

ONOMASTIC OF SNAKE SPECIES SCIENTIFIC NAMES

Snake species in the genus *Atractus*

Masud Salimian
Morgan State university

Overview

Atractus is the largest genus of neotropical fossorial snakes, belonging to the subfamily *Dipsadinae* (*Colubridae*). Commonly called ground snakes, *Atractus* includes over 150 recognized species (and counting), making it one of the most species-rich snake genera in the world. Distributed from southern Central America (eastern Panama) through northern Argentina, *Atractus* is especially diverse in the Andes and Amazon Basin. These snakes are small, secretive, and adapted for burrowing—a combination that has long complicated their study and classification.

Natural History

Atractus species are primarily fossorial or semifossorial, living in leaf litter, loose soil, under logs, rocks, or in termite and ant nests. They are usually nocturnal or crepuscular but may also be found during the day in cool, moist microhabitats. Habitats range widely—from lowland Amazonian rainforest and Atlantic forest to montane cloud forests, savannas, and even dry forests. Many species are microendemic to particular valleys or mountain slopes, reflecting fine-scale habitat specialization and limited dispersal ability. Diet consists mostly of soft-bodied invertebrates, especially earthworms, but some species eat insect larvae or other small soil invertebrates. *Atractus* snakes are important predators in the soil invertebrate food web.

Reproduction and Sexual Dimorphism

Atractus snakes are oviparous, laying small clutches (commonly 2–6 eggs) in moist, protected sites such as rotting logs or burrows. For most species, detailed reproductive phenology is unknown, but breeding is generally tied to wet seasons, maximizing hatchling survival when prey is abundant. Sexual dimorphism is subtle but generally consistent: females tend to be larger or more robust, while males typically have longer, tapering tails. Cloacal probing is often necessary to reliably determine sex in the field.

Dentition and Hemipenial Morphology

Atractus species are aglyphous (lacking specialized fangs) and have small, uniform, recurved teeth ideal for gripping slimy or soft-bodied prey like earthworms. Their jaws are not adapted for venom injection or subduing large vertebrate prey. Hemipenes are typically short, bilobed, and ornamented with spines, calyces, or papillae. Hemipenial morphology is species-specific and an essential character in *Atractus* taxonomy, given the genus's extreme external conservatism.

Scalation

Scalation is one of the primary tools for diagnosing *Atractus* species. Dorsal scales are smooth (rarely weakly keeled) and arranged in 15–17 rows at midbody (most often 15). Ventrals usually number between ~100–200 and are often sexually dimorphic in count. Subcaudals are paired and relatively few, consistent with their short tails. Head scalation is conservative across the genus.

Snouts are short, rounded, and blunt—adapted to burrowing. Head shields are usually large, smooth, and symmetrical. Color patterns vary greatly among species: from uniform brown, reddish, or gray tones to boldly banded or striped forms. Many have pale venters with or without dark markings, while some show contrasting black-and-white venter patterns.

Venom

Atractus snakes are non-venomous to humans. They lack fangs or venom glands. Their teeth are simple and adapted for grasping small invertebrates. There is no evidence of medically significant envenomation in humans. Their main defense mechanisms are crypsis, fossorial habits, and occasionally flattening or coiling when threatened.

Historical Notes

Atractus was first described by Wagler in 1828 (*Atractus elaps*), but the genus remained taxonomically neglected for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Early descriptions were often based on very few specimens, complicating later revisions. Modern herpetologists have recognized *Atractus* as a taxonomically complex and highly diverse radiation, particularly in the Andes, where isolation in montane valleys and slopes has driven rapid speciation. In the last few decades, *Atractus* has become a focus of intensive taxonomic work, with dozens of new species described using detailed analyses of scalation, hemipenes, color pattern, and molecular data. Molecular phylogenetics has revealed deep divergences among lineages, suggesting that even more cryptic species await discovery. *Atractus* is now recognized as an important system for studying Neotropical biodiversity, speciation, and biogeography. However, many species are threatened by deforestation, agriculture, and mining—especially in the Andean cloud forests and Amazonian foothills, making conservation assessments increasingly urgent.

Genus

Atractus WAGLER, 1828

The genus name *Atractus* is probably a Latinization of the Greek word *átraktos* (ἀτρακτός) meaning "spindle," or "arrow." This name is a morphology-based descriptor referring to the fusiform habitus of these snakes, which typically possess a uniform body width and a short, rapidly tapering tail, resembling an antique spindle used for spinning fibers. The grammatical gender is masculine. *Atractus trilineatus* WAGLER, 1828 is the type species of the genus *Atractus* WAGLER, 1828.

Nomenclature Notes: ICZN Opinion 2210 was crucial for stabilizing the names of these common Neotropical snakes. To ensure taxonomic stability, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) conserved the name *Atractus* WAGLER, 1828, by suppressing its senior objective synonym *Brachyura* KUHL & VAN HASSELT, 1822. Furthermore, the specific name *Atractus trilineatus* was given precedence over its senior objective synonym *Brachyorrhos kuhli* SCHLEGEL, 1826. This ruling preserved a name that has been in consistent use for nearly two centuries for this megadiverse group of ground snakes.



Johann Georg Wagler (March 1800 – August 1832)
(Wikimedia Commons)

Species

Atractus aboiporu MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, FOUQUET, COSTA-PRUDENTE & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2019

The species epithet *aboiporu* is a language-based noun referring to snake's diet. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Tupi indigenous name *aboiporu*, itself a compound formed from Tupi words *abô* ("earthworm,") and *poru* ("eater,") a direct reference to the special diet of this species. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, it is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Remarks: Although, the epithet is selected based on earthworm eating habit of the species, this is by no means restricted to this *Atractus* species alone. In fact, all *Atractus* species are earthworm-feeding specialists. Authors also point this fact in a statement in the original paper, "... alluding to the peculiar feeding habits of the new species, as well as other congeners."

Atractus acheronius PASSOS, RIVAS-FUENMAYOR & BARRIO-AMORÓS, 2009

The species epithet *acheronius* is a behavior-based morphology descriptor referring to fossorial nature of the species. It is derived from the name *Acheron* with adjective forming suffix *-ius* meaning "pertaining to," thus "pertaining to Acheron. The name Acheron (Ἀχέρων) originates in Ancient Greek mythology, identifying the river across which the boatman Charon ferries the

souls of the deceased to the Underworld. The authors selected this epithet to parallel the snake's subterranean lifestyle and dark coloration with the "Black River" (Río Negro) valley of its type locality.

Mythology Notes: According to Classical myth, Acheron is the "River of Woe," one of the five primary rivers of the Greek Underworld. Often depicted as a tributary of the Styx, it represents the boundary between the living and the dead. This association with the lightless subterranean depths serves as a metaphor for the specialized fossorial niche of this species and the sunless environment it inhabits beneath the leaf litter of the Sierra de Perijá.

Atractus akerios MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, PRUDENTE, VENEGAS & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2021

The species epithet *akerios* is a quantity-based noun of a mythological and metaphorical nature. It is a Latinization of the Ancient Greek adjective *akérios* (ἀκήριος) which carries two profound and distinct meanings that both apply to this snake. One meaning is "lifeless," or "dead," which refers to the species' apparent disappearance or "lifelessness" at a site where it was once expected to be found. The other meaning, "harmed by a Ker," derived from the Keres (the death-spirits in Greek mythology,) which in this sense, *akérios* (*a-* "not" + *kérios* "harmed") means "untouched by death" or "unharmed." However, in the context of this snake, the authors use it to reference the Keres themselves and the "doom" of a species vanishing from a locality. The authors chose this name to reference the sudden and "mysterious" disappearance of the species from a well-studied site in the Brazilian Amazon, where it was once recorded but has since become remarkably rare. Grammatically, it is a noun in apposition and remains invariant.

Mythology Notes: In Greek mythology, the *Keres* (Κῆρες) were female death-spirits, the daughters of Nyx (Night). They personified violent or cruel death and were often depicted as winged, dark entities hovering over battlefields. Unlike Thanatos, who represented peaceful death, the Keres represented "doom" and the physical decay of the body. The epithet *akerios* invokes these spirits to highlight the "ecological doom" or the ghost-like rarity of this snake within its known range.

Atractus albuquerquei CUNHA & NASCIMENTO, 1983

The specific epithet *albuquerquei* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors Brazilian entomologist and museum administrator Dalcy de Oliveira Albuquerque.

Remarks: Dalcy de Oliveira Albuquerque (1918–1982) was a highly respected Brazilian entomologist and museum administrator who played a key role in the modernization of scientific institutions in Brazil. A specialist in Diptera (flies), he published numerous works on the taxonomy of Neotropical species and served as the Director of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi between 1962 and 1968, where he was instrumental in recovering and reorganizing the historic Adolpho Ducke collection. His leadership extended to the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, which he directed from 1972 to 1976. In recognition of his immense contributions to Brazilian zoology, several species have been named in his honor, most notably the Albuquerque ground snake (*Atractus albuquerquei*) and the lizard *Colobodactylus dalcyanus*.



Atractus albuquerquei, Albuquerque Ground Snake - Três Lagoas, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil - Diego Santana
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/diegojsantana>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus alphonsehoge CUNHA & NASCIMENTO, 1983

The specific epithet *alphonsehoge* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Brazilian herpetologist Alphonse Richard Hoge.

Remarks: Alphonse Richard Hoge (1912–1982) was a titan of Brazilian herpetology who bridged the scientific communities of Belgium and Brazil. Born in Rio Grande do Sul to a Belgian engineer, he returned to Belgium as an infant but eventually moved back to Brazil in 1939. In 1946, he joined the Instituto Butantan, where he served as the Director of the Biology Department from 1969 until his retirement in 1982. Hoge is famous for his extensive research on venomous snakes, particularly his groundbreaking study of intersexuality in the Golden Lancehead (*Bothrops insularis*) on Queimada Grande Island. His immense impact on South American biodiversity is honored by the naming of the Alphonse Richard Hoge Herpetological Collection at Butantan and several species named in his honor, including: *Ranacephala hogei* (Hoge's side-necked turtle), a critically endangered species from southeastern Brazil, *Atractus alphonsehoge* (Alphonse's ground snake), endemic to the forests of northern Brazil, and *Amphisbaena hogei* (Hoge's worm lizard), a fossorial reptile found in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Atractus altagratiae PASSOS & FERNANDES, 2008

The species epithet *altagratiae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it is named after a female individual. It is honoring Brazilian scientific illustrator Altagratia Chiesse.

Remarks: Altagratia Chiesse is a herpetologist and scientific illustrator associated with the Departamento de Vertebrados at the Museu Nacional in Brazil. Her work primarily focuses on the taxonomy and systematics of Neotropical snakes, particularly the complex genus *Atractus*. She is specifically recognized for her skill in creating detailed morphological illustrations. The species *Atractus altagratiae* was named in her honor to acknowledge her dedication to the herpetological collection and her "valuable help... in the elaboration of the snake illustrations" for numerous scientific works. Beyond illustration, Chiesse is an active researcher. She has co-authored significant taxonomic papers, such as the revision of the *Atractus occipitoalbus* complex published in *Herpetologica* (2009). Her work has been integral to the management of the herpetological collection at the Museu Nacional, one of the most important scientific repositories in South America.

Atractus alytogrammus KÖHLER & KIECKBUSCH, 2014

The species epithet *alytogrammus* is a pattern-based morphology noun. It is a Latinized compound noun derived from two Ancient Greek elements, *álytos* (ἄλῡτος) [Latin: *alytos*] meaning "that may not be untied," or "unbroken," itself derived from the privative *a-* (ἀ-) meaning ("un,") and *lūtós* (λύτός) meaning "that may be untied," combined with *grámmē* (γραμμή) meaning "a stroke or line of a pen." Taken together, the name literally translates to "a continuous line," or "unbroken stripe." Grammatically, *alytogrammus* functions as a noun in apposition, thus it is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the continuous dorsolateral pale stripe in this species.

Publication Quote: "... is a compound noun derived from *alytos* (Greek for "unbroken") and *gramme* (Greek for "line"), alluding to the continuous dorsolateral stripe ..."

Grammar Notes: Although the masculine suffix *-us* frequently denotes an adjective; the original authors explicitly defined the epithet as a noun. According to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (Article 31.2.2), this designation makes the name a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant regardless of the gender of the genus.

Atractus andinus PRADO, 1944

The species epithet *andinus* is geography based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is the Latin adjective *andinus* meaning "belonging to the Andes." The adjective *andinus* ("Andean,") itself is from the proper noun Andes ("Andes Mountains,") and the adjectival suffix *-inus* denoting "belonging to," "of the nature of," or "originating from," to create the final form. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the type locality and distribution of this species in "Andes, Colombia," as Prado stated. The species is distributed in Central Colombia (Antioquia), 1535 m elevation and is known only from the type locality.

Geography Notes: The Andes cordillera, the world's longest continental mountain range, follows the western margin of South America through seven nations. The etymology of the name "Andes" is frequently linked to the Jauja region in the department of Junín, Peru, where the pre-

Hispanic Xauxa (or Jauja) and Huanca (Wanka) peoples originally flourished. One compelling theory suggests the name derives from the Anti people, a group that inhabited the lush eastern slopes of the central Peruvian Andes. In the Quechua language, the term *anti* means "east" (signifying the direction of the rising sun), and it was used by the Inca Empire to designate the Antisuyu, the eastern quadrant of their realm. This indigenous root was eventually adopted and pluralized by Spanish chroniclers into "Andes" to describe the vast mountain system that dominated the Xauxa heartland and beyond. The word *cordillera* itself is from Spanish *cordillera*, meaning "mountain chain," derived from *cuerda* (rope). Adopted to English denoting a long, extensive system or chain of parallel mountain ranges, often forming the main backbone of a large landmass, like the Andes in South America or the American Cordillera along the western Americas.

Atractus apophis PASSOS & LYNCH, 2010

The species epithet *apophis* is a behavior-based morphology noun referring to fossorial nature of the species. It is derived from the name *Apophis* a mythical creature who according to Egyptian mythology inhabited the underground of the earth and fought with the God Rá at each night-fall, always defeated, but resurrected in the next day for new combat. Grammatically, it functions as a noun in apposition and as such, it is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The authors used the epithet in allusion to the secretive fossorial habits of the species.

Mythology Notes: In Egyptian mythology, Apep (also known as Apophis) represents the primordial deity of chaos (*isfet*) and the eternal adversary of the sun god, Ra. Usually depicted as a gargantuan, coilsome snake-like monster or serpent, Apep was believed to reside in the darkest depths of the Underworld, where he attempted to swallow Ra's solar barque during its nightly transit. This mythological battle symbolized the perpetual struggle between light and darkness, with the serpent's movements often blamed for earthquakes and solar eclipses. In the context of herpetology, this reference typically alludes to a species' imposing size, dark or subterranean habits, or an appearance that mirrors the menacing form of the ancient chaos-serpent.

Atractus arangoi PRADO, 1940

The specific epithet *arangoi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Colombian naturalist Andrés Posada Arango.

Remarks: Andrés Posada Arango (1839–1923) was a foundational figure in Colombian science, widely regarded as one of the country's first great naturalists and physicians. Born in Medellín, he balanced a distinguished medical career, serving as a professor and rector at the University of Antioquia, with a deep passion for the natural world. He is best known for his pioneering work in ichthyology, particularly his 1889 publication *Los Peces de Colombia*, and for founding the Academia de Medicina de Medellín. His vast contributions to botany, zoology, and archaeology led to numerous species being named in his honor, including the ground snake *Atractus arangoi* and the plant genus *Posadaea*.



Atractus arangoi - La Isla Escondida, Putumayo, Colombia - Jurgen Beckers
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/jurgenbeckers>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus atlas PASSOS, SCANFERLA, MELO-SAMPAIO, BRITO & ALMENDARIZ, 2018

The species epithet *atlas* is a morphology-based noun with a mythological connection, referring to both the snake's large size and the taxonomic difficulty of the genus. It is a Latinized noun derived from the Ancient Greek *Átlās* (Ἄτλας), a Titan from Greek mythology. The authors employed the epithet metaphorically to describe the large size of the species, ranking among the five largest members of the genus, alluding to the legendary strength of the Titans.

Simultaneously, the name serves as an allusion to the "tremendous endeavor" required to resolve the diversity of *Atractus*, referencing the "excess of obligations" and the eternal punishment of Atlas. Grammatically, it functions as a noun in apposition and as such, it is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Mythology Notes: In Greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan condemned by Zeus to hold up the celestial heavens for eternity following the Titanomachy (the ten-year war between the Titans and the Olympians). According to ancient texts, Atlas stood at the western ends of the earth, eventually becoming identified with the Atlas Mountains of North Africa. He was traditionally viewed as a figure skilled in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy; in antiquity, he was often credited with the invention of the celestial sphere. The modern use of the word "atlas" for a book

of maps stems from the 16th-century cartographer Gerardus Mercator, who named his collection of maps in honor of the Titan, characterizing him as the founder of geography.



Atractus atlas - Paquisha, Ecuador - jorgebrito
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/jorgebrito>
Creative Commons License

Atractus atratus PASSOS & LYNCH, 2010

The species epithet *atratus* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin participial adjective *ātrātus*, meaning "darkened," "blackened," or "clothed in black." formed from adjective *āter* ("dull black," or "dark,") and the adjectival/participle suffix *-ātus* indicating "provided with," or "clothed in." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus* (nominative masculine singular in *-er*). The epithet refers to the uniformly dark coloration of the belly of the species, a feature that distinguishes it from many of its congeners. Note that, unlike the adjective *niger*, *āter* traditionally implies a dark, lusterless appearance, aptly describing the matte-black pigmentation often seen in fossorial dipsadines.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: (adjective) *āter* --> (genitive) *ātrī* --> (stem) *ātr-* + (adjectival suffix) *-ātus* = *ātrātus*.



Atractus atratus - Palestina, Huila, Colombia - Nelson Fabian Galindez Mutiz
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/nelson_fabian
 Creative Commons License

Atractus attenuatus MYERS & SCHARGEL, 2006

The species epithet *attenuatus* is a habitus-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *attenuātus* meaning "thinned," "reduced," or "attenuated." It is the perfect passive participle of the Latin verb *attenuō* (present infinitive *attenuāre*), meaning "to make thin," which is derived from the prefix *ad-* ("to,") and *tenuō* ("make thin.") The epithet refers to the slender, elongated body shape of the species which is reduced in girth compared to more robust members of the genus. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: (verb) *attenuō* --> (stem) *attenu-* + (adjectival suffix) *-ātus* = *attenuātus*.

Atractus avernus PASSOS, CHIESSE, TORRES-CARVAJAL & SAVAGE, 2009

The species epithet *avernus* is a habit-based noun referring to a fossorial lifestyle by analogy to a mythical location. It is derived from the Latin proper noun Avernus, referring to Lake Avernus in Italy, which in Ancient Greek and Roman mythology was considered the entrance to the Underworld. The name originates from the Ancient Greek *áornos* (ἄορνος). The authors selected the epithet in allusion to the secretive, subterranean existence of this species. Grammatically, it is

a proper noun in apposition; as such, it is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Remarks: The etymology of the geographic Lake Avernus points to a similar grim connotation. It derives from the Ancient Greek *áwornos* (ἄφορνος), meaning "birdless," formed from the privative *a-* (ἀ-), "without," and *órnis* (ὄρνις), "bird." This name likely refers to the absence of avian life around the lake in antiquity, caused by toxic volcanic gases, such as carbon dioxide, seeping from the crater, a fitting metaphor for the sunless, subterranean world inhabited by these fossorial snakes.

