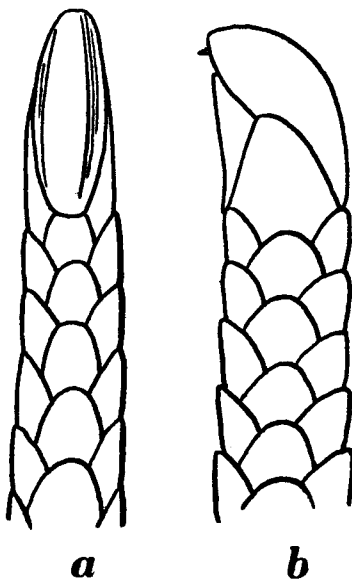


Fig. 1. *Celestus de la sagra* (Cocteau), cotype, tip of fourth toe. a, dorsal view; b, median view. $\times 7$.

1) Stejneger (1904, p. 622) placed a species from Porto Rico in the genus *Celestus*, however, without mentioning his reasons for reviving Gray's genus.

can be retracted into the sheath. Dr. Jean Guibé of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris on my request examined the five type specimens in that Museum and confirms this observation. On the lower surface of the digit the terminal scale is enlarged with a median notch. The large claw-like structure in the figures by Cocteau (l. c., pl. 20 figs. e, f) is the sheath, while the small, downward bent claw of Cocteau's description is not shown in his figures. If the presence of a distinct ungual sheath is accepted as a character of generic value, it is clear that *de la sagra* cannot be retained in *Celestus*.

Unfortunately I have no *Diploglossus* species with a distinct ungual sheath for comparison, and neither did I find adequate figures of this sheath in literature.

Therefore, I do not know, whether the structure of the sheath in *de la sagra* is the same as in the genus *Diploglossus*, and I must leave the question of the definite generic position of this species to other herpetologists.

In the specimen figured by Cocteau (l. c., pl. 20) the chinshields of the second pair are separated by one elongate shield, while in the two specimens examined by me this shield is replaced by four scales, which together have the same outline. In no. 3634 the right frontoparietal has fused with the frontal, so that on the right side the frontal and parietal are in contact.

LITERATURE

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