Atractus ayeush ESQUEDA, 2011

The species epithet *ayeush* is a language-based eponymous noun of quasi-kinship. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Ayamán indigenous word *ayeush*, meaning "brother." The epithet honors the author's late friend and colleague, Mr. Rommel Azuaje, an esteemed member of the Forest Firefighting Group at the University of the Andes. The name alludes to Azuaje's protective role, which the author likens to the Ayamán people's "historical stewardship of the Lara-Falcón mountainous system," the region serving as the type locality. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, the epithet is invariant and does not change to match the masculine gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "The specific name, used here as a noun in apposition, is derived from the word "ayeush", of masculine gender, which means "brother" in the language of the Ayamanes (Ayama, or Yama, or Wayama)(Querales 2001), an Arawak ethnic group whose territory extended to current municipalities of the Falcón State (Democracia, Sucre, Federación and Unión) and Lara State (Iribaren, Torres, Crespo and Urdaneta), where it is located the Serranía de Parupano, type locality of the new species. The name is meant to be dedicated to my late friend and appreciated colleague Rommel Azuaje, outstanding member of the Forest Fireman Group of the University of The Andes deceased in 2006"

Ethnohistorical Notes: The Ayamán (also known as Ayomán or Wayama) are an Arawak ethnic group originally inhabiting the northwestern mountainous regions of Venezuela. Their ancestral territory was notably extensive, spanning the current municipalities of Democracia, Sucre, Federación, and Unión in Falcón State, as well as Iribarren, Torres, Crespo, and Urdaneta in Lara State. Historically characterized by their presence in the Serranía de Parupano, the Ayamán first made contact with European colonizers in 1530 during the expeditions of Nicolaus Federmann. While some early anthropologists classified them within the Jirajaran language family, more recent linguistic and ethnohistorical studies identify them as part of the broader Arawakan heritage. Their name is preserved today in local toponyms and in the specific epithets of regional fauna, such as the snake species *Atractus ayaman*, which honors their historical stewardship of the Lara-Falcón mountainous system.

Alternative Interpretation: The choice of "brother" may also signify a fictive-kinship relationship, expressing a deep, fraternal bond between the author and Azuaje, common in close-knit academic and service-oriented field groups.

Atractus badius (BOIE, 1827)

The species epithet *badius* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *badius*, meaning "chestnut-colored," "bay," or "reddish-brown." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the dorsal coloration of the body, which is

primarily red and covered by large black dyads separated by narrow light rings. It is important to note that this nut-brown or reddish coloration exhibits significant variation: the background color ranges from bright red to dark brown, and the width of the bands varies from narrow to exceptionally wide.

Publication Quote: "... supra badius ..." It translates to, "... above nut-brown ..."



Atractus badius, Boie's Ground Snake - Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, French Guiana - Arnaud Aury

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/arnaud_aury

Creative Commons License

Atractus biseriatus PRADO, 1941

The species epithet *biseriatus* is a pattern-based morphological descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *biseriātus*, meaning "having two serial rows." It is formed from the prefix *bi-* ("two") and the adjective *seriātus* ("arranged in serial order,") which is derived from *seriēs* ("row," or "succession,") with the suffix *-ātus* indicating "provided with." While morphologically a perfect passive participle, *seriātus* is fully lexicalized as an adjective in zoological Latin. Grammatically, *biseriātus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the two series of light paravertebral spots on the species, which may sometimes be confluent or merged.

Publication Quote: "... com duas series de manchas claras paravertebrais, às vezes confluentes..." It translates to, "with two series of light paravertebral spots, sometimes confluent."



Atractus biseriatus, Two-lined Ground Snake - Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia - Cristian Antonio Calderón López
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/cristianlopez>
Creative Commons License

Atractus bocki WERNER, 1909

The specific epithet *bocki* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors the collector of the type, G. Bock (often cited as C. Bock in older literature, though taxonomic catalogs typically clarify the initial as G.)

Remarks: While a full formal biography of G. Bock is not widely publicized in standard herpetological dictionaries, he appears to have been an active collector for Franz Werner, the prolific Austrian herpetologist. Bock collected the original specimen (ZMH 4194) in the Cochabamba Department of Bolivia. This specimen was later deposited in the Zoologisches Museum Hamburg (ZMH). Tragically, the holotype collected by Bock was destroyed during the Second World War during the Allied bombing of Hamburg. For nearly a century, the species was known only from Werner's original description and plates until its rediscovery in the early 2000s.



Atractus bocki, Bock's Ground Snake - León, Jujuy Province, Argentina - Alfredo Sabaliauskas
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/sab_alfred
 Creative Commons License

Atractus bocourti BOULENGER, 1894

The specific epithet *bocourti* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors French naturalist Marie Firmin Bocourt.

Remarks: Marie Firmin Bocourt (1819–1904) was a distinguished French zoologist and paleontologist, though he is perhaps best remembered for his significant contributions to herpetology through his extensive involvement with the monumental work *Reptiles, Poissons, Insectes* in the section of the series dedicated to reptiles. His detailed descriptions and illustrations, often produced as part of the Mission scientifique au Mexique et dans l'Amérique Centrale, provided essential foundational knowledge on Mexican and Central American reptiles.

Atractus boimirim PASSOS, PRUDENTE & LYNCH, 2016

The species epithet *boimirim* is a language-based noun referring to snake's size. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Tupi indigenous name *boimirim*, meaning "small snake." It is a compound formed from Tupi words *bói* (or *'mbói*) meaning "snake," and *mirim* meaning "small," a direct reference to the diminutive size of this species. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, the epithet is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Language Notes: In the original description, the authors noted that "in Tupi (the linguistic branch of most Brazilian Indians), ... the spelling ('m) with the prefix 'm before the snake radical bóî is optional in some variants of the Tupi-Guarani vocabulary." This linguistic nuance highlights the cultural heritage integrated into the taxonomic naming of many Brazilian herpetofauna.

Atractus boulengerii PERACCA, 1896

The specific epithet *boulengerii* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ii* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors Belgian born British zoologist George Albert Boulenger for his extraordinary contributions to the field of herpetology.

Remarks: George Albert Boulenger FRS (1858–1937) was a Belgian-British zoologist renowned as one of history's most prolific taxonomists of lower vertebrates, with an incredible ability to identify thousands of fish, amphibian, and reptile species from memory. After earning a natural sciences degree from the Free University of Brussels, he joined the British Museum (Natural History), where he worked in the Department of Zoology from 1882 until his retirement in 1920. During his long and distinguished career, Boulenger published over 800 scientific papers and monographs, describing more than 2,500 new species and producing monumental catalogues of the museum's collections, which established a high standard for systematic herpetology. After his retirement, he pursued a second career as a botanist, specializing in European roses.

Atractus caete PASSOS, FERNANDES, BÉRNILS & MOURA-LEITE, 2010

The species epithet *caete* is a language-based noun referring to snake's size. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Tupi indigenous name *caetê* meaning "true forest." It is a compound formed from Tupi words *caá* meaning "forest" and *etê* meaning "true," alluding to the Atlantic Rainforest remnants where the species was found. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, the epithet is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Anthropology & Conservation Notes: The Tupi word *caetê* is also the denomination for the extinct anthropophagous group of Brazilian Indians native to the region of the type locality. The Caeté people originally occupied the coastal regions of northeastern Brazil, a territory defined by the lush Atlantic Forest. Portuguese colonizers later exterminated the group after the natives captured and devoured Dom Pero Fernandes Sardinha, the first bishop of Brazil, in 1556. Today, the "true forest" (*caá-etê*) described by the epithet faces a different kind of extinction; the Atlantic Forest is one of the most threatened biomes on Earth, with only about 12% of its original cover remaining. In the state of Alagoas, where the species was discovered, the habitat is severely fragmented due to centuries of sugar cane monoculture and urban expansion. This environmental degradation renders the remaining remnants critical for the survival of micro-endemic species like *Atractus caete*, which serves as a biological link to a landscape and a culture that have both largely vanished.

Atractus careolepis KÖHLER & KIECKBUSCH, 2014

The species epithet *careolepis* is a morphology-based noun referring to lepidosis. It is a hybrid Latin-Greek compound noun derived from Latin verb *careō* (present infinitive *carēre*) meaning "to lack," or "be without," and the Ancient Greek *lepís* (λεπίς) meaning "scale," Taken together,

the name literally translates to "lacking (a) scale, or scales." Grammatically, the compound noun in here functions as a noun in apposition, thus invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the absence of the loreal scale in this species. Note that the loreal scale in *Atractus* species is typically elongated and its absence is a primary diagnostic feature for this species.

Publication Quote: "... is a compound noun derived from *careo* ... and *lepis* ... referring to the absence of the loreal scale in this species."

Grammar Notes: Grammatically, the compound *careolepis* is a third-declension, one-termination adjective, meaning its nominative singular form (*careolepis*) is identical across masculine, feminine, and neuter genders, however, the original authors explicitly used it as a "compound noun" and thus in here it functions as a noun in apposition (ICZN Article 31.2.2). Also, the formation is not simply *careo* + *lepis*, but it follows the following route: (verb) *careō* --> (stem) *care-* + (interfix) *-o-* + *lepis* = *careolepis*.

Atractus carrioni PARKER, 1930

The specific epithet *carrioni* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Ecuadorian naturalist Clodoveo Carrión Mora.

Remarks: Clodoveo Carrión Mora (1883–1957) was a distinguished Ecuadorian naturalist and paleontologist who is considered one of the most important scientific figures in the history of Loja Province. Educated at the universities of London and Manchester, he returned to Ecuador to become a lifelong professor at the Colegio Bernardo Valdivieso, where he dedicated himself to documenting the region's biodiversity and geological past. Carrión Mora was a tireless collector who collaborated with global institutions like the British Museum, and his fossil discoveries were instrumental in reconstructing the Cenozoic climate and geological evolution of the Andes. His legacy lives on in the scientific names of numerous species across multiple disciplines, including the ground snake *Atractus carrioni*, the lizard *Stenocercus carrioni*, the frog *Pristimantis carrioni*, and even the insect vector of Chagas disease in southern Ecuador, *Triatoma carrioni*.



Atractus carrioni, Parker's Ground Snake - Santa Gertrudis, Ecuador - John G. Phillips
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/johnsalamander>
Creative Commons License

Atractus caxiuana COSTA PRUDENTE & SANTOS-COSTA, 2006

The species epithet *caxiuana* is a language-based name that functions as a toponym. The name is derived from the Tupi language word *caxiuanã* meaning "place of many snakes." It is a compound of the Tupi terms *caxiu* (or *kasiu*) meaning "a snake," or "a serpent," and *anã* meaning "many," "plenty," or "abundance." Together, the terms describe the region's dense biodiversity and the historical prevalence of snakes in that specific area of the Amazon. Grammatically, it is best treated as a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant. The epithet refers to the Caxiuanã National Forest, within which the type locality is situated. It is also a wonderful irony that a species named "place of many snakes" is actually part of a genus known for being cryptic and difficult to find.

Geography Notes: The type locality of the species is the Ferreira Penna Scientific Station (ECFPn - for its Portuguese name, Estação Científica Ferreira Penna), located within the 300,000-hectare Caxiuanã National Forest in Melgaço, Pará State, Brazil. Situated 400 km west of Belém, the station sits in a remote area of dense, primary lowland rainforest (terra firme). The facility is managed by the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi and serves as a critical site for long-term ecological research in the Eastern Amazon.

Atractus cerberus ARTEAGA, MEBERT, VALENCIA, CISNEROS-HEREDIA, PEÑAFIEL, REYES-PUIG, VIEIRA-FERNANDES & GUAYASAMIN, 2017

The species epithet *cerberus* is a metaphorical toponym with a mythological foundation. It is a Latinized noun borrowed from the Ancient Greek *Kérberos* (Κέρβερος), the multi-headed hound that guards the gates of the underworld. The authors employed the epithet as an allusion to the species' type locality: the gates of the Refinería del Pacífico, a massive industrial oil-processing plant in Ecuador that the authors likened to the "underworld" due to its environmental impact. Grammatically, it functions as a noun in apposition and remains invariant, regardless of the masculine gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Mythology Notes: In Greek mythology, Cerberus is the formidable guardian of Hades. Usually depicted with three heads, a mane of hissing snakes, and a serpent's tail, he ensures that the souls of the deceased remain within the infernal realm. His inclusion in this species' etymology serves as a sharp critique of industrial expansion, suggesting that the refinery stands as a modern gatekeeper to a degraded, subterranean world.

Atractus charitoae SILVA HAAD, 2004

The species epithet *charitoae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it is named after a female individual. It is honoring author's spouse, Charito de Silva.

Publication Quote: "Dedicada a mi esposa Charito de Silva, en reconocimiento a su dedicación, paciencia y amor al compartir 40 años de investigación de la ofidiofauna en la Amazonia colombiana." It translates to, "'Dedicated to my wife Charito de Silva, in recognition of her dedication, patience, and love in sharing 40 years of research on the snake fauna of the Colombian Amazon.'"

Atractus chthonius PASSOS & LYNCH, 2010

The species epithet *chthonius* is a habit-based descriptor referencing a fossorial lifestyle, while simultaneously serving as a cultural toponym. It is the Latin adjective *chthonius* ("underworldly," or "beneath the earth,") derived from the Ancient Greek *khthónios* (χθόνιος), meaning "in or under the ground." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination adjective agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the secretive, subterranean habits of the species and also serves as a tribute to the pre-Columbian Tierradentro civilization (literally "inside of the ground") that inhabited the region of the type locality in Huila/Cauca, Colombia.

Ethnogeography Notes: The Tierradentro culture (c. 600–900 AD), located in Colombia's Andean massif, is renowned for its monumental subterranean funeral architecture known as hypogea. These intricate shaft-and-chamber tombs, carved directly into volcanic tuff, feature spiral staircases and geometric paintings in red, black, and white. This "inside of the ground" necropolis, one of the largest in the Andes, reflects a society deeply focused on ancestor worship and subterranean spiritual life, providing a poignant cultural parallel to the fossorial nature of the snake that shares its name.

Atractus clarki DUNN & BAILEY, 1939

The species epithet *clarki* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished American pathologist Dr. Herbert Charles Clark.

Remarks: Herbert Charles Clark (1877–1960) was a distinguished American pathologist and a titan of tropical medicine who served as the first director of the Gorgas Memorial Laboratory in Panama from 1929 to 1954. Although his primary expertise lay in the study of infectious diseases such as malaria and Chagas disease, his leadership in the Canal Zone made him a vital ally to the biological sciences, as he provided logistical support and specimens to naturalists exploring the Isthmus. His role as a facilitator of regional research was so significant that the prominent herpetologist Karl P. Schmidt named the coral snake *Micrurus clarki* in his honor, acknowledging both the holotype Clark collected and his lifelong commitment to advancing scientific knowledge in the American tropics.



Atractus clarki, Clark's Ground Snake - Dagua, Valle del Cauca, Colombia - David Bell
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/parzudak>
Creative Commons License

Atractus collaris PERACCA, 1897

The species epithet *collaris* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is nominative singular Latin adjective *collaris* formed from *collum* ("the neck,") and adjectival suffix *-alis* denoting "pertaining to," yielding "collared," or "pertaining to the neck." It is referring the brownish-black color of the head extending beyond the parietal scales, over about three transverse rows of scales, forming a dark collar-like pattern on the neck of the species. Grammatically, it is a third-declension two-termination adjective agreeing in case and gender with masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Parti superiori di color bruno-olivastro chiaro. Il capo è bruno-nerastro e questo colore si estende all'indietro, oltre i parietali, sopra circa tre serie trasversali di scaglie in modo da formare, come un collare scuro." It translates to, "The upper parts are light olive-brown. The head is brownish-black, and this color extends backward, beyond the parietal scales, over about three transverse rows of scales, forming a dark collar-like pattern."



Atractus collaris, Collared Ground Snake - Paucartambo Province, Peru - Nick Volpe
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/nickvolpe>
Creative Commons License

Atractus crassicaudatus (DUMÉRIL, BIBRON & DUMÉRIL, 1854)

The species epithet *crassicaudatus* is a morphology-based descriptor of a body part. It is the compound Latin adjective *crassicaudatus* meaning "thick-tailed," or "having a thick tail," derived from adjective *crassus* ("dense," "thick," or "solid,") and adjective *caudātus* meaning "tailed," or "caudate," itself derived *cauda* ("tail") and suffix forming adjectives from nouns *-ātus* meaning "provided with." Grammatically, *crassicaudatus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the thick, robust tail of the species unlike many congeners that have slender tapering tails.

Publication Quote: "queue courte et robuste... sa queue est forte, robuste, au lieu d'être grêle, effilée." It translates to, "short, robust tail... Its tail is strong and robust, instead of being slender and tapering."

Remarks: Epithets referring to the morphology of the tail are a common theme in reptilian nomenclature. For snakes, at least 32 species and 6 subspecies possess epithets derived from the

Latin cauda to highlight distinguishing diagnostic traits. These descriptors encompass diameter (e.g., *Atractus crassicaudatus*), length (e.g., *Enhydris longicauda*, *Gloydus brevicauda*), pattern (e.g., *Dendrelaphis caudolineatus*, *Drymarchon caudomaculatus*), and color (e.g., *Atractus nigricaudus*). Other taxa utilize unique Greek roots to describe specialized tail modifications, such as the spider-tailed horned viper (*Pseudocerastes urarachnoides*), where the name refers to the mimicry-based "arachnid" structure of the tail tip.



Atractus crassicaudatus, Thickhead Ground Snake - University City of Bogotá, Bogotá, Bogota, Colombia - Auréles Miralien

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/aurelien_miralles

Creative Commons License

Atractus dapsilis MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, FOUQUET, COSTA-PRUDENTE & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2019

The species epithet *dapsilis* is a quantity-based descriptor referring to the large sample size available for the species' description. It is the Latin adjective *dapsilis*, meaning "bountiful," "plentiful," or "abundant," likely borrowed from the Ancient Greek *dapsilḗs* (δασιλής). Grammatically, it is a third-declension, two-termination adjective agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the relative local abundance of the species within its range, which, unlike many of its rarer congeners, allowed for a large series of specimens to be examined.

Publication Quote: "... is a neuter Latin adjective ... we use this name in reference for the relative local abundance of the new species, which unlike many other congeners is herein described based on a large sample size."

Grammar Notes: original description mistakenly identifies the epithet as a "neuter Latin adjective." However, *dapsilis* is a two-termination adjective of the third declension; the form

dapsilis is used for both masculine and feminine genders, while the neuter form is *dapsile*. As the genus *Atractus* is masculine, the form *dapsilis* is correct for agreement, though its classification as neuter by the authors is technically inaccurate.

Remarks: It is worth noting that the word *dapsilis* in Latin originally carried a connotation of "sumptuous" or "rich" (often related to a feast or daps), which evolved into the more general sense of "plentiful," or "abundant," used here as epithet.

Atractus darienensis MYERS, 2003

The species epithet *darienensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from the place name *Darién* (Province) and the adjectival suffix *-ensis*, meaning "from," or "of," thus, "from Darién Province." It refers to the province where the type specimens were collected from. The specific type locality is "north end of the Serranía de Pirre, Province of Darién, eastern Panama."

Grammar Notes: Latin adjectives formed with the suffix *-ensis* are consistently of the third-declension and have two terminations. The two terminations are: *-ensis*: The nominative singular form for both masculine and feminine nouns and *-ense*: The nominative singular form for neuter nouns.

Atractus dativus PASSOS, MENESES-PELAYO, RAMOS, MARTINS, MACHADO, LOPES, BARRIO-AMORÓS & LYNCH, 2024

The species epithet *dativus* is a language-based name that functions metaphorically as an eponymous tribute. While it is the Latin adjective *datīvus* ("pertaining to giving"), derived from *datus* (past participle of *dō*, "to give"), its use here is symbolic. The authors intended the name as an indirect reference to the common Spanish expression "Dios Proveerá" ("God will provide"). This serves as a dedication to the members of the Amphibian Lab at the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales (UNAL) for their creative solutions to resource scarcity in science. Grammatically, it is best treated as a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant.

Remarks: While *datīvus* is classically a first/second-declension adjective, the context provided by Passos et al. (2024) suggests it functions as a noun in apposition. Because the name identifies a specific linguistic case and a specific cultural philosophy, rather than describing a physical attribute of the snake, it acts as a fixed title. This interpretation ensures that the metaphorical link to the "Dative/Giving Case" remains intact regardless of the grammatical gender of the genus.

Grammar Notes: In supporting the "Noun in Apposition" argument, we can offer a couple of reasons: (1) Semantic Shift: The authors aren't saying the snake is "given" (adjective); they are naming the snake after the concept of the Dative/Giving (a noun-concept). (2) Invariance: If a future researcher moved this species to a feminine genus (e.g., *Dipsas*), changing it to *dativa* would actually destroy the pun. The pun relies on the specific word "Dativus" (the name of the case). Therefore, it should be treated as an invariant noun in apposition.

Atractus depressiocellus MYERS, 2003

The species epithet *depressiocellus* is a morphology-based noun in apposition. It is a Latin compound noun meaning "depressed little eye," formed from the past participle of *dēprimō* (present infinitive: *dēprimere*), meaning "to press down" or "depress," and *ocellus*, the diminutive of *oculus* ("little eye.") Myers explicitly stated that the epithet is used as a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant. The epithet refers to the depressed, very small eyes of the snake, which serve as a diagnostic feature of the species.

Publication Quote: "The specific name is a noun in apposition. It is a combination of the Latin *depressus* (pressed down, depressed) and *ocellus* (a little eye), in reference to the small, depressed eyes..."

Morphology Notes: The genus *Atractus* is characterized by overall small eyes as an adaptation to a fossorial (burrowing) lifestyle. However, in *A. depressiocellus*, this trait is taken to a morphological extreme. The "depressed" nature refers to the eye being flattened and set deeply into the ocular scale, reducing its protuberance and potentially offering greater protection while the snake pushes through dense Panamanian soils.

Atractus discovery ARTEAGA, QUEZADA, VIEIRA & GUAYASAMIN, 2022

The species epithet *discovery* is a language-based noun honoring the funding source for the authors' research. It is an unmodified English noun meaning "the process of finding or being found." Specifically, the name recognizes The Explorers Club Discovery Expedition Grants, which supported the fieldwork leading to the identification of this species. Grammatically, the epithet is treated as a noun in apposition, making it invariant and independent of the masculine gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Remarks: The Explorers Club Discovery Expedition Grants initiative, is a program seeking to foster scientific understanding for the betterment of humanity and all life on Earth and beyond. The grant program supports researchers and explorers from around the world in their quest to mitigate climate change, prevent the extinction of species and cultures, and ensure the health of the Earth and its inhabitants.

Taxonomy Notes: The use of un-Latinized English words in scientific nomenclature is a modern departure from the tradition of utilizing "dead" languages. Historically, Latin and Greek were favored for three reasons: (1) Stability, as meanings do not shift; (2) Universality, providing a common ground across all modern languages; and (3) Neutrality, avoiding the perceived dominance of any single modern tongue. While the ICZN Code allows nouns in apposition from any language, many taxonomists consider the use of non-Latinized modern terms like *discovery* to be "discouraged" as it can lead to linguistic fragmentation and a lack of grammatical consistency.

Alternative Interpretations: While the epithet remains unchanged under the ICZN, had the authors sought to honor the concept of "discovery" while adhering to classical traditions, they might have chosen the Greek *anakálypsis* (ανακάλυψη) meaning "discovery," or "unveiling," or the Latin *repertum* "a discovery," or "a finding." Alternatively, Latinizing the English name into a form such as *discoveryi* would have integrated the honorific into the standard grammatical framework of the genus.

Atractus duboisi (BOULENGER, 1880)

The specific epithet *duboisi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors Belgian naturalist and illustrator Charles Frédéric Dubois.

Remarks: Charles Frédéric Dubois (1804–1867) and his son, Alphonse Joseph Charles Dubois (1839–1921), were prominent Belgian naturalists and illustrators who made significant contributions to the study of European fauna. The elder Dubois is best known for his work *Planches colorées des oiseaux de l'Europe*, a massive undertaking featuring hundreds of hand-colored lithographs that was completed by Alphonse after his father's death. Alphonse went on to become the curator of vertebrates at the Royal Museum of Natural History in Brussels and

published several important works on birds and butterflies, including *La Faune illustrée des Vertébrés de la Belgique*. The family's scientific legacy is also reflected in herpetology, as the Yellow-spotted Ground Snake (*Atractus duboisi*) and the venomous Dubois' sea snake (*Aipysurus duboisii*) were named in their honor.



Atractus duboisi - Napo, Ecuador - Eric van den Berghe
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/ericvandenbergh>
Creative Commons License

Atractus duidensis ROZE, 1961

The species epithet *duidensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor. It is a Latin adjective formed from the place name (Cerro) *Duida* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis*, meaning "from," or "of," thus, "from Cerro Duida." It refers to the locality where the type specimens were collected from. The specific type locality is "Cumbre del (Summit of) Cerro Duida, Territorio Federal Amazonas, Venezuela."

Geography Notes: The Cumbre del Cerro Duida, located within the Duida-Marahuaca National Park in the Amazonas state of Venezuela, serves as a significant high-altitude biological "island" within the Guiana Shield. Rising to approximately 2,050 meters above sea level, this summit is the type locality for the endemic snake species *Atractus duidensis*, which was first described from specimens collected during the historic Tyler-Duida Expedition in 1929. The environment at the summit is characterized by unique, often rain-drenched tepui ecosystems and montane cloud forests that harbor a high degree of endemism. Its extreme isolation and rugged terrain have historically made it a focal point for herpetological research, as it provides a distinct evolutionary habitat for specialized ground snakes like those in the genus *Atractus* that are found nowhere else on Earth.

Atractus dunni SAVAGE, 1955

The species epithet *dunni* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring American herpetologist Emmett Reid Dunn.

Remarks: Emmett Reid Dunn (1894–1956) was an American herpetologist and professor at Haverford College. Dunn was a major figure in early 20th-century herpetology, contributing to the systematics of salamanders and snakes, and served as curator of reptiles and amphibians at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. His numerous Central American collections and descriptive works made him one of the leading taxonomists of his generation. The epithet honors his lifelong devotion to herpetological research and education.



Atractus dunni, Dunn's Ground Snake - Seis de Julio de Cuellaje, Ecuador - narumk07
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/narumk07>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus echidna PASSOS, MUESES-CISNEROS, LYNCH & FERNANDES, 2009

The species epithet *echidna* is a pattern-based morphology noun referring to a mythical creature's hybrid nature. It is a Greek third-declension noun *Echidna* (Ἐχιδνα) the half woman-half snake monster goddess used as a noun in apposition to the genus *Atractus*. The authors used the name to allude to Echidna's hybrid nature referencing the "contrasting anterior/posterior coloration pattern" of the species. Thus, just as the mythological Echidna was "split" between two forms (woman and serpent), this snake appears "split" between two distinct color patterns, making the name a creative morphological metaphor.

Mythology Notes: Echidna (Ἐχιδνα, romanized: Ékhidna, literally meaning "she-viper",) in Greek mythology is the monstrous "Mother of Monsters," a terrifying creature, half beautiful woman and half serpent, who mated with the giant Typhon to birth many of Earth's most fearsome beasts, including the Chimera, Hydra, Sphinx, and Cerberus, living a solitary, immortal existence in a cave until eventually slain by Argus Panoptes. Her lineage traces back to primordial forces, often cited as children of Phorcys and Ceto or Tartarus and Gaea, embodying chaos and representing swamps and decay. She appeared as a Hybrid Form: A fair-faced maiden from the waist up, but a massive, speckled snake from the waist down, described as irresistible

and ageless. A monstrous progenitor, she represented the dangers of the wild, swamps, and corruption, who fed on passersby.

Atractus ecuadorensis SAVAGE, 1955

The species epithet *ecuadorensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from a country name *Ecuador* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Ecuador." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Ecuador as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality of "Llanganate Range, Provincia Tungurahua, Ecuador."

Geography Notes: Ecuador, a nation defined by its position on the Earth's center and named after the equator, is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries despite its relatively small size. The country is geographically divided into four distinct regions: the Costa (coastal lowlands), the Sierra (Andean highlands), the Oriente (Amazon rainforest), and the world-renowned Galápagos Islands. Its capital, Quito, is the highest official capital city in the world and sits near active volcanoes like Cotopaxi. Ecuador made history in 2008 by becoming the first nation to grant constitutional rights to nature, reflecting a deep-seated cultural respect for its environment. From the summit of Mount Chimborazo, the point on Earth closest to the sun, to the lush canopy of the Amazon and the evolutionary laboratory of the Galápagos, Ecuador offers an unparalleled concentration of biological and cultural richness.

Atractus edioi DA SILVA, RODRIGUES SILVA, RIBEIRO, SOUZA & DO AMARAL SOUZA, 2005

The species epithet *edioi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring Brazilian engineer Édio Laudelino da Luz.

Remarks: Édio Laudelino da Luz is a Brazilian engineer whose contribution to biology is immortalized through the ground snake *Atractus edioi*, which was named in his honor. While serving as the Project Manager for the Cana Brava Hydroelectric Power Plant (UHE Cana Brava) in Goiás, da Luz was noted for his exceptional professionalism and his significant support for the environmental rescue and fauna monitoring programs required during the dam's construction. Biologists discovered the new species within the Cerrado ecosystem of the impact zone and dedicated the name to him as a tribute to his commitment to preserving the region's biodiversity amidst large-scale infrastructure development.

Atractus elaps (GÜNTHER, 1858)

The species epithet *elaps* is a morphology-based noun of a similitive nature. It is a Latinized form of the Ancient Greek *élaps* (ἔλαψ), meaning "serpent" or "fish," originally derived from *éllops* (ἔλλωψ), a reference to "fish" in general. Its specific use here refers to the (now obsolete) genus *Elaps*, which historically contained coral snakes. The epithet alludes to the remarkable Batesian mimicry displayed by this species; its vibrant red, black, and yellow rings are so similar to those of venomous elapids that it is easily misidentified without dental examination. Grammatically, it is a noun in apposition and remains invariant when combined with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Ground-colour yellow; body and tail encircled by about thirty broad black rings...This snake has so much the appearance of an Elaps, both in physiognomy and coloration, that, without examining the dentition, one might take' it for a species of that genus..."

Taxonomy Notes: The genus *Elaps* SCHNEIDER, 1801 was once a broad category for many banded snakes. Following major revisions to address paraphyletic groupings, true coral snakes were moved to *Micrurus*, while many non-venomous mimics were moved to genera like *Lampropeltis*. While the family name *Elapidae* persists, the original genus name *Elaps* was suppressed or replaced, notably by *Homoroselaps* in certain African contexts, or rendered a junior synonym of *Micrurus* in the Americas.



Atractus elaps, Black Ground Snake - Vista Hermosa, Meta, Colombia - Alexander Mejia
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/alexandermejia>
Creative Commons License

Atractus emigdioi GONZÁLEZ-SPONGA, 1971

The species epithet *emigdioi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring Venezuelan herpetologist Emigdio González-Sponga.

Remarks: Emigdio González-Sponga is the son of Manuel Ángel González-Sponga (1929–2009), who was a towering figure in Venezuelan zoology, particularly renowned for his immense contributions to the study of arachnids. Manuel Ángel explicitly dedicated the species to his son, who was the one who collected the holotype specimen. Emigdio frequently accompanied his father on field expeditions across Venezuela, often appearing in acknowledgments for other taxonomic works as well..

Atractus emmeli (BOETTGER, 1888)

The species epithet *emmeli* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring Ferdinand Emmel who sent two specimens of this snake to Naturmuseum Senckenberg, Frankfurt.

Remarks: Ferdinand Emmel was a collector whose contribution to South American herpetology is immortalized in the scientific name of *Atractus emmeli*, also known as Emmel's ground snake. In the late 19th century, Emmel sent two specimens collected from the upper Beni River in Bolivia to the Naturmuseum Senckenberg in Frankfurt, Germany. These specimens were studied by the renowned German herpetologist Oskar Boettger, who described the species as new to science in 1888. A small, fossorial (burrowing) snake native to the lowland forests of Bolivia and Peru, it is characterized by its smooth scales and predominantly dark coloration.



Atractus emmeli, Emmel's Ground Snake - Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia - Virna Abrego
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/abregovirna>
Creative Commons License

Atractus erythromelas BOULENGER, 1903

The species epithet *erythromelas* is a color-based morphology epithet. It is a compound adjective formed from Greek roots: *erūthrós* (ἐρυθρός), meaning "red," and *mélas* (μέλας), meaning

"black." It refers to the striking coloration of the species, which typically features a red dorsal ground color with black spots or cross-bars. Grammatically, in Zoological Latin, *erythromelas* is treated as a third-declension, one-termination adjective. While the original Greek has three terminations (*-melas*, *-melaena*, *-melan*), the ICZN treats such Greek-derived compounds as indeclinable for gender. Thus, the ending remains *-melas* whether the genus is masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Publication Quote: "Coloration very variable. Red above, with black spots disposed quincuncially, or black with red cross-bars continuous across the back or interrupted and alternating; head reddish brown above with black spots; a black streak on each side of the head, passing through the eye; body red beneath, largely and irregularly spotted with black, or with a narrow or broad black median band, or with a median series of small black spots; lower surface of tail uniform red or with a few black spots."

Atractus esepe ARTEAGA, MEBERT, VALENCIA, CISNEROS-HEREDIA, PEÑAFIEL, REYES-PUIG, VIEIRA-FERNANDES & GUAYASAMIN, 2017

The species epithet *esepe* is a language-based noun derived from a common colloquialism in Spanish herpetology. It is a phonetic transcription of the abbreviation "sp." (for species), where the Spanish names for the letters "s" (*ese*) and "p" (*pe*) are combined. Grammatically, it is a noun in apposition and remains invariant. The authors chose this name as an allusion to how researchers in the field frequently refer to *Atractus* specimens when they cannot be immediately identified. As *A. esepe* is a rare species known only from its type locality in Caimito, Esmeraldas, the name reflects the initial uncertainty faced by the collectors upon its discovery.

Remarks: The genus *Atractus* is notoriously difficult to identify in the field due to extreme morphological conservatism, many species look nearly identical to the naked eye, requiring microscopic scale counts or hemipenial analysis for confirmation. In Ecuador, which boasts one of the highest herpetological densities in the world, the genus is represented by over 30 species. Consequently, most "herpers" and researchers use the shorthand "*Atractus sp.*" (pronounced *esepe*) when encountering these snakes. By codifying this slang into a formal name, the authors bridged the gap between informal field jargon and formal taxonomy.

Atractus favae (DE FILIPPI, 1840)

The species epithet *favae* is an eponymous descriptor in the genitive case. It is a patronymic name honoring Angelo Fava, an Italian scholar and educator. The name was formed by treating the Italian surname "Fava" as a first-declension Latin noun and applying the genitive singular suffix *-ae*. Grammatically, it is a noun in the genitive case and remains invariant. Originally described as *Calamaria favae*, it was later moved to the genus *Atractus*.

Remarks: Angelo Fava (1808–1881) was a distinguished 19th-century Italian administrator and polymath who spearheaded critical reforms in the public education system of the newly unified Italy. Though his professional life was largely spent in the Ministry of Public Education, his scientific training in medicine and philosophy at the University of Padua fostered a lifelong friendship with the naturalist Filippo De Filippi. De Filippi dedicated this species to Fava in his 1840 catalog of the snakes in the Pavia Museum, immortalizing their personal and intellectual bond.

ICZN Compliance and Name Formation: In *Atractus favae*, the use of the suffix *-ae* for a male honoree is a deliberate choice reflecting the Latinization of the name Fava. Under ICZN Art. 31.1.2, an author may treat a modern surname as a Greek or Latin noun. Since Fava ends in *-a*, it

naturally fits the first declension, for which the genitive singular is *-ae*. As this spelling was intentional and is not a demonstrative inadvertent error, the original spelling *favae* must be preserved, and any attempt to "correct" it to *favai* is prohibited.

Atractus flammigerus (BOIE, 1827)

The species epithet *flammigerus* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is a compound Latin adjective derived from *flamma* ("flame,") and the verb *gerere* ("to bear," or "to carry,") literally translating to "flame-bearing." Grammatically, *flammigerus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the vivid, flame-like red or orange spots or bands present on the rusty brown dorsal or lateral surfaces of the species, which Boie described as "cloudy."

Publication Quote: "...supra fasciis. transversis sinuatis ferrugineus fusco nebulosus." It translates to, "...above the transverse sinuous bands, rusty brown, cloudy."

Grammar Notes: While the root *flammiger* is a valid masculine adjective in classical Latin, Boie employed the extended adjectival form *flammigerus*. Although the *-us* suffix is grammatically redundant for an adjective which is already in masculine form (*flammiger*), this version explicitly utilizes the *-us* suffix of the second declension perhaps to emphasize and clarify its grammatical role. As a true adjective, its termination is governed by the gender of the genus; had it been placed in a feminine genus, the name would have been rendered *flammigera* (whether *flammiger* or *flammigerus* used).

Remarks: The "flame-bearing" descriptor is a poetic yet accurate representation of the species' aposematic coloration. This species often exhibits a "coral snake" mimicry pattern, where the bright red or orange pigmentation stands out against a darker ground color, as if the snake were "carrying fire" along its body. This terminology was common in early 19th-century herpetology to describe striking, high-contrast patterns.

Formation Notes: (noun) *flamma* --> (stem) *flamm-* + (interfix) *-i-* + (verb) *gerere* (or *gerō*) --> (stem) *ger-* + (adjectival suffix) *-us* = *flammigerus*.



Atractus flammigerus, Flaming Ground Snake - Régina, French Guiana - Maël Dewynter
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/mael_dewynter
 Creative Commons License

Atractus franciscopaivai SILVA HAAD, 2004

The species epithet *franciscopaivai* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring influential Brazilian herpetologist Francisco Paiva do Nascimento.

Remarks: Francisco Paiva do Nascimento (died 2015) was a highly influential Brazilian herpetologist at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (MPEG) in Belém, Brazil. He is best remembered for his long and prolific partnership with Osvaldo Rodrigues da Cunha, with whom he conducted an ambitious ten-year collection program (1970–1980) that dramatically expanded the museum's scientific collection. Together, they authored the foundational 1978 work *Ofídios da Amazônia X – As cobras da região leste do Pará*, which remains an essential reference for Amazonian snake taxonomy. Throughout his career, Nascimento described numerous new species of reptiles, including the coral snake *Micrurus paraensis* and several burrowing snakes in the genus *Atractus*. His significant contributions to South American herpetology are commemorated in the names of species like the gecko *Gonatodes eladioi*.

Atractus francoi PASSOS, FERNANDES, BÉRNILS & MOURA-LEITE, 2010

The species epithet *francoi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring prominent Brazilian herpetologist Francisco Luís Franco.

Remarks: Francisco Luís Franco is a prominent Brazilian herpetologist and the Curator of the Alphonse Richard Hoge Herpetological Collection at the Instituto Butantan in São Paulo. With a career spanning several decades, he has become a leading authority on the systematics and taxonomy of Neotropical snakes, particularly focusing on the diverse families of *Dipsadidae* and *Colubridae*. Dr. Franco has been instrumental in expanding and modernizing one of the world's most significant scientific snake collections, ensuring its recovery and continued growth following the catastrophic fire in 2010. His extensive research includes the description of numerous new species and detailed studies on the historical expeditions that shaped Brazilian zoology.



Atractus francoi - Paraty, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Wagner Nogueira
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/wagnernogueira>
Creative Commons License

Atractus fuliginosus (HALLOWELL, 1845)

The species epithet *fuliginosus* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *fūlīgīnōsus* meaning "sooty," formed from the noun *fūlīgo* ("soot,") and the adjectival suffix *-ōsus* ("full of," or "augmented.") Grammatically, *fuliginosus* is a first/second-declension, three-

termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the overall dark, shiny brown coloration of the species, which in preserved specimens often takes on a matte, soot-like appearance.

Publication Quote: "Body and tail dark brown; upper part of head and sides brown as far as the inferior margin of the orbit; irides; upper jaw, chin, throat, under parts of abdomen and tail, light straw colour, the latter mottled with brown."

Remarks: The choice of *fuliginosus* highlights a common occurrence in 19th-century taxonomy where a name reflects the state of a specimen after fixation in preservative. While Hallowell's description notes "dark brown," the transition from living tissue to a "sooty" (charcoal-gray or dull black) appearance in alcohol is characteristic of many fossorial snakes. The suffix *-ōsus* emphasizes the intensity of this somber coloration, distinguishing it from species with more variegated or "nebulous" patterns.



Atractus fuliginosus, Hallowell's Ground Snake - Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Mason Hall, Trinidad and Tobago - Saifudeen Muhammad

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/saifudeen_muhammad

Creative Commons License

Atractus gaigeae (SAVAGE, 1955)

The species epithet *gaigeae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it honors a female individual. It honors distinguished American herpetologist Helen Beulah Thompson Gaige.

Remarks: Helen Beulah Thompson Gaige (1890–1976) was a distinguished American herpetologist who was among the first professional women in her field in the United States. She held a long career at the Museum of Zoology at the University of Michigan, serving as an assistant curator and later curator of Amphibians, and specialized in Neotropical frogs. Gaige co-authored *The Herpetology of Michigan* in 1928, was editor-in-chief of the ichthyological and herpetological periodical *Copeia* starting in 1937, and was instrumental in organizing the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (ASIH), where she was named honorary president in 1946. The ASIH currently honors her and her entomologist husband, Frederick McMahon Gaige, with the annual Gaige Fund Award, a monetary grant for graduate students in herpetology.



Atractus gaigeae, Gaige's Ground Snake - Tena, Napo, Ecuador - kenbehrens

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/kenbehrens>

Creative Commons License

Atractus gigas MYERS & SCHARGEL, 2006

The species epithet *gigas*, is a habitus-based morphology noun. It is a Latin third-declension noun *gigās* meaning "giant," derived from Ancient Greek *Gígas* (Γίγας) meaning "giant." It references the species' unusually robust and large body size compared to other congeners. Grammatically, *gigas* functions as a noun in apposition which means it does not need to agree in gender with masculine *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "*Atractus gigas* is distinguished from all species of *Atractus* by its unparalleled large size (> 1 m) and robust body."

Remarks: In Greek mythology, Gigas (plural Gigantes) refers to the "Earthborn" giants, a powerful, aggressive race born from Gaia (Earth) from the blood of Uranus after his castration, famous for their war with the Olympian gods called the Gigantomachy, often depicted with serpent legs and representing untamed, primitive forces that the civilized Olympians and heroes like Heracles overcame, symbolizing the triumph of order over chaos, with their buried bodies causing earthquakes and volcanoes. Ancient Greek pottery and friezes often depicted the Gigantes with anguipede (snake-like) lower limbs. This makes the use of gigas for a large snake particularly resonant in classical tradition.



Atractus gigas, Giant Groundsnake - Pichincha, Ecuador - Mateo Montesdeoca
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/gdtmateo_ecu
Creative Commons License

Atractus guentheri (WUCHERER, 1861)

The specific epithet *guentheri* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors German-born British zoologist Albert Günther.

Remarks: Albert Günther (1830–1914) was a German-born British zoologist, ichthyologist, and herpetologist whose meticulous work at the British Museum significantly advanced the classification of fishes, amphibians, and reptiles. Born in Esslingen, Germany, Günther joined the British Museum in 1857, where he rose to become Keeper of Zoology in 1875. His magnum opus, the monumental eight-volume *Catalogue of Fishes* (1859–1870), described approximately 6,800 species and established a comprehensive foundation for modern ichthyology. Beyond his

immense administrative and cataloguing contributions, Günther was a keen researcher, notably being the first to correctly identify New Zealand's tuatara as the sole surviving member of an ancient lineage of reptiles. His prolific career also saw him found the Record of Zoological Literature and serve as president of the Linnean Society.



Atractus guentheri, Günther's Ground Snake - Mascote, State of Bahia, Brazil - Martín Cervantes-López
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/cabruco>
Creative Commons License

Atractus heliobelluomini SILVA HAAD, 2004

The species epithet *heliobelluomini* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring prominent Brazilian veterinarian and herpetologist Hélio Emerson Belluomini.

Remarks: Hélio Emerson Belluomini (1924–2014) was a prominent Brazilian veterinarian and herpetologist who dedicated over 30 years to the Instituto Butantan in São Paulo. Joining the institute in 1951, he rose to become the Technical Director of the Venomous Animals Service, where he revolutionized the production of antivenom by modernizing how snakes were maintained in captivity. Belluomini was a pioneer in studying venom extraction yields and the biology of pit vipers, and he played a crucial role in wildlife rescue operations during the construction of major Brazilian hydroelectric plants. Beyond his technical research, he was a prolific educator who delivered hundreds of lectures, and his scientific legacy is honored by the South American snake species *Atractus heliobelluomini*.

Atractus heyeri ESQUEDA & MCDIARMID, 2015

The species epithet *heyeri* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring eminent American herpetologist W. Ronald Heyer.

Remarks: W. Ronald Heyer (born 1941) is an eminent American herpetologist and Curator Emeritus of Amphibians and Reptiles at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. He is widely recognized as the world's leading authority on the leptodactylid frogs, a diverse group of Neotropical frogs. Throughout his distinguished career, Heyer has conducted extensive fieldwork across Central and South America, notably in Amazonian Peru and Brazil, leading to the description of numerous new species. He was also a pivotal figure in addressing the global crisis of amphibian declines, serving as the first chair of the IUCN/SSC Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force. His monumental 1994 book, *Measuring and Monitoring Biological Diversity: Standard Methods for Amphibians*, remains the foundational manual for researchers worldwide.

Atractus hoogmoedi PRUDENTE & PASSOS, 2010

The species epithet *hoogmoedi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it is named after a male individual. It is honoring preeminent Dutch herpetologist Marinus Hoogmoed.

Remarks: Marinus Steven Hoogmoed (born 1942) is a world-renowned Dutch herpetologist whose work has shaped the modern understanding of reptiles and amphibians in South America, particularly in Suriname and the Brazilian Amazon. For nearly 40 years, he served as the curator of herpetology at the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden (now Naturalis Biodiversity Center), where he managed one of the world's most historically significant scientific collections. After his retirement in 2004, he moved to Brazil to continue his research as a guest scientist at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Hoogmoed has authored hundreds of scientific papers and books, including the foundational *Notes on the Herpetofauna of Surinam*, and his immense contribution to taxonomy is reflected in the many species named in his honor, such as the lizard *Arthrosaura hoogmoedi* and the dwarf gecko *Lepidoblepharis hoogmoedi*.

Atractus hostilitractus MYERS, 2003

The species epithet *hostilitractus* is a geography-based noun of historical reference. It is a compound Latin noun formed from the adjective *hostilis* ("hostile," or "unfriendly,") and the noun *tractus* ("region," "territory," or "tract of land.") Grammatically, the epithet functions as a noun in apposition and, as such, remains invariant in the nominative singular, not changing to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the "Hostile Territory" of the Panamanian interior where the species was discovered.

Remarks: The name is an "associative implication" to the tumultuous history of the Bayano and Darién regions of Panama. The type locality, Río Mortí, was historically part of an area where the indigenous Guna (Cuna) people resisted 19th- and early 20th-century incursions by outsiders. For much of that era, the interior was considered a "forbidden" or "hostile" tract of land for explorers and settlers. By combining *hostilis* and *tractus*, Myers evokes the adventurous and often dangerous history of herpetological exploration in the Panamanian jungle, a place where the terrain was as resistant to outsiders as the history was to colonization. It is a notable biological irony that the historical resistance to incursion also served to keep the environment pristine, allowing wildlife, including snake species, to flourish undisturbed for centuries.

Grammar Notes: Although the masculine suffix *-us* frequently denotes a second-declension adjective; Myers explicitly designated the name as a noun in apposition. According to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (Article 31.2.2), this designation renders the name invariant regardless of the gender of the genus.

Atractus imperfectus MYERS, 2003

The species epithet *imperfectus* is a habitus-based descriptor of the holotype's incomplete body. It is the Latin adjective *imperfectus*, meaning "unfinished," "incomplete," or "imperfect," formed from the prefix *im-* ("not,") and the adjective *perfectus* ("finished," or "complete.")

Grammatically, *imperfectus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the fragmentary condition of the type specimen, which consists only of the head and anterior portion of the neck.

Remarks: The species was described from a partial body (MCZ 50213), a specimen of unknown sex that was killed and decapitated by a surveying party in 1936 during the Panama snake census. At the time of description in 2003, the precise locality and full morphology remained a mystery, leading Myers to assign the name *imperfectus*. However, the "unfinished" nature of the species has since been resolved; subsequent collections and photographic evidence of live specimens have provided the missing data on the body proportions, tail length, and full color pattern. The name now stands as a historical marker of the species' long journey from a 1936 fragment to a fully recognized member of the Panamanian herpetofauna.

Atractus indistinctus PRADO, 1940

The species epithet *indistinctus* is a morphology-based descriptor of resemblance. It is the Latin adjective *indistinctus*, meaning "not easily distinguished," or "easily confused." It is formed from the prefix *in-* ("not,") and the adjective *distinctus* ("distinct,") itself the perfect passive participle of *distinguō* ("to separate," or "to distinguish.") Grammatically, *indistinctus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. Prado chose this epithet to signal the taxonomic subtlety required to diagnose the species against those it most closely resembled in the literature of the time, the difficulty of morphologically distinguishing this species from its close congeners, *Atractus maculatus* (GÜNTHER, 1858) and *Atractus obtusirostris* WERNER, 1916.

Publication Quote: "...Proximo a *Atractus maculatus* (Günther) e a *Atractus obtusirostris* Werner..." It translates to, "... Next to *Atractus maculatus* (Günther) and *Atractus obtusirostris* Werner..."

Atractus insipidus ROZE, 1961

The species epithet *insipidus* is a morphology-based descriptor of general appearance. It is the Latin adjective *insipidus*, meaning "tasteless," "unpalatable," or "dull." The word is formed from the prefix *in-* ("not") and the adjective *sapidus* ("tasty" or "savory"), which stems from the verb *sapiō* ("to taste" or "to have discernment") and adjectival suffix *-idus* ("tending to.")

Grammatically, *insipidus* is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the seemingly unremarkable or "bland" appearance of the type specimens.

Remarks: The naming rationale likely reflects the condition of the specimens at the time of description. Roze published the name in 1961 based on material collected by the Tyler-Duida

Expedition in 1929. Having been preserved in spirits for over three decades, the snakes had significantly faded. While living *Atractus* can exhibit rich, subtle patterns, these 32-year-old "lost world" specimens likely appeared "insipid" or lackluster to Roze, who lacked the benefit of seeing their colors in life. In this sense, the name is more a reflection of the history of the holotype than the biology of the species.

Atractus iridescens PERACCA, 1896

The species epithet *iridescens* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin present active participle of the inceptive verb *īridēscō* ("to begin to shine like a rainbow,") derived from the noun *īris* ("rainbow,") and the suffix *-ēscere* ("to become," or "to begin to.") Grammatically, *iridescens* is a third-declension adjective of one termination; the nominative singular form remains identical regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the intense purplish-iridescent reflections throughout the body, producing a lustrous, rainbow-like display.

Publication Quote: "... le parti superiori presentano dappertutto degli splendidi e intensi riflessi violacei-iridescenti." It translates to, "... the upper parts display beautiful and intense purplish-iridescent reflections throughout."

Remarks: While some sources (e.g., Reptile Database) suggest a hybrid Greek-Latin origin, combining the Greek *iridos* (ἵριδος) with the Latin suffix *-escens*, it is more precise to treat the word as a standard Latin inceptive participle. Although the root *iris* was borrowed from Greek into Latin, the word *iridescens* functions as a legitimate Latin construction.

Color Notes: In herpetology, this "rainbow" effect is not produced by pigment, but by structural coloration. It is caused by the microscopic ridges on the scales (the nanostructure) that diffract light. This trait is particularly prevalent in somber or dark-colored fossorial snakes, where the iridescence provides a high-contrast shimmer against an otherwise uniform background. Peracca's choice of this epithet highlights a diagnostic feature that is often more apparent in life than in preserved specimens.



Atractus iridescens, Iridescent Ground Snake - Hacienda San Miguel, Ecuador - rollinkansas
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/rollinkansas>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus lancinii ROZE, 1961

The specific epithet *lancinii* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors prominent Venezuelan herpetologist Abdem Ramón Lancini.

Remarks: Abdem Ramón Lancini (1934–2007) was a prominent Venezuelan herpetologist and dedicated conservationist who served as the Director of the Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Caracas for nearly three decades. An expert in the venomous snakes of Venezuela, he authored the seminal book *Serpientes de Venezuela* (1979), which remains a critical reference for both scientists and medical professionals treating snakebites. Lancini was a pioneer in wildlife preservation, founding the National Aquarium of Valencia and leading efforts to protect the Orinoco crocodile from extinction through captive breeding programs. His extensive fieldwork and taxonomic contributions are honored in the scientific names of several species, including Lancini's ground snake (*Atractus lancinii*) and the Terrarana frog (*Pristimantis lancinii*).

Atractus lasallei AMARAL, 1931

The species epithet *lasallei* is an eponymous descriptor in the genitive case. It honors the Instituto de La Salle in Bogotá, Colombia. The name was formed by Latinizing the "La Salle" title and applying the masculine genitive singular suffix *-i*. Grammatically, it is a noun in the genitive case and remains invariant.

Remarks: The Instituto de La Salle in Bogotá is a landmark scientific institution, home to Colombia's first natural history museum. Founded in 1904 and led by influential French-born brothers such as Apolinar María and Nicéforo María, the institute was the epicenter of Colombian biological research in the early 20th century. Despite a catastrophic fire in 1948 during the Bogotazo riots, which destroyed over 55,000 specimens, the Lasallian brothers reconstructed the collections. Today, it remains a vital repository for Andean biodiversity.

Nomenclatural Notes: The use of the genitive suffix *-i* to honor an organization is an unusual stylistic choice. In Latin, this formation implies "of La Salle," treating the name as that of an individual male (La Sallius) rather than an institution. While the ICZN allows for such Latinization, modern nomenclature typically prefers a noun in apposition (e.g., *Atractus lasalle*) when the honoree is a corporate entity or institution. Furthermore, as the type locality of "San Pedro, Antioquia" is geographically removed from the Bogotá-based institute, it cannot be considered a toponym. Thus, in its original form, the name is grammatically an honorary patronym for the scientific contributions of a single Lasallian figure, rather than a collective honor for the Brotherhood or the Institution as a whole.



Atractus lasallei, Lasalle's Ground Snake - San Pedro de los Milagros, Antioquia, Colombia - Daniel Bocanumenth E.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/dbocanumenth>
Creative Commons License

Atractus latifrons (GÜNTHER, 1868)

The species epithet *latifrons* is a morphology-based descriptor referencing a physical feature. It is a compound Latin adjective *lātīfrōns*, meaning "broad-foreheaded," or "having a wide front."

It is derived from the adjective *lātus* ("wide," or "broad,") and the noun *frōns* ("forehead" or "front"). Grammatically, *latifrons* is a third-declension, one-termination adjective; it retains the same form in the nominative singular regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the unusually wide proportions of the scales on the top of the head and the chin.

Publication Quote: "... one pair of chin-shields in contact with four labials. Vertical very broad, broader than long, with the lateral edges short and convergent; frontals longest in their transverse diameter..."

Remarks: Günther's choice of *latifrons* highlights the "squashed" or broadened appearance of the head scales in this species compared to its congeners. In his description, he emphasizes that the "vertical" (modern frontal) and "frontals" (modern prefrontals) are wider than they are long. Furthermore, his mention of the single pair of large, broad chin shields reinforces the "wide-fronted" theme. In the context of the 1860s, *latifrons* was a precise way to describe a snake with a head that appeared more "blunt," or "expanded" due to these specific scale dimensions.



Atractus latifrons, Broadhead Ground Snake - Codeagro, Manaus, State of Amazonas, Brazil - Ronaldo Garcia

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/ronaldo_g_lebowski

Creative Commons License

Atractus lehmanni BOETTGER, 1898

The specific epithet *lehmanni* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors German mining engineer and botanical collector, Friedrich Carl Lehmann.

Remarks: Friedrich Carl Lehmann (1850–1903) was a prolific German botanical collector, mining engineer, and diplomat who spent nearly three decades documenting the flora of the northern Andes. Unlike many European collectors of his era who made brief expeditions, Lehmann settled in Popayán, Colombia, marrying into the local Mosquera family and establishing a permanent base for his research. He is most celebrated for his extensive orchid collections, producing over 10,000 herbarium specimens and nearly 1,000 high-quality botanical paintings now archived at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. While he served as the German Consul in Colombia, he was equally active as a commercial plant hunter for European nurseries, collaborating with leading taxonomists like H.G. Reichenbach to describe hundreds of new species. His tragic death, reportedly by drowning in the Timbiquí River, did not end his family's scientific legacy; his grandson, Federico Carlos Lehmann Valencia, became a renowned Colombian ornithologist and conservationist.



Atractus lehmanni, Lehmann's Ground Snake - Santa Rosa de Cabal, Risaralda, Colombia - Isac Walker Cardona
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/isacw>
Creative Commons License

Atractus loveridgei AMARAL, 1930

The specific epithet *loveridgei* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors British herpetologist Arthur Loveridge.

Remarks: Arthur Loveridge (May 1891 – February 1980) was a British biologist and herpetologist known for his extensive work on the wildlife of East Africa and New Guinea. Starting his career with positions at museums in Wales and Manchester, he moved to Kenya in 1914 to become curator of the Nairobi Museum. After serving in the East African Mounted Rifles during World War I and working as an assistant game warden in Tanganyika, he emigrated to the United States in 1924 to join Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology,

where he served as curator of herpetology for 33 years. Throughout his career, Loveridge published numerous scientific papers and popular books based on his expeditions and research. After his retirement from Harvard in 1957, he and his family moved to the island of Saint Helena, where he continued his passion for natural history until his death in 1980

Atractus macondo PASSOS, LYNCH & FERNANDES, 2009

The species epithet *macondo* is an ethnogeography-based toponymic descriptor. It is a noun in apposition referencing the fictional village of "Macondo" from the masterpiece novel *Cien Años de Soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) by the Colombian Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, it remains invariant and does not change to match the masculine gender of the genus *Atractus*. The authors chose this name to reflect the species' distribution along the Atlantic coast of Colombia and to honor the local culture and people of the Magdalena Department.

Remarks: In the realm of Magical Realism, Macondo is a place where the boundaries between reality and fantasy are blurred. By applying this name to a real-world serpent, the authors bridge the gap between Colombian literature and its biological heritage. The type locality, Isla de Salamanca National Park, sits within the very landscapes that inspired García Márquez's writing. This epithet serves a dual purpose: it acts as a "literary toponym" for the region and a cultural tribute to the costeños (coastal inhabitants) whose history is inextricably linked to the Magdalena River basin.

Atractus maculatus (GÜNTHER, 1858)

The species epithet *maculatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is singular Latin adjective *maculātus* which is the perfect passive participle of *maculō* ("to stain," or "make spotted,). As a participle/adjective it means "stained", or "spotted." It refers to the presence of dorsal series of irregular size and shape black spots on the body of the species, which are a diagnostic characteristic for this species. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Brownish yellow, with a dorsal series of irregular black spots ... spots of the dorsal series, some triangular, some band-like, some quadrangular; on the sides smaller irregular spots."



Atractus maculatus, Spotted Ground Snake - Lagoa dos Gatos, State of Pernambuco, Brazil - José Antonio Vicente Filho

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/zezitofilho>

Creative Commons License

Atractus major BOULENGER, 1894

The species epithet *major* is a habitus-based morphology descriptor of size. It is the Latin adjective *major*, the comparative form of *magnus* ("large," or "big,") thus literally translating to "larger," or "greater." Grammatically, it is a third-declension, two-termination comparative adjective (the masculine and feminine nominative singular being identical). The name refers to the species' size, which is significantly larger than the majority of the *Atractus* species known to Boulenger at the time.

Remarks: While Boulenger did not explicitly state his rationale, the comparative data in his 1894 monograph makes the choice clear. In his analytical table of 22 species, *A. major* ranks among the highest in both body size (ventrals: 148–172) and tail length (subcaudals: 30–45). Modern observations confirm this; *Atractus major* is one of the largest members of the genus, with a robust habitus that stands in stark contrast to the slender, diminutive forms of many of its congeners. Its name serves as a permanent reference to its "greater" physical presence within the Guiana Shield and Amazonian herpetofauna.



Atractus major, Big Ground Snake - Francisco de Orellana, Descanso, Ecuador - Arturo Ruiz Villanueva
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/airvillanueva>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus manizalesensis PRADO, 1940

The species epithet *manizalesensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from a country name *Manizales* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Manizales." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Manizales as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality of "Vila maria, Dep. de Caldas, Colombia."

Remarks: Prado only mentioned "Colombia" as the type locality. However, by naming it *manizalesensis* it indicates that he was aware of broader type locality, though may not have had the information about the precise locality. Or, he might have known where the snake was originated or sent from to the museum and used the name of the capital of the province as type locality. Nicéforo-María (1942) restricted the type locality to the region of Manizales, Cordillera Central de las Andes, Colombia and later Dunn further restricted to Villamaria, Caldas Department, Colombia (fide E.R. Dunn in Savage, 1960).

Grammar Notes: Latin adjectives formed with the suffix *-ensis* are consistently of the third-declension and have two terminations. The two terminations are: *-ensis*: The nominative singular form for both masculine and feminine nouns and *-ense*: The nominative singular form for neuter nouns.



Atractus manizalesensis - Manizales, Neira, Manizales, Caldas, Colombia - josorio
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/josorio>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus marisela LANCINI, 1969

The species epithet *marisela* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it honors a female individual. It honors Venezuelan naturalist and collector Marisela Urosa Zambrano who collected most of the specimens used for the description of the species. Grammatically, as a noun in the genitive case, the name is invariant.

Remarks: Marisela Urosa Zambrano (also cited as Sambrano) was an active field collector in Venezuela during the 1960s, a period of significant herpetological discovery in the country. Working closely with the Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Caracas, her efforts in the state of Trujillo were instrumental in uncovering the hidden diversity of the Andean cloud forests. Beyond her namesake ground snake, her work provided vital data for Abdem Ramón Lancini and other researchers, highlighting the essential, often unsung role of field collectors in the taxonomic process.

Atractus marthae MENESES-PELAYO & PASSOS, 2019

The species epithet *marthae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it honors a female

individual. It honors Colombian herpetologist and Professor, Dr. Martha Patricia Ramírez-Pinilla.

Remarks: Martha Patricia Ramírez-Pinilla is a prominent Colombian herpetologist and Professor at the Universidad Industrial de Santander (UIS) in Bucaramanga, where she serves as the Coordinator of the Zoological Collections at the Museum of Natural History. She holds a doctorate in Biological Sciences with a focus on Zoology from the National University of Tucumán and has dedicated her career to the study of reproductive and developmental biology, morphology, and the ecology of amphibians and reptiles. As the Director of the Herpetology Collection and the Laboratory of Reproductive Biology of Vertebrates, she has published extensive research on Neotropical species, particularly concerning placentation in lizards and the conservation of Andean biodiversity. Her scientific legacy is further recognized through the ground snake *Atractus marthae* and *Atractus micheleae*, which was named in honor of her daughter, and her role as a member of the Colombian Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences.

Atractus matthewi MARKEZICH & BARRIO-AMORÓS, 2004

The species epithet *matthewi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors Matthew L. Markezich (born 1990), the son of the senior author, Allan L. Markezich., the son of the senior author reportedly accompanied his father during various phases of research or fieldwork, serving as a "constant source of help and inspiration to his father." Grammatically, the name is a noun in the genitive case and is invariant.

Historical Notes: This species was involved in a rare nomenclatural race. It was described almost simultaneously as *Atractus nororientalis* SANCHEZ, DE SOUSA, ESQUEDA & MANZANILLA 2004. Because the Maryland Herpetological Society bulletin reached the public just slightly earlier, *matthewi* took priority under the ICZN. This resulted in a familial eponym being established over the more descriptive toponym *nororientalis* ("north-eastern").

Atractus medusa PASSOS, LYNCH & FERNANDES, 2008

The species epithet *medusa* is a geography-based toponymic noun with a mythological connection. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Ancient Greek *Médousa* (Μέδουσα), referring to the most famous of the three Gorgons from Greek mythology. The authors selected this name in allusion to the type locality of the species, "Gorgona Island, department of Cauca, Colombia." Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, the epithet is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Named after the female monster Medusa (Greek: μέδουσα) of Greek mythology...Herein the word alludes to the type locality of the species, Gorgona Island, an island on the western portion of the genus' range."

Mythology Notes: Medusa is a famous figure in Greek mythology, a Gorgon, daughter of the gods Phorcys and Ceto, their home being on the farthest side of the western ocean. She was once a beautiful mortal priestess of goddess Athena who was transformed by her into a monster with living venomous snakes in place of hair so that her gaze turned people to stone. She was slayed by the hero Perseus, who used her severed, still-powerful head as a weapon and symbol, eventually giving it to Athena to adorn her shield. In herpetology, her name also is used as epithet in *Bothrops medusa* (STERNFELD 1920).

Alternative Interpretation: Some sources, incorrectly, interpret the epithet to the intricate, snake-like patterns or multiple appendages, most notably in the Medusa's head as hair. This interpretation assumes that it serves as a vivid morphological metaphor for the complex, vermiculated dorsal design of snake which consists of numerous dark, irregular, and winding lines that resemble the serpent-hair of the mythological figure. This interpretation is false, as the authors specifically mention their intention of the naming as the similarity of type locality name "Gorgona Island" to Medusa being one of the three "Gorgons" in Greek mythology.



Atractus medusa - Isla Gorgona, Guapí, Cauca, Colombia - Álvaro Javier Fierro
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/alvaro-j-fierro>
Creative Commons License

Atractus melanogaster WERNER, 1916

The species epithet *melanogaster* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is a compound Latin adjective derived from the Greek words *mélas* (μέλας) meaning "black" and *găstér* (γᾱστήρ) meaning "belly." It literally translates to "black-bellied," or "having a black belly." The epithet refers to the dark gray belly, with small white speckles and widely spaced large white spots of the species. Grammatically, it is treated as an invariant noun in apposition; while adjectival in meaning, it does not change to match the gender of the generic name (see Grammar Notes). It should be noted that *melanogaster* is used exclusively as a taxonomic epithet and thus normally in the nominative singular; other inflections may be theoretical or rarely found.

Publication Quote: "... Unterseite sonst dunkelgrau mit kleinen weißen Spritzflecken und weit entfernt stehenden großen weißen Flecken. Stark irisierend." It translates as, "... The underside is

otherwise dark gray with small white speckles and widely spaced large white spots. It is highly iridescent."

Grammar Notes: Wiktionary classifies *melanogaster* as a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, simply because it happens to have a masculine nominative ending in *-er* (resembling the Latin *niger* or *asper*) that "feels" more traditionally Latin. However, if it were a true 1st/2nd declension adjective, the feminine would necessarily be *melanogastra* and the neuter *melanogastrum*. In over 200 years of biological nomenclature, such forms have never been utilized; *melanogaster* is applied universally across all genders. Conversely, it can be strongly argued that the epithet is indeclinable, as it is a direct borrowing of a Greek compound (*mélas* + *gastér*). Such Greek compounds, when Latinized, do not conform to standard Latin declension patterns and remain grammatically fixed. Under the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN, Art. 31.2.3), words not formed in accordance with Latin grammar are treated as indeclinable and need not agree in gender with the generic name. Therefore, *melanogaster* is grammatically treated as a noun in apposition.

Remarks: Epithets like *melanogaster* reflect a descriptive tradition favoring concise morphological contrast. In this case, ventral darkness is elevated to a diagnostic trait, signaling differentiation from sympatric congeners with lighter bellies. The use of compound Greek stems, especially color-based, was frequent in late 19th-century nomenclature, bridging classical language and anatomical taxonomy. Comparable constructs include *hypomelas*, *xanthochilus*, or *leucostictus*, each encoding pigmentation patterns into scientific Latin with both clarity and nuance.

Formation Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route from Greek compounds: (Greek adjective) *mélas* (μέλας) --> (Greek genitive, the stem source) *mélanos* (μέλανος) --> (stem) *melan-* + (interfix) *-o-* + (Greek noun) *gastér* = *melanogaster*.

Atractus melas BOULENGER, 1908

The species epithet *melas* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is a Latinized adjective derived from the Ancient Greek *mélas* (μέλας), meaning "black," or "dark." Grammatically, in Zoological Latin, *melas* is treated as an indeclinable third-declension adjective. Although the original Greek form has three terminations (*melas*, *melaena*, *melan*), the ICZN (Art. 31.2.3) stipulates that Greek-derived names and their compounds may be treated as indeclinable. Consequently, the word remains *melas* regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the species' overall dark, blackish-brown coloration, which lacks the vivid banding seen in many of its congeners. It should be noted that Boulenger 1908 description lacks any reference to the coloration, however, the type specimen (BMNH 1946.9.7.27) is indeed described in subsequent revisions as being almost entirely blackish-brown or lead-gray, which justifies the name.

Remarks: Color-based Greek and Latin words, alone or in compound, have been favored selections of authors from the start, including Linnaeus himself. They are generally selected when one or two colors overwhelmingly manifest themselves in a species. The "darkness" or "blackness" can be expressed directly using one of the Latin or Latinized-from-Greek words: *niger*, *ater*, and *melas*. The choice of root often dictates the specific "quality" of the dark pigment: *niger* often represents a shining or lustrous black; *ater* often represents a dull, matte black; *melas* usually indicates a dark color, frequently including shades of deep charcoal or lead-gray. Additionally, a late 20th-century phenomenon in nomenclature has been the use of mythological figures, specifically those associated with the underworld, to express dark colors,

often in relation to the secretive, fossorial lifestyle of these snakes (e.g., *Atractus cerberus* or *Atractus erebus*).



Atractus melas, Dark Ground Snake - Unión Panamericana, Choco, Colombia - Daniel Vásquez-Restrepo
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/microteiido>
Creative Commons License

Atractus meridensis ESQUEDA & LA MARCA, 2005

The species epithet *meridensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from a place name *Mérida* (State) and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Mérida State." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Mérida State, Venezuela as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality of "in the backyard of a house, Pueblo Llano Municipality, Mérida State, Venezuela."

Atractus michaelsabini ARTEAGA, QUEZADA, VIEIRA & GUAYASAMIN, 2022

The specific epithet *michaelsabini* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. The name honors Mr. Michael Sabin.

Publication Quote: "The specific epithet *michaelsabini* is a patronym honoring a young nature lover, Michael Sabin, grandson of American philanthropist and conservationist Andrew "Andy" Sabin. The Sabin family is involved in conservation and field research of amphibians and reptiles and has protected over 264,365 acres of critical habitat throughout the world."



Atractus michaelsabini - Piñas, Ecuador - Holger Sanchez
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/holgersanchez>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus micheleae ESQUEDA & LA MARCA, 2005

The species epithet *micheleae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it honors a female individual. It honors distinguished Venezuelan ecologist and Professor, Dr. Michele A. Soler, who is also the collector of the holotype.

Remarks: Michele Ataroff Soler is a distinguished Venezuelan ecologist and a retired titular professor at the Universidad de Los Andes (ULA) in Mérida, where she led the Laboratory of Terrestrial Ecology. She earned her Doctorate in Ecology from the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) and has dedicated her career to the study of Andean Mountain ecosystems, specifically the ecohydrology and functioning of cloud forests and paramos. Her research on the impact of deforestation and climate change in the Cordillera de Mérida is considered foundational for environmental conservation in the region. Beyond her academic influence, she is a pioneering field naturalist whose efforts in documenting the high-altitude biodiversity of

Venezuela led to the discovery and collection of significant biological specimens, including the holotype of the snake species that bears her name, *Atractus micheleae*.

Atractus microrhynchus (COPE, 1868)

The species epithet *microrhynchus* is a morphology-based descriptor of lepidosis (scale arrangement). It is the Latinized adjective *microrhynchus* meaning "small-snouted," or "having a small snout," derived from compound Greek roots *mikrós* (μικρός) meaning "small," and *rhynchos* (ῥύγχος) meaning "snout." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the unusually reduced size of the scales forming the anterior portion of the head (prefrontals and postnasal).

Publication Quote: "Prefrontals very small, equal postnasal, one-sixth the size of postfrontals..."

Formation Notes: (Greek) *mikrós* --> (Latinized) *micro*s --> (combining form) *micro*- + (Greek) *rhynchos* --> (Latin stem) *rhynch*- + (Latin masculine suffix) *-us* = *microrhynchus*.



Atractus microrhynchus, Short-nosed Ground Snake - El Mirador, Ecuador - David Weaver
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/davidweaver>
Creative Commons License

Atractus modestus BOULENGER, 1894

The species epithet *modestus* is a morphology-based descriptor of comparative appearance. It is the Latin adjective *modestus*, meaning "moderate," "unassuming," or "plain," derived from noun *modus* "measure," or "limit," and adjectival suffix *-estus* meaning "characterized by."

Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the snake's uniform and unremarkable dorsal coloration.

Publication Quote: "Uniform plumbeous above, on the sides of the ventrals, and on the subcaudals; ventrals yellowish in the middle." [plumbeous: "lead-colored" or "blue-grey"]

Remarks: In the 19th century, *modestus* was a standard descriptor for species that lacked the diagnostic stripes, spots, or vibrant colors seen in their relatives. For *Atractus modestus*, the name perfectly captures its "measured" appearance, a snake that stays within the "limits" of a plain, uniform brown or olive-grey palette. Currently, *modestus* is used as epithet for 12 snake species and 3 subspecies. In almost all cases the species' characteristics, mostly subtle colors and size were compared with other species in the same genus in general or within its distribution range. These snakes usually lack the striking colors or patterns of their congeners or of medium sizes, thus coined as modest.

Grammar Notes: The formation route for *modestus* uses an adjectival suffix found in small group of adjectives. While the suffix *-tus* usually denotes "provided with," the "e" in *modestus* is a phonetic bridge common in a small group of Latin adjectives (like *funestus* and *honestus*). It identifies the quality of the noun (*modus*) as an inherent trait of the subject. Formation route: (noun) *modus* --> (stem) *mod-* + (suffix) *-estus* = *modestus*.



Atractus modestus, Modest Ground Snake - Gualimán, Ecuador - Ross Maynard

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/ross_maynard

Creative Commons License

Atractus muisca PASSOS, MENESES-PELAYO, RAMOS, MARTINS, MACHADO, LOPES, BARRIO-AMORÓS & LYNCH, 2024

The species epithet *muisca* is an ethnonymic eponymous noun. It is a noun in apposition referencing the *Muisca*, a sophisticated Pre-Columbian civilization that inhabited the Eastern Cordillera highlands of Colombia at the time of Spanish contact in 1537. Because the epithet is a noun in apposition, it remains invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus. The name honors the Muisca people for their historical model of an egalitarian society and acknowledges that the species' distribution coincides with their ancestral territory.

Publication Quote: "Named after the well-developed Pre-Columbian civilization that lived along Eastern Cordillera highlands of Colombia, when the Spanish colonizers arrived in 1537. Their contribution to Latin American myths is vast, being most likely the nation that gave rise to the European legend of "El Dorado" (Hemming, 1978). They were the main emerald producers in Colombia, and also monopolized the mining of copper, gold, and coal. For Muisca the forests were public, as were the lagoons, the moors, and the riverbanks, making food production according to the needs of each inhabitant. Its social redistribution mechanism operated in parallel with the exchange system. The caciques retained the productive surpluses through tribute, redistributing a part among the population through a common consumption fund. This ancient policy is an inspiration in modern times of massive inequality in the distribution of wealth around the world. We named this species in honor to Muisca for their historical example of a feasible egalitarian society, and because *Atractus muisca* also occurs along its original territory."

Remarks: The extensive quote by the authors provides a rare, modern example of authors using a species description as a platform for social commentary, linking the ecology of the snake to the "ancient policy" of the people who once shared its territory.

Atractus multicinctus (JAN, 1865)

The species epithet *multicinctus* is a morphology-based descriptor. It is a compound Latin adjective meaning "many-banded," formed from the adjective *multus* ("many") and *cinctus*, the perfect passive participle of the verb *cingō* (infinitive *cingere*), meaning "to surround," "to encircle," or "to gird." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the numerous narrow white or orange bands on a black background. These bands are typically disjointed across the dorsal midline, with the two sides often offset by one or two scales. This specific arrangement, a diagnostic feature of this species, distinguishes it from other banded *Atractus* species.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: (adjective) *multus* --> (stem) *mult-* + (interfix) *-i-* + (verb root) *cing-* + (suffix) *-tus*.

Latin Phonology Notes: In historical linguistics, the transition from the root *cing-* to the participle *cinctus* involves Regressive Voiceless Assimilation (specifically, Devoicing). When the voiced velar consonant "g" (from *cing-*) comes into direct contact with the voiceless dental consonant "t" (from the suffix *-tus*), the first consonant assimilates to the second by losing its "voice." In Latin, a voiced stop cannot easily precede a voiceless stop; therefore, the voiced "g" becomes its voiceless counterpart, "c" (pronounced as "k"). So, *cing-* + *-tus* --> *cingtus* --> *cinctus*.



Atractus multicinctus, Banded Ground Snake - Eloy Alfaro, Ecuador - Frederic Griesbaum
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/frederic_griesbaum
 Creative Commons License

Atractus multidentatus PASSOS, RIVAS-FUENMAYOR & BARRIO-AMORÓS, 2009
 The species epithet *multidentatus* is a morphology-based descriptor of dentition. It is the compound Latin adjective *multidentātus* meaning "many-toothed," formed from the adjective *multus* ("many") and *dentātus* ("toothed,") from *dēns* ("tooth,") and the adjectival suffix *-ātus* meaning "provided with." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the unusually high number of maxillary teeth (18) possessed by this species.

Publication Quote: "... maxilla arched in dorsal view, with 18 maxillary teeth lacking diastema; teeth large, similar in size, little spaced, curved posteriorly, angulars in cross section, slightly robust at the base, and narrower on the apices."

Remarks: Most species within the genus *Atractus* possess a significantly lower number of maxillary teeth (typically between 5 and 12). By presenting 18 teeth, *A. multidentatus* sits at the extreme end of the genus's dental variation. The name serves as a clear diagnostic marker for this specific dental morphology, which is a critical character for differentiating it from other small, litter-dwelling snakes in the Venezuelan Andes.

Atractus nasutus PASSOS, ARREDONDO, FERNANDES & LYNCH, 2009

The species epithet *nasutus* is a morphology-based descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *nāsūtus*, meaning "large-nosed" or "possessing a prominent snout." It is derived from the noun *nāsus*

("nose") and the adjectival suffix *-ūtus* ("provided with" or "characterized by"). Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the species' distinctive snout, which is prominently protruding and acuminate (tapering to a point).

Publication Quote: "...head arched in lateral view, subtriangular in dorsal view; snout acuminate in lateral and dorsal views..."

Remarks: While many *Atractus* species have relatively blunt or rounded snouts, *A. nasutus* is distinguished by a snout that is notably pointed and "nose-like" when viewed from the side. This specialized cephalic morphology is likely an adaptation for its fossorial (burrowing) lifestyle, allowing it to move through soil and leaf litter more efficiently.

Grammar Notes: The suffix *-ūtus* used here is an interesting case of late Latin rebracketing. It is a sequence found in two types of Classical Latin words: (1) adjectives derived from nouns with stems ending in *u*, such as *cornūtus* (horned) from *cornū* (stem *cornū-* + *-tus*) as seen in *Protobothrops cornutus* and (2) perfect participles of verbs with stems ending in *u*, such as *acūtus* ("sharp") from the verb stem *acu-* (as seen in *acuere*, "to sharpen") seen in *Deinagkistrodon acutus*. In *nāsūtus*, this suffix is applied to the second-declension noun *nāsus* to emphasize a prominent physical trait.

Atractus natans HOOGMOED & PRUDENTE, 2003

The species epithet *natans* is a habitat-based descriptor of temporary nature. It is the Latin adjective *natāns* meaning "swimming," or "floating." The third-declension participle *natāns* is the present active participle of *natō* (present infinitive: *natāre*) meaning "to swim," itself derived from the verb *nō* ("to swim,") and frequentative suffix *-tō* to denote repeated or intense action. Grammatically, it is a third-declension, one-termination adjective; it retains the same form in the nominative singular regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name was chosen in allusion of the fact that most type specimens of this species were collected from floating rotten logs in a flooded forest.

Publications Quote: "The specific name *natans* (= floating in Latin) is used in loose reference to the fact that all specimens collected in Mamirauá (the majority of the type series) were found in floating rotten logs in flooded forest."

Grammar Notes: As mentioned, *natō* is a frequentative verb derived from *nō* ("to swim"). While *nō* describes the simple act of swimming, the suffix *-tō* adds a sense of repeated or intense action, highly appropriate for a snake species surviving in the dynamic environment of a flooded várzea forest where "floating" is a constant state of being.

Formation Notes: [(verb) *natō*] --> [(present infinitive) *natāre* - (infinitive ending) *-re* --> (present stem) *natā-* + [(present active participle suffix) *-ns*] = *natāns*.

Atractus nawa MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, PRUDENTE, VENEGAS & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2021

The species epithet *nawa* is an ethnolinguistic-based descriptor from the Panoan linguistic family. The name is derived from the language of Pano-speaking societies living along the Juruá River basin, where the type specimens were collected. According to the original publication, it corresponds to a "self-designation or to an indicator of otherness (other people)". The name alludes to the way indigenous people in the region distinguish the new species from its congeners. Grammatically, it is treated as a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant.

Geography Notes: The type locality of the species is reported as Porto Walter, Acre, Brazil. This municipality is located directly within the Juruá River basin, specifically positioned along the Juruá River and the Juruá-Mirim River. The region is often characterized as part of the upper Juruá and is a prominent area for biological research, particularly regarding the high diversity of snakes and other fauna found throughout the basin.

Remarks: By choosing a term from the Panoan linguistic family, the authors honor the indigenous knowledge of the region. The term *nawa* captures a complex social concept of identity and "otherness" that perfectly mirrors the discovery of a distinct new lineage within the diverse *Atractus* genus.

Atractus nicefori AMARAL, 1930

The specific epithet *nicefori* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors French missionary and naturalist, Antoine Rouhaire, a French missionary and prolific naturalist mostly known by his religious name as "Brother Nicéforo María".

Remarks: Brother Nicéforo María (1888–1980), born Antoine Rouhaire, was a French missionary and prolific naturalist who spent over 70 years in Colombia, becoming one of the most important figures in the country's taxonomic history. A member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (La Salle), he served as the director of the Museo de Historia Natural del Instituto de La Salle in Bogotá, which he worked tirelessly to rebuild after it was destroyed by fire during the 1948 Bogotazo riots. Nicéforo María was a "polymath of the field," collecting and describing thousands of specimens across ornithology, herpetology, and ichthyology. His legacy is immortalized in the scientific names of more than 100 species and plants, including the critically endangered Nicéforo's wren (*Thryophilus nicefori*), the San Gil climbing salamander (*Bolitoglossa nicefori*), and the snake *Atractus nicefori*.



Atractus nicefori, Northern Ground Snake - Andes, Antioquia, Colombia - Mateo Giraldo Tamayo
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/mateogiraldot>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus nigricaudus SCHMIDT & WALKER, 1943

The species epithet *nigricaudus* is a color-based noun. It is a compound Latin noun derived from *niger* ("black") and *cauda* ("tail"), literally meaning "black tail." Although the compound word resembles a first/second-declension adjective due to the "-us" ending, the word *caudus* does not exist as an adjective in the classical Latin language. The authors used it as a reference to the color of the underside of the tail of this species which is entirely black. Grammatically, it functions as a noun in apposition; therefore, it remains invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus.

Publication Quote: "... in having the underside of the tail entirely or nearly entirely black ..."

Nomenclature Notes: The correct classical formation for a noun in apposition would be *nigricauda* ("black tail"). However, Schmidt and Walker (1943) used the "-us" termination, likely treating it as a new adjectival creation. Some researchers argue that the original spelling must be retained under ICZN rules because it was clearly the authors' intended form, even if it does not follow standard Latin rules for the noun *cauda*. Since the authors didn't explicitly state it was a noun in apposition, and used it adjectivally, the "incorrect" Latin suffix is preserved for the sake of nomenclatural stability.

Atractus nigriventris AMARAL, 1933

The species epithet *nigriventris* color-based morphology descriptor of body sections. It is a compound Latin adjective derived from *niger* ("black,") and *venter* ("belly,") literally meaning "black-bellied," or "having a black belly." It is a third-declension two-termination adjective in nominative masculine singular form matching the masculine *Atractus*. It is in allusion to the dark ventral color of the species which is also commonly known as Black-bellied Ground Snake.

Remarks: Epithets referring to the belly (*venter*) can be categorized into three primary groups. The first and largest group refers to color; currently, 16 species and 4 subspecies have epithets involving ventral color, such as *Myriopholis albiventer* (white belly) or *Chersodromus rubriventris* (red belly). The second group refers to patterns like spots or stripes, found in 9 species including *Atractus ventrimaculatus* (spotted belly) and *Tropidonophis punctiventris*. The third group concerns the quantity or size of ventral scales, represented by taxa like *Chironius multiventris* and *Leptomicrurus scutiventris*. It should be noted that this discussion only addresses epithets that strictly contain the word *venter* or its derivatives; there are other epithets that describe the belly without using this specific root.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: [(adjective) *niger* --> (genitive) *nigrī* --> (stem) *nigr-*] + [(noun) *venter* --> (genitive) *ventris* --> (stem) *ventr-*] + [(suffix) *-is*] = *nigriventris*.

Atractus obesus MARX, 1960

The species epithet *obesus* is an appearance-based descriptor of habitus size. It is the Latin adjective *obesus* meaning "fat," "stout," or "plump." It is the perfect passive participle of *obedō* (present infinitive *obedere* or *obēsse*) meaning "to eat away," or "to devour," from the prefix *ob-* ("away," or "completely,") and *edō* ("to eat.") Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the very large size and relatively thick body of the species resembling a snake that has just eaten a large prey. Marx's choice of *obesus* highlights that this species is significantly more corpulent than its typically slender congeners.

Publication Quote: "...Museum has acquired two specimens of an unusual snake of the genus *Atractus*. These animals are distinguished by their very large size, relatively thick bodies, and coral snake pattern."



Atractus obesus, Fat Ground Snake - Ventanas, Jardín, Antioquia, Colombia - Luis D. Montoya-Ospina
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/ldmontoya>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus obtusirostris WERNER, 1916

The species epithet *obtusirostris* is a morphology-based morphology descriptor of snout shape. It is the compound Latin adjective *obtusirōstris* meaning "blunt-snouted," or "having a rounded snout." It is formed from the adjective *obtusus* ("blunted," or "dull,") perfect passive participle of *obtundō* (present infinitive: *obtundere*) meaning "to strike against," or "to blunt," and the noun *rōstrum* ("snout," or "beak.") The third-declension suffix *-is* is added to the compound to produce a two-termination adjective. Grammatically, it is a third-declension two-termination adjective in the nominative singular, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The epithet refers to the characteristically broad and rounded shape of the snout in this species.

Publication Quote: "...Schnauze breit abgerundet..." It translates as, "Snout broad and rounded."

Grammar Notes: The noun *rōstrum* originally referred to a bird's beak or an animal's snout, but was extended in Latin to describe objects with a similar projecting shape, such as the prow of a ship. In herpetology, it specifically denotes the rostral or nasal region. The derivation here identifies that the stem is pulled from the second-declension genitive *rōstrī* before being transformed into a third-declension adjective via the suffix *-is*.

Formation Notes: The formation follows the following route: [(adjective) *obtusus* --> (stem) *obtūs-*] + [(interfix) *-i-*] + [(noun) *rōstrum* --> (genitive) *rōstrī* --> (stem) *rōstr-*] + [(adjectival suffix) *-is*] = *obtūsirōstris*.

Atractus occidentalis SAVAGE, 1955

The species epithet *occidentalis* is a geography-based descriptor of comparative distribution. It is a Latin adjective derived from Latin word *occidēns*, which is the present participle of *occidere* meaning "to fall" or "to set (as the sun)" and "the west" [literally: "the setting (place of the sun)"] and the adjectival suffix *-alis* indicating "of" or "pertaining to." It translates to "pertaining to the west" or "western." The epithet refers to the species' distribution along the western slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes and its type locality in Mindo, Pichincha Province. Grammatically, it is a third-declension two-termination adjective in nominative masculine singular form matching the masculine *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "*A. occidentalis* appears to be the west Ecuador representative of *A. ecuadorensis* which it resembles in coloration... the name *occidentalis* ... seems appropriate for an *Atractus* from the west slope of the Ecuadorian Andes."

Formation Notes: [(Latin) *occidēns* --> (genitive) *occidentis* --> (stem) *occident-*] + [(suffix) *-ālis*] = *occidentalis*.

Atractus occipitoalbus (JAN, 1862)

The species epithet *occipitoalbus* color-based morphology descriptor. It is a compound Latin adjective derived from the third-declension noun *occiput* (genitive *occipitis*) meaning "the back part of the head," formed from *ob-* ("at," "before," or "over,") and *caput* ("the head,") combined with adjective *albus* ("white,") literally meaning "white-occiput," or "having a white back of the head." The name refers to the white coloration of the back of the head (occipital and temporal regions) and the ventral side of the head on an otherwise entirely black species. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "...Esso ne differisce altresì nel colorito die è tutto nero tanto di sopra quanto di sotto ad eccezione soltanto delle regioni occipitale e temporale della testa e della parte inferiore della medesima..." It translates to, "It also differs in coloration, being entirely black both above and below, with the exception only of the occipital and temporal regions of the head and the lower part of the head itself."

Formation Notes: [(noun) *occiput* --> (genitive) *occipitis* --> (stem) *occipit-*] + [(connecting vowel) *-o-*] + [(adjective) *albus*] = *occipitoalbus*.

Grammar Notes: As mentioned above, the noun *occiput* is itself a compound formed from the prefix *ob-* ("at," "before," or "over,") and the noun *caput* ("head.") The transformation follows two specific Latin linguistic rules. (1) Assimilation: When the prefix *ob-* is placed before a word starting with "c," the "b" assimilates to the following consonant, becoming *oc-* (e.g., *ob-* + *caput* --> *occaput*). (2) Vowel Reduction: In Latin compounding, the short "a" in the root *caput* often undergoes a shift to "i" or "u." In the case of the nominative singular compound, it shifts to "i," resulting in *occiput*. This is most clearly seen in the genitive form *occipitis* and the resulting stem *occipit-* used in this epithet.



Atractus occipitoalbus, Gray Ground Snake - Mera, Ecuador - Joey Santore
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/joeyesantore>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus oculosomphalus AMARAL, 1932

The species epithet *oculosomphalus* is a morphology-based descriptor of lepidosis (scalation). It is a compound Latin adjective *oculosomphalis* literally meaning "eye-temporal," derived from *oculus* ("eye,") and the adjective *somphalis*, which in a biological context means "of or belonging to the temples of the head." The adjective *somphalis* itself is formed from *tempus* ("the temples of the head,") and the adjectival suffix *-alis* ("pertaining to"). Grammatically, it is a third-declension, two-termination adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. Beyond the simple combination of parts "eye-temporal," the name refers to a diagnostic anatomical bridge that in this species, the temporal scale makes direct contact with the orbit of the eye.

Remarks: In most species of the genus *Atractus*, the temporal scales are entirely separated from the orbit of the eye by a series of postocular scales. *A. oculosomphalus* is named for its unique cephalic lepidosis, where an anterior temporal scale extends forward to make direct contact with the eye. This anatomical "shortcut" between the ocular and temporal regions provides a diagnostic feature that is immediately reflected in its scientific name. Also note that some sources reference this contact to the absence of postocular scales in this species which is not accurate. *A. oculosomphalus* does have postoculars, but in this species, temporal scale wedges between them to make direct contact with the eye.

Atractus orcesi SAVAGE, 1955

The specific epithet *orcesi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors prominent Ecuadorian naturalist Gustavo Edmundo Orcés Villagómez.

Remarks: Considered the "father of zoology in Ecuador," Gustavo Edmundo Orcés Villagómez (1903–1999), was a polymathic naturalist whose work spanned ichthyology, ornithology, and herpetology. After co-founding the Department of Biology at the Escuela Politécnica Nacional in 1946 with Robert Hoffstetter, he dedicated decades to the systematic classification of Ecuadorian fauna, amassing significant collections that later formed the core of the Natural History Museum named in his honor. A prolific field collector and generous collaborator, Orcés-V. provided his extensive coral snake (genus *Micrurus*) collection to Janis Roze, which proved vital for Roze's definitive taxonomic revisions of the group. Throughout his long career, he mentored a generation of Ecuadorian biologists and described numerous taxa, including the frog genus *Macrogenioglottus*. His profound impact on Neotropical biology is reflected in the many species named for him, such as the Orces's harlequin frog (*Atelopus orcesi*) and the snake *Atractus orcesi*.



Atractus orcesi - Mindo Valley, Ecuador - Tom Kennedy
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/tomkennedy>
Creative Commons License

Atractus pachacamac MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, PRUDENTE, VENEGAS & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2021

The species epithet *pachacamac* is a language-based noun referencing a fossorial lifestyle through analogy to a mythical deity. The word *Pachacámac* (or Pacha Kamaq) is from the Quechua language, meaning "creator of the land," formed from *pacha* ("land") and *kamaq* ("creator"). In Inca mythology, he was a powerful god residing underground. The authors chose this name to refer to the species' fossorial lifestyle in high elevations. The choice of epithet serves as a living archive that preserves indigenous ecological concepts within the formal biological record. Because Quechua words do not follow Latin declension rules, names derived from it are treated as indeclinable nouns in apposition under ICZN rules.

Remarks: The use of this name reflects a modern trend in Neotropical herpetology to move away from purely Greco-Latin descriptors in favor of names that preserve and honor local indigenous languages and sacred histories. By selecting a deity responsible for the "animation of the land," the author creates a poetic link between the snake's fossorial habits and the ancient beliefs of the people who inhabited its range. In *Atractus* genus alone, more than 20 epithets fall into this style on naming.

Mythology Notes: In Andean cosmology, Pachacámac was one of the most powerful and feared deities, primarily worshipped at the great ceremonial center of Pachacamac on the Peruvian coast. He was considered the master of earthquakes and the force that animated all living things from within the earth. Unlike the celestial Sun God (Inti), Pachacámac was a chthonic deity (one belonging to the underworld and the soil.) He was credited with creating the first man and woman but also with the power to destroy the world with a single tilt of his head. According to myth, the Pachacámac, son of the sun, came to our world and climbed to the highest summit to throw four stones to the four cardinal points, thereby taking possession of everything that covered his sight and reached his stones. This story, represents the establishment of Tahuantinsuyo (the Four Regions), the Inca concept of a balanced and ordered universe. Naming a burrowing snake after the "Earth-Maker" is highly symbolic. Just as Pachacámac resided beneath the surface and influenced the world from the depths, *Atractus pachacamac* lives within the leaf litter and soil, a hidden part of the Andean ecosystem's "animation."

Language Notes: Quechua is an indigenous language family spoken by the Quechua peoples of the Andean highlands and remains the most widely spoken indigenous language of the Americas today. It is an agglutinative language where words are formed by adding suffixes to a root, such as the root *kama* ("to create") receiving the agentive suffix *-q* to become *kamaq* ("creator").



Atractus pachacamac - Sardinas, Ecuador - Benjamin Hidalgo
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/benjaminhidalgo>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus paisa PASSOS, ARREDONDO, FERNANDES & LYNCH, 2009

The species epithet *paisa* is a language-based eponymous noun derived from a common colloquialism in (Colombian) Spanish referencing people from a certain region. The word "*paisa*" used in Colombia means "the countryman from Antioquia Department". The type locality of the species is "Vereda San Francisco, Sonsón municipality, Antioquia department" of Colombia and by designating the epithet *paisa*, the authors paid tribute to the inhabitants of the Antioquia Department. Under the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN, Art. 31.2.3), words not formed in accordance with Latin grammar are treated as indeclinable and need not agree in gender with the generic name. Therefore, *paisa* is grammatically treated as a noun in apposition.

Geography Notes: Antioquia is a significant hub for biodiversity and herpetological research in Colombia. Located in the northwestern part of the country, it is characterized by the convergence of the Central and Western Andes (Cordilleras Central and Occidental). This rugged topography creates a mosaic of high-elevation cloud forests, páramos, and deep river valleys that foster high rates of endemism. In the genus *Atractus*, the diversity of species found in Antioquia, such as *A. paisa*, *A. lasallei*, and *A. duboisi*, is a result of this extreme altitudinal variation, which acts as a powerful driver of speciation through geographic isolation.

Remarks: The type locality, Sonsón, is situated at approximately 2,600 m elevation. Most *Atractus* species from this region are small, leaf-litter dwelling snakes adapted to cool, moist highland environments. Interestingly, *A. paisa* is parapatric with its relative *A. lasallei*, meaning their ranges are adjacent but rarely overlap, a common distribution pattern in the complex mountainous terrain of Antioquia.

Atractus pamplonensis AMARAL, 1935

The subspecies epithet *pamplonensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor. It is a Latin adjective formed from a place name, *Pamplona* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Pamplona." The name refers to the type locality and distribution of the species in Pamplona. The specific type locality is "Pamplona, De. de Norte de Santander, Colombia."

Geography Notes: Pamplona is a high-altitude city located in the Norte de Santander department of northeastern Colombia, nestled within the rugged Pamplonita River valley of the Eastern Cordillera (Cordillera Oriental). Situated at an elevation of approximately 2,342 meters, the region is characterized by a "cold mountain" climate (tierra fría) and is surrounded by the ecologically vital Santuurbán Paramo, which serves as a major water source for the surrounding territories. Historically known as the "City of Mists," its complex topography consists of steep Andean slopes and high-elevation grasslands that provide a specialized habitat for fossorial herpetofauna. This geographic setting is particularly significant in the study of the genus *Atractus*, as the isolated valleys of the Eastern Cordillera have fostered high levels of micro-endemism among species restricted to these specific montane corridors.



Atractus pamplonensis, Pamplona Ground Snake - Toledo, North Santander, Colombia - Arley O. Gallardo
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/arleyo>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus pantostictus FERNANDES & PUERTO, 1993

The specific epithet *pantostictus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is a fully Latinized form of the Greek adjective *pántostiktós* (παντόστικτος), derived from the Ancient Greek adverb *pántose* (πάντοσε) meaning "in all directions" or "every way" (from the root of *pâs* [πάς], meaning "all") and *stiktós* (στικτός) meaning "spotted" or "mottled". It literally translates to "spotted all over," or "having spots in all directions." The epithet refers to the distinctive pattern of this species, consisting of four or five longitudinal series of dark-colored spots on the dorsum, that sometimes merging into small cross bars. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Remarks: While many *Atractus* species have spots, *A. pantostictus* is named for the pervasive nature of its patterning. The "all over" descriptor differentiates it from congeners that might only have spots on certain parts of the body or only along a single row. This species is endemic to the Central Plateau of Brazil, often occurring in the Cerrado biome, where its "spotted all over" appearance serves as effective camouflage in the leaf litter.

Grammar Notes: Unlike Greek compound names that function as nouns in apposition (such as *melanogaster*), this epithet is treated as a first/second-declension, simply because the authors

took a Greek adjective (*pantostiktos*) and fully Latinized it into a three-termination form (-us, -a, -um) to function as an adjective that agrees with the genus.

Formation Notes: (Greek) *pántose* --> (combining form) *panto-* + (Greek) *stiktós* --> (Latinized) *stictus* = *pantostictus*.



Atractus pantostictus - Belo Horizonte, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil - a_f_r
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/a_f_r
Creative Commons License

Atractus paraguayensis WERNER, 1924

The species epithet *paraguayensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from a place name *Paraguay* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Paraguay." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Paraguay as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality of "Bernal Cué," a former name for Colonia Nueva Colombia in Paraguay.

Historical & Geography Notes: The type locality refers to Bernal Cué, the historical designation for the region currently known as the Nueva Colombia District in the Cordillera Department of Paraguay. Originally settled by German and Swiss immigrants, the area was renamed "Nueva Colombia" (New Colombia) by its founders as a tribute to the high-quality coffee produced there, which was said to rival the famous beans of Colombia. Historically, the locality was a center for agricultural experimentation by European colonists who sought to establish a "New World" pastoral ideal in the Paraguayan interior. This geographical reference is

significant in herpetology as it identifies a type locality within a landscape that has transitioned from a colonial frontier to an independent district recognized for its unique cultural and agricultural heritage.

Atractus paucidens (DESPAX, 1910)

The species epithet *paucidens* is a morphology-based descriptor of comparative dentition. It is the compound Latin adjective *paucidēns* meaning "few tooth-tooth," or "having few teeth," derived from adjective *paucus* ("few," or "little,") and third-declension noun *dēns* ("a tooth.") Grammatically, it is a third-declension, one-termination adjective; it maintains the same form in the nominative singular regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the reduced number of maxillary teeth in this species compared to its congeners.

Publication Quote: "...La seule différence entre cet individu et un *Atractus* proprement dit réside dans le nombre réduit des dents maxillaires et leur grande taille relative..." It translates to, "...The only difference between this individual and a true *Atractus* lies in the reduced number of maxillary teeth and their relatively large size..."

Remarks: Despax originally assigned this species to the now-obsolete genus *Atractopsis*. His diagnosis relied heavily on the "reduced number" of teeth relative to the species of *Atractus* known to him in 1910. By naming it *paucidens*, he provided a diagnostic marker that was immediately visible upon dental examination, even though modern taxonomy has since moved the species into *Atractus*. Furthermore, there is a literal mismatch between the Latin noun *dēns* (singular: "a tooth") and the intended plural meaning. While the nominative plural is *dentēs* ("teeth"), Latin compounding frequently uses the singular root to describe a general state. This is a common "short-hand" in Latin nomenclature (similar to how we say "blue-eye" in English to describe someone with two blue eyes). Regardless of this classical technicality, the epithet remains invariant under ICZN Article 32.5.1.

Grammar Notes: While some sources categorize the first element as a prefix (*pauci-*), it is more accurately viewed as a compound of the adjective *paucus*. The "i" is a standard Latin interfix (connecting vowel) used to join the two roots.

Formation Notes: [(adjective) *paucus* --> (stem) *pauc-*] + [(interfix) *-i-*] + [(noun) *dēns*] = *paucidēns*.

Atractus pauciscutatus SCHMIDT & WALKER, 1943

The species epithet *pauciscutatus* is a morphology-based descriptor of comparative scalation. It is the compound Latin adjective *pauciscūtātus* which in biological context means "few-shielded," or "having small number of long scales," derived from adjective *paucus* ("few," or "little,") and the adjective *scūtātus* ("armed with a long shield,") itself formed from *scūtum* ("long shield,") with adjectival suffix *-ātus* ("provided with.") Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the significantly smaller number of ventral scales (146) in this species compared to its morphological lookalike, in terms of coloration, *A. bocourti*'s (170-182).

Publication Quote: "An *Atractus* close to *bocourti* in coloration, but differing in having ventrals 146 as opposed to the much higher range of 170-182 in females of *bocourti* known to us."

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: [(adjective) *paucus* --> (stem) *pauc-*] + [(interfix) *-i-*] + [(noun) *scūtum* --> (genitive) *scūtī* --> (stem) *scūt-*] + [(suffix) *-ātus*] = *pauciscutatus*.

Historical Notes: The term *scūtātus* is derived from the classical Latin *scūtum*, a type of shield used among Italic peoples in antiquity, most notably by the army of ancient Rome. While it specifically refers to the large oblong wooden shield carried by infantry, it was also used as a generic word for "shield". In biological contexts, authors use the term by analogy to the ventral scales, which are the long, shield-like plates found on the underside of snakes.

Atractus paulus MELO-SAMPAIO & VENEGAS, 2023

The specific epithet *paulus* is an eponymous noun with a secondary morphological meaning. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized from the Portuguese name *Paulo*. The epithet honors Dr. Paulo Gustavo Homem Passos, a preeminent authority on the genus *Atractus*. Concurrently, *paulus* is a classical Latin adjective meaning "little," or "small," especially pertaining to size. The authors noted a secondary reference to the small sample size available for the species' description (only two specimens). Grammatically, it functions here as a noun in apposition, remaining invariant.

Remarks: Dr. Paulo Passos is a leading Brazilian herpetologist and Associate Professor at the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (MNRJ). Widely considered the world's foremost authority on the tribe Dipsadini, he has revolutionized the taxonomy of the genus *Atractus* by describing over 35 new species and providing critical revisions of complex species groups across South America. His career is dedicated to untangling the immense morphological diversity of these "cryptozoic" snakes, utilizing both classical lepidosis and modern osteological and hemipenial analyses to define species boundaries in what was once considered a taxonomically "impossible" genus.

Grammar Notes: The grammatical status of this epithet is a matter of interpretation. While *paulus* is a legitimate first/second-declension adjective, the authors' primary intent was a patronym. As a patronym used in its nominative form rather than the genitive (*passosi*), it functions as a noun in apposition and does not need to change gender to match the genus.

Atractus pearti PASSOS, MENESES-PELAYO, RAMOS, MARTINS, MACHADO, LOPES, BARRIO-AMORÓS & LYNCH, 2024

The specific epithet *pearti* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors Canadian musician Neil Ellwood Peart.

Remarks: Neil Ellwood Peart (1952–2020) was a monumental figure in rock music, globally revered as the virtuoso drummer and primary lyricist for the Canadian band Rush. Known to fans as "The Professor," Peart was celebrated for his technical precision, stamina, and massive, 360-degree drum kits that incorporated everything from orchestral bells to electronic triggers. Beyond his musicianship, he was a prolific and introspective writer, penning seven non-fiction books, such as *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road*, which chronicled his motorcycle journey across North America following the tragic loss of his daughter and wife. A lifelong student of his craft, he famously reinvented his drumming style in the 1990s under jazz teacher Freddie Gruber, proving his commitment to constant evolution. His immense contributions earned him numerous accolades, including an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and being named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Atractus peruvianus (JAN, 1862)

The species epithet *peruvianus* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from the place name *Peru* and the suffix -anus, meaning "of," "from," or "belonging to." It literally translates to "from the Peru." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Peru as the species' provenance, rather than from a narrowly defined locality that the type specimen was collected from. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows a specific "atomic" route to resolve the hiatus between the root and the suffix: (Native Root) *Peru* --> (Latinized Country Name) *Peruvia* --> (Adjectival Stem) *Peruvi-* + (suffix) *-ānus* = *peruviānus*.

Linguistic Note on the "v": The letter "v" serves as a phonetic bridge. In early Latinizations of New World locations, words ending in "u" often adopted a consonantal "v" (originally the same character as "u" in Latin script) when suffixes were added. This prevented the clashing of vowels (*Peru-anus*) and maintained the three-syllable rhythm found in the Latinized name of the country, *Peruvia*.

Atractus poeppigi (JAN, 1862)

The specific epithet *poeppigi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending -i indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished German naturalist Eduard Friedrich Poeppig.

Remarks: Eduard Friedrich Poeppig (1798–1868) was a distinguished German naturalist, explorer, and professor at the University of Leipzig who made monumental contributions to the biological understanding of South America. Between 1827 and 1832, he undertook a harrowing scientific expedition through Chile, Peru, and Brazil, becoming one of the first Europeans to descend the entire length of the Amazon River after crossing the Andes. During this journey, he amassing a staggering collection of over 17,000 dried plants and hundreds of zoological specimens, many of which were described in his major work, *Reise in Chile, Peru und auf dem Amazonenstrome*. Poeppig is also remembered for his botanical descriptions and for being the first to describe several iconic species, such as the pampas cat. His legacy is honored in the names of numerous organisms, including the silvery woolly monkey (*Lagothrix poeppigii*) and the South American wood turtle (*Rhinoclemmys punctularia poeppigii*).

Atractus potschi FERNANDES, 1995

The specific epithet *potschi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending -i indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Brazilian herpetologist Sérgio Potsch de Carvalho e Silva.

Remarks: Sérgio Potsch de Carvalho e Silva is a distinguished Brazilian herpetologist and Associate Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), recognized for his extensive contributions to the study of Atlantic Forest amphibians. His research primarily focuses on the taxonomy, biology, and vocalization of Neotropical anurans, particularly within the families *Hylidae* and *Brachycephalidae*. Throughout his career, Dr. Potsch has described numerous new species, such as the snouted treefrog *Scinax lutzikasnuchi*, and has been a vocal advocate for the conservation of Brazil's high-altitude grasslands and coastal ecosystems. A dedicated educator, he has mentored a significant number of researchers who now populate herpetology departments across Brazil. His scientific legacy is further honored by the species

Ischnocnema potschi, a leaf-litter frog named in recognition of his lifelong dedication to Brazilian biodiversity.



Atractus potschi - Fazenda Limoeiro, Ramalho, Feira da Mata, State of Bahia, Brazil - Júlia
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/juliadegois>
Creative Commons License

Atractus punctiventris AMARAL, 1933

The species epithet *punctiventris* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor of body sections. It is a compound Latin adjective derived from the participle *pūnctus* ("marked with points," "dotted," or "stippled,") and the noun *venter* ("belly,") literally meaning "dotted-bellied." It is a third-declension two-termination adjective in nominative masculine singular form matching the masculine *Atractus*. It is in allusion to the rounded spot located in the center of the ventral and subcaudal scales.

Publication Quote: "...superfície ventral também esbranquiçada com uma estria negra mediana constituída por uma mancha arredondada colocada bem sobre o centro de cada placa ventral e das subcaudais..." It translates to, "The ventral surface is also whitish with a median black stripe consisting of a rounded spot located right in the center of each ventral plate and the subcaudal scales."

Formation Notes: [(participle) *pūnctus* --> (stem) *pūnct-*] + [(interfix) *-i-*] + [(noun) *venter* --> (genitive) *ventris* --> (stem) *ventr-*] + [(suffix) *-is*] = *pūnctiventris*.

Remarks: As noted in a previous entry for *A. nigriventris*, this species belongs to the second group of "venter" epithets, those named for the specific pattern of the belly rather than its solid

color. The use of the participle *pūnctus* (from *pungō*, "to prick") is particularly evocative of these "stippled" or "punctured" spots that form a distinct line down the center of the tail.

Atractus resplendens WERNER, 1901

The species epithet *resplendens* is an appearance-based morphology descriptor of iridescence. It is the singular Latin adjective *resplendēns*, which is the present participle of *resplendeō* (present infinitive: *resplendēre*), meaning "to shine back brightly" or "to glitter." The word is formed from the prefix *re-* ("back") and *splendeō* ("to shine"). As a participle used as an adjective, it translates to "shining brightly" or "resplendent." Grammatically, it is a third-declension, one-termination adjective; it maintains the same form in the nominative singular regardless of the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the glossy, vividly iridescent blue-green dorsal surface and the strongly iridescent black longitudinal band on the ventral side.

Publication Quote: "Oberseite glänzend schwarz, lebhaft blaugrün schillernd. ... Unterseite mit einem breiten, schwarzen, ebenfalls stark irisierenden Längsband ..." It translates to, "Upper side glossy black, vividly iridescent blue-green. ... Underside with a broad, black, also strongly iridescent longitudinal band ..."

Remarks: Iridescence is a common feature in many fossorial snakes of the genus *Atractus*, but *A. resplendens* was specifically highlighted for the intensity of this effect on both its dorsal and ventral surfaces. The "shining back" (*re-* + *splendeō*) aspect of the etymology is particularly fitting for a species whose scales act like a prism when exposed to light.

Atractus reticulatus (BOULENGER, 1885)

The species epithet *reticulatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *rēticulātus* meaning "reticulated," or "net-like." It is formed from the second-declension noun *rēticulum* meaning "a small net," (the diminutive of *rēte*) and the adjectival suffix *-ātus*, meaning "provided with," or "having the nature of." Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension masculine adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus name *Atractus*. The name refers to the net-like dorsal pattern of the species caused by the contrast between the dark brown edge scales on a pale brownish dorsal color, creating the visual effect of a fine dark net or mesh over the body.

Publication Quote: "... Pale brownish above, each scale edged with dark brown..."

Formation Notes: [(noun) *rēticulum* --> (genitive) *rēticulī* --> (stem) *rēticul-*] + [(suffix) *-ātus*] = *rēticulātus*.



Atractus reticulatus, Reticulate Ground Snake - Parque Eldorado, Eldorado do Sul , Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil-
amandapmarcon

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/amandapmarcon>

Creative Commons License

Atractus riveroi ROZE, 1961

The specific epithet *riveroi* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished herpetologist Juan Arturo Rivero-Quintero.

Remarks: Juan Arturo Rivero-Quintero (1923–2014) was a monumental figure in Caribbean biology and the father of modern herpetology in Puerto Rico. After earning his doctorate from Harvard University, he returned to the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM), where he founded the Mayagüez Zoo (which now bears his name) and served as Dean of Arts and Sciences. Rivero was a prolific researcher who described dozens of new species, including many of the island's iconic coquí frogs, and authored the definitive *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Puerto Rico*. His influence extended far beyond the Antilles; he was an expert on high-altitude Andean frogs, and his legacy is preserved in the names of numerous taxa, such as the genus *Riveroana* and the *Atractus riveroi*.

Atractus ronnie PASSOS, FERNANDES & BORGES-NOJOSA, 2007

The species epithet *ronnie* is an eponymous noun used as a noun in apposition. It honors prominent Brazilian herpetologist Dr. Ronaldo "Ronnie" Fernandes.

Remarks: Ronaldo Fernandes (born 1966) is a prominent Brazilian herpetologist and Associate Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), where he serves as the curator of

the herpetological collection at the Museu Nacional. An expert in snake systematics, he earned his doctorate in Quantitative Biology from the University of Texas and has focused his research on the taxonomy, phylogeny, and reproductive biology of Neotropical colubrid snakes. Fernandes has played a critical leadership role within the museum, serving as the Assistant Director for Science and contributing to the recovery and reconstruction efforts following the devastating 2018 fire. His extensive body of work includes the description of numerous new species, particularly in the genus *Atractus*, and his contributions to the field are honored in the scientific name of the rare snake *Calamodontophis ronaldi*.

Atractus roulei DESPAX, 1910

The specific epithet *roulei* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished French zoologist Louis Roule.

Remarks: Louis Roule (1861–1942) was a multifaceted French zoologist who held the rare distinction of being a Doctor of Science and a Doctor of Medicine. After starting his career at the Faculty of Sciences of Toulouse, where he became a professor in 1892, he moved to the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris to succeed Léon Vaillant as the chair of herpetology and ichthyology. Roule was a prolific researcher whose work spanned from marine invertebrates and embryology to deep-sea fish; he was notably the first scientist to describe *Grimaldichthys profundissimus*, a fish found at record-breaking depths of over six kilometers. Beyond his technical papers, he was a gifted biographer of great French naturalists and a popularizer of science, authoring numerous books on the migratory lives of fish. His legacy is preserved in the names of several species, including the snake *Atractus roulei* and the fish genus *Rouleina*.

Atractus sanctaemartae DUNN, 1946

The species epithet *sanctaemartae* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a place name ("Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,") Latinized ("Sancta Marta,") and put into the genitive case ("Sanctae Martae,") meaning "of Santa Marta." It is specifically a compound noun where both parts have been declined into the genitive singular form to agree with one another. The ending *-ae* indicates a feminine gender assigned to the Latinized locality. The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality of "San Sebastián de Rábago (now known as Nabusimake), Dep. de Magdalena, Colombia," where the holotype was collected. San Sebastián is located within the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range.

Grammar Notes: The practice of naming species after their locality is common in biological taxonomy. While epithets ending in adjectival suffixes *-ensis* (third declension, one termination adjective) and *-icus* or *-ianus/-inus* (first/second-declension, three-termination adjective) are more prevalent, the use of genitives is also a standard practice. The epithets *talamancae*, *tarascae*, or *sanctaemartae* are perfect examples of a genitive-case noun being used as a species epithet, which is a common and distinct practice from using adjectival suffixes like *-ensis*. It is not an exception but a different valid method of forming a species name. Here is the grammatical breakdown of *sanctaemartae*. The original word Santa Marta is treated as a Latin first-declension noun (two parts, Santa and Marta) in taxonomy. First-declension nouns typically end in *-a* in the nominative singular and *-ae* in the genitive singular. So, the nominative form of *Marta* in genitive becomes *Martae*. However, the *Santa* part needs to be Latinized first (*Sanctus/Sancta*), then to *Sanctae*, yielding the compound *sanctaemartae*. In binomial nomenclature, the genitive

form *sanctaemartae* is used in the genitive case. This means it functions like a separate noun that modifies the genus, rather than an adjective that agrees with it. Thus, the name literally means "the *Atractus* of Santa Marta". Hypothetically, had Dunn selected to use the narrower type locality of San Sebastián, the similar approach would have resulted in the epithet *sanctisebastiani*.

Atractus sanguineus PRADO, 1944

The species epithet *sanguineus* is a color-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *sanguineus* ("bloody," "blood-stained," or "blood-colored,") formed from the noun *sanguis* ("blood") and the adjectival suffix *-eus* (meaning "made of" or "resembling"). The name refers to the snake's distinctive blood-red dorsal coloration. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Notes: "Vermelho-sangüínea em cima, onde sôbre a linha mediana corre um traço negro, ladeado em toda extensão por manchas arredondadas da mesma côr, ..." It translates to, "Blood-red above, where a black line runs along the midline, flanked along its entire length by rounded spots of the same color."

Remarks: The epithet reflects the holotype's striking appearance, described as "vermelho-sangüínea" (blood-red). However, it should be noted that not all morphs of *Atractus sanguineus* exhibit this namesake coloration. Some individuals lack red pigments entirely, while in others, the intensity varies significantly, ranging from a light reddish hue to an intense, overwhelming brownish-red.

Atractus savagei SALAZAR-VALENZUELA, TORRES-CARVAJAL & PASSOS, 2014

The specific epithet *savagei* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors one of the most influential American herpetologists Jay M. Savage

Remarks: Jay Mathers Savage (1928–2025) recently passed away, leaving behind a profound legacy as one of the most influential herpetologists of the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Throughout his long career at the University of Southern California and later the University of Miami, he was a tireless explorer and taxonomist, best known for his definitive work on the amphibians and reptiles of Costa Rica. Beyond his descriptions of iconic species like the Golden Toad, Savage was a visionary institution-builder; he co-founded the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), which has trained thousands of tropical biologists, and served as a mentor to a vast "lineage" of scientists who now lead the field. His monumental 2002 monograph remains the "gold standard" for regional herpetological guides, and his passing marks the end of an era for Neotropical biology.

Atractus schach (BOIE, 1827)

The species epithet *schach* is a language-based noun referring metaphorically to the snake's dorsal pattern. It is a Latinized noun from the German word *Schach*, meaning both "chess" (the game) and "check" (the chess situation in which the king is threatened). While the original publication did not provide an explicit rationale, the name refers to the distinctive "checkered," or "tessellated," appearance of the dorsal scales. Grammatically, it is treated as a noun in apposition and remains invariant when combined with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "supra e vinaceo et fusco pallidus, linea dorsi media nigra, maculis fuscis subquadratis huic contiguis albisque laterum minoribus tessellatus..." It translates to, "above, pale from crimson and brown, the middle line of the back is black, tessellated with brown spots sub-squared to this and smaller white spots on the sides..."

Remarks: The connection between the name *schach* and the pattern is reinforced by Boie's use of the Latin *tessellatus*, which translates to "mosaic" or "checkered". This creates a clear visual link between the German noun for chess and the "sub-squared" (*subquadratis*) spots described in the type series, which resemble the alternating squares of a chessboard.

Atractus serranus AMARAL, 1930

The species epithet *serranus* is a language-based toponymic descriptor referring to species habitat. It is a Latinized adjective based on the Spanish adjective *serrano*, meaning "highland," or "from the mountains." The name refers to the "species' restricted range at high elevations in Serra de Paranapiacaba, state of São Paulo in Brazil. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Incidental Etymology: While the Spanish origin is the intent of the original author, an interesting and unintentional etymology can be derived from the Latin noun *serra* ("a saw,") combined with the suffix *-ānus* ("belonging to"). This interpretation would describe a "resident of the saw," referring to the jagged, tooth-like profile of the mountainous terrain in the Serra de Paranapiacaba, which mirrors the appearance of a saw blade.

Geography Notes: The type locality of the species is the Serra de Paranapiacaba, a mountain range that forms part of the Atlantic Forest biome in southeastern Brazil. This region is characterized by high humidity and steep, rugged terrain, providing the specialized environment required for this "Sao Paulo Ground Snake".

Atractus snethlageae CUNHA & NASCIMENTO, 1983

The specific epithet *snethlageae* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a matronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-ae* indicates that it honors a female individual. It honors German-Brazilian ornithologist Dr. Emilie Snethlage.

Remarks: Dr. Maria Elizabeth Emilia Snethlage (1868-1929) was a trailblazing German-Brazilian ornithologist who became the first woman to lead a scientific institution in South America as the Director of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. After working as an assistant at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, she moved to Brazil in 1905, where she conducted daring expeditions into the Amazon rainforest, often traveling with only indigenous guides. Her 1914 masterpiece, *Catálogo das Aves Amazônicas*, remains a cornerstone of Neotropical ornithology. Her immense contribution to natural history is honored in the names of several species, including the ground snake *Atractus snethlageae*, the Snethlage's marmoset (*Mico emiliae*), and the Madeira parakeet (*Pyrrhura snethlageae*).

Atractus spinalis PASSOS, TEIXEIRA Jr, RECODER, DE SENA, DAL VECHIO, ARRUDA-PINTO, MENDONÇA, CASSIMIRO & RODRIGUES, 2013

The species epithet *spinalis* is a habitat-based descriptor, metaphorically acting as a toponym. The Latin adjective *spīnālis* means "spinal," or "of or belonging to the spine," formed from *spīna* ("spine,") and the adjectival suffix *-ālis* ("pertaining to,."). However, the name in here is used in reference to the Espinhaço Mountains Range [= Cadeia do Espinhaço,] where the type series of

Atractus spinalis was collected and the species is endemic to. The Portuguese word espinhaço translates to "backbone," or "spine," which mirrors the Latin origin of the species epithet *spinalis*, derived from *spina* ("backbone"). Thus, the epithet refers to the profile appearance of the type locality characterized by its rugged, "spine-like" shape. Grammatically, *spinalis* is a third-declension, two-termination adjective.

Remarks: The authors are using a calque (a loan translation) where instead of naming the snake "espinhacensis" or "espinhaco," they translated the meaning of the place name (Espinhaço → Backbone/Spine) into Latin (*Spinalis*).



Atractus spinalis - Morro do Pilar, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil- Luiz Braga

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/luizbraga>

Creative Commons License

Atractus steyermarki ROZE, 1958

The specific epithet *steyermarki* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Venezuelan-American botanist Julian A. Steyermark.

Remarks: Julian Alfred Steyermark (1909–1988) was a legendary Venezuelan-American botanist renowned for his extraordinary field collections and prolific taxonomic work. During his career, which spanned tenures at the Field Museum of Chicago, the Instituto Botánico of Caracas, and the Missouri Botanical Garden, he collected over 130,000 plant specimens, earning him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. A specialist in the family *Rubiaceae*, Steyermark authored or co-authored several monumental floristic works, including the *Flora of*

Missouri, *Flora of Guatemala*, and the seminal *Flora of the Venezuelan Guayana*. His tireless exploration of the isolated tepuis of the Guiana Shield led to the description of 2,392 plant taxa, including 1,864 species. His immense contribution to botany is commemorated by numerous plant names, such as the genera *Steyermarkia* and *Steyermarkochloa*, and he remains one of the most cited authorities in New World botany.

Atractus stygius PASSOS, AZEVEDO, NOGUEIRA, FERNANDES & SAWAYA, 2019F

The species epithet *stygius* is a habitat-based descriptor alluding to a fossorial lifestyle while functioning as a social commentary. Derived from the Latin adjective *stygius*, from Ancient Greek *Stúgĭos*, it translates to "Stygian," "infernal," or "of the lower world". Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective agreeing with the masculine genus *Atractus*. While the name refers to the species' secretive habits in the "underworld," the authors explicitly state it also serves as a warning regarding the "pernicious" and "absurd" levels of deforestation in the Cerrado savannas due to monoculture expansion.

Publication Quote: "... The word is also used in reference to something pernicious or tragic. We employed this name because of the secretive habits of the new species as well as an urgent alert for the absurd levels of deforestation that the Cerrado savannas have suffered in recent years, as a result of the indiscriminate expansion of soybean monoculture. This scenario is even more worrisome for the conservation agenda given the growing disregard of Brazilian authorities regarding the preservation of natural environments, and considering the previously undetected high levels of herpetofaunal endemism recently reported for the Cerrado."

Atractus surucucu PRUDENTE & PASSOS, 2008

The species epithet *surucucu* is a geography-based toponymic noun, used as a noun in apposition. It is a Latinized noun from a place name, (Serra do) *Surucucu*, a mountain slope. Grammatically, *surucucu* functions as a noun in apposition, thus invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the type locality and distribution of the species in Serra do Surucucu, in the State of Roraima, Brazil.

Remarks: Although the epithet *surucucu* is alluding to the proper name of the type locality of the species (Serra do Surucucu), the word "surucucu" itself is derived from Tupi indigenous name (suu'-u-u) meaning a very aggressive pit-viper. Surucucu also commonly refers to the popular name of the snake Bushmaster (*Lachesis muta*) in Brazil.

Atractus tamessari KOK, 2006

The specific epithet *tamessari* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished Guyanese biologist Michael Tamessar.

Remarks: Michael "Mike" Tamessar is a foundational figure in Guyanese biology and a retired Senior Scientific Officer at the University of Guyana (UG), where he dedicated his career to building the country's taxonomic capacity. Known for his vast expertise in the natural history of Guyana, he specialized in both vertebrates (fishes, amphibians, and reptiles) and invertebrates (scorpions and spiders). Despite limited resources during the late 20th century, Tamessar was instrumental in developing the Guyanese scientific collections at the Centre for the Study of Biological Diversity and served as a vital mentor and guide to generations of visiting scientists and local students. His legacy is immortalized in the scientific names of several species

discovered in the Guiana Shield, most notably the snake *Atractus tamessari*, which was named in honor of his lifelong commitment to the biodiversity of his homeland.



Atractus tamessari - Ireng - Sawariwau (Including St. Ignatius), Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo, Guyana - penterd
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/penterd>
Creative Commons License

Atractus taphorni SCHARGEL & GARCÍA-PÉREZ, 2002

The specific epithet *taphorni* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors distinguished American ichthyologist Donald C. Taphorn.

Remarks: Donald C. Taphorn (born 1951) is a distinguished American ichthyologist and conservationist whose career has been foundational to the study of freshwater fishes in the Neotropics. After moving to Venezuela in the 1970s, he joined the Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Occidentales Ezequiel Zamora (UNELLEZ), where he founded and directed the Museo de Zoología (MCNG), transforming it into one of the most significant and well-organized natural history collections in South America. Over several decades, Taphorn authored more than 100 scientific publications, including the definitive *The Characiform Fishes of the Apure River Drainage, Venezuela* (1992), and described roughly 100 new species of fish. While primarily an ichthyologist, his broad impact on Venezuelan biodiversity research is reflected in the many species named in his honor, ranging from the cichlid *Astronotus mikoljii* to the Monte Cano gecko (*Lepidoblepharis montecanoensis*), which he co-described.

Atractus tartarus PASSOS, PRUDENTE & LYNCH, 2016

The species epithet *tartarus* is a habitat-based descriptor alluding to a fossorial lifestyle while functioning as a social commentary. It is a Latinized adjective derived from the Ancient Greek *Tártaros* (Τάρταρος), the deepest abyss of the underworld. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension nominative singular adjective agreeing with the masculine genus *Atractus*. While the name refers to the species' secretive habits in the "underworld," the authors use it to highlight the environmental "abyss" created by massive mining activity within the species' known range.

Mythology Notes: *Tártaros* (Τάρταρος) refers primarily to the deepest, darkest pit of the underworld in Greek mythology, situated as far beneath Hades as heaven is above earth. It serves as a prison for defeated Titans (like Cronus) and a place of eternal punishment for sinners. In early Greek myths, it is a primordial force, representing the abyss, alongside Chaos and Gaia.



Atractus tartarus - Oriente, Paragominas, State of Pará, Brazil - Biólogo Alvarez

<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/biologoalvarez>

Creative Commons License

Atractus thalesdelemai PASSOS, FERNANDES & ZANELLA, 2005

The specific epithet *thalesdelemai* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors esteemed Brazilian herpetologist and professor Thales de Lema.

Remarks: Thales de Lema (born 1928) is a highly esteemed Brazilian herpetologist and professor whose career has been central to the study of South American snakes, particularly within the diverse tribe *Elapomorphini*. Based at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), he has served as a curator at the Museum of Science and Technology and the Museum of Natural Sciences of the Fundação Zoobotânica. Throughout his decades of research, Lema has authored numerous seminal works on snake systematics and biogeography, describing dozens of new taxa such as *Tantilla marcovani* and species in the genus *Apostolepis*. Beyond his taxonomic contributions, he is a prolific mentor who has supervised many of Brazil's leading modern herpetologists, including Ana Lúcia da Costa Prudente. His name is honored in

the scientific community through several patronyms, such as the snake *Apostolepis thalesdelemai*, and *Atractus thalesdelemai*.

Atractus titanicus PASSOS, ARREDONDO, FERNANDES & LYNCH, 2009

The species epithet *titanicus* is a habitus-based morphology descriptor with a mythological connection. It is a Latinized adjective derived from the Ancient Greek *Tītān* (Τῑτάν) or its plural form *Tītānes* (Τῑτᾱνες), referring to the deities that preceded the Olympians in Greek mythology, combined with the adjectival suffix *-icus* ("pertaining to," or "belonging to,") producing a masculine nominative singular form that agrees with the gender of *Atractus*. The authors selected this name in allusion to the size and strength of the Titans for this species which is amongst the largest in size in the genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "The specific epithet "*titanicus*" is an adjective derived from the Greek name Titan, son of Uranus and Gaea who symbolize strong power and large size. The word alludes to the large body size of *Atractus titanicus* compared to other congeners."

Mythology Notes: In Greek mythology, the Titans (Ancient Greek: Τῑτᾱνες, Tītānes; singular: Τῑτάν, Tītān) were the deities that preceded the Olympians. They were the twelve children of the primordial deities Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth). The six male Titans were Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Cronus, and the six female Titans (called the Titanesses; Ancient Greek: Τῑτανίδες, Tītānides; singular: Τῑτανίς, Tītānís) were Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, and Tethys. After Cronus married his sister Rhea, she bore the first generation of Olympians: the six siblings Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Hades, and Hestia. Certain other children of the Titans, such as Prometheus, Atlas, Helios, and Leto, are sometimes also called Titans. They were the generation of gods preceding the Olympians, and were overthrown as part of the Greek succession myth, which tells how Cronus seized power from his father Uranus and ruled the cosmos with his fellow Titans before being in turn defeated and replaced as the ruling pantheon of gods by Zeus and the Olympians in a ten-year war called the Titanomachy ("battle of the Titans"). As a result of this war, the vanquished Titans were banished from the upper world and held imprisoned under guard in Tartarus. Some Titans were apparently allowed to remain free.

Taxonomy Notes: In their original description, the authors state the name is derived from "the Greek name Titan, son of Uranus and Gaea." However, in Greek mythology, "Titan" is not the name of a singular deity but rather a title for any member of the race of powerful, pre-Olympian deities. While specific figures like Helios or Atlas are sometimes referred to as "The Titan," the epithet *titanicus* is used here in a figurative sense. In modern usage, a "titan" (lowercase) refers to any person or thing of incredible strength or importance, which aligns with the intended analogy regarding this species' massive proportions relative to its congeners.



Atractus titanicus - Reserva La Rivera, Filandia, Quindío, Colombia - Carlos Mauricio Ramirez
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/mauricini>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus torquatus (DUMÉRIL, BIBRON & DUMÉRIL, 1854)

The species epithet *torquatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *torquātus* meaning "adorned with a neck chain (or collar)." Its formation can be explained in two ways: either directly as the perfect passive participle of *torqueō* (present infinitive: *torquēre*) meaning "to turn," "to twist," or "to twirl," or alternatively from the third-declension noun *torquis* (genitive also *torquis*) meaning "collar," or "necklace," and the adjectival suffix *-ātus* meaning "provided with," or "having the nature of." It should be noted that *torquis* itself comes from the root of *torqueō*. The name refers to the presence of a black or brownish band that encircles the upper and lateral sides of the neck like a half-collar in this species. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "a le dessus et les côtés du corps soit. fauves, soit légèrement roussâtres, soit d'un brun de schiste mouillée. L'une ou l'autre de ces teintes, ordinairement plus claire au centre qu'au pourtour des écailles, est toujours marquée d'un grand nombre de taches noires où brunâtres, tantôt isolées, tantôt plus ou moins rapprochées, tantôt réunies de façon à produire des bandes transversales entières ou interrompues. Assez souvent l'une de ces bandes, plus nettement formée qu'aucune des autres, ceint les faces supérieures et latérales du cou en manière de demi-collier." it translates to, "The upper and lateral sides of the body are either tawny, slightly reddish, or the color of wet slate. One or the other of these shades, usually lighter in the

center than at the edges of the scales, is always marked with a large number of black or brownish spots, sometimes isolated, sometimes more or less close together, and sometimes joined together to form complete or interrupted transverse bands. Quite often, one of these bands, more clearly defined than any of the others, encircles the upper and lateral sides of the neck like a half-collar."

Remarks: The term *torquis* originally referred to a twisted metal collar worn by Gauls and later adopted as a military decoration by the Romans. In herpetology, this epithet is frequently used for species exhibiting a distinct nuchal collar, such as *Tropidodipsas fischeri* or the Ring-necked Snake, *Diadophis punctatus*. In *Atractus torquatus*, this "half-collar" is a primary diagnostic feature that distinguishes it from other Amazonian congeners that may have spotted but not banded neck patterns.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: [(noun) *torquis* --> (genitive) *torquis* --> (stem) *torqu-*] + [(suffix) *-ātus*] = *torquātus*.



Atractus torquatus, Neckband Ground Snake - Seliba longtrack, Marchallkreek, Suriname - Jap Smits
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/japsmits>
Creative Commons License

Atractus touzeti SCHARGEL, LAMAR, PASSOS, VALENCIA, CISNEROS-HEREDIA & CAMPBELL, 2013

The specific epithet *touzeti* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors prominent French herpetologist Jean-Marc Touzet.

Remarks: Jean-Marc Touzet is a French herpetologist and conservationist who has spent over two decades in Ecuador, becoming one of the most influential figures in the study and protection of the country's diverse reptiles and amphibians. In 1989, he led a group of young biologists to establish the Vivarium de Quito, a specialized center for the management and public exhibition of Ecuadorian herpetofauna, and in 1992 co-founded the Fundación Herpetológica Gustavo Orcés (FHGO). Throughout his career, Touzet has amassed significant scientific collections and coordinated major research initiatives, such as the SUBIR project, while playing a pivotal role in mentoring a new generation of Ecuadorian herpetologists. His enduring impact on the field is recognized through several patronyms, including Touzet's Dwarf-iguana (*Enyalioides touzeti*) and Touzet's Ground Snake (*Atractus touzeti*).



Atractus touzeti - Faldas del Reventador, Provincia de Sucumbíos, Ecuador - Mario Humberto Yáñez-Muñoz
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/mario_yanez_munoz
Creative Commons License

Atractus trefauti MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, FOUQUET, COSTA-PRUDENTE & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2019

The specific epithet *trefauti* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors preeminent Brazilian herpetologist Miguel Trefaut Urbano Rodrigues

Remarks: Miguel Trefaut Urbano Rodrigues (born 1953) is a preeminent Brazilian herpetologist and professor at the University of São Paulo (USP) known for his extensive work on the systematics, evolution, and biogeography of Neotropical reptiles and amphibians. Since

beginning his research in the 1980s, he has conducted numerous expeditions to remote regions such as the sand dunes of the São Francisco River and the Pico da Neblina, leading to the description of over 60 new species. A former director of the Museum of Zoology of USP (1997–2001) and a member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences, his contributions include pioneering studies on the genetic diversity and paleoclimatic modeling of the Atlantic Forest and Amazonia. His legacy in Brazilian biology is further cemented by the numerous taxa named in his honor, including the frog *Cycloramphus migueli* and the gecko *Liotyphlops trefauti*, and *Atractus trefauti*.



Atractus trefauti - Sinnamary, French Guiana - nicolas burnel
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/nicolas-burnel>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus trihedrurus AMARAL, 1926

The specific epithet *trihedrurus* is a morphology descriptor based on the shape of the snake's tail. It is a compound adjective Latinized from the Ancient Greek *tri-* (τρι-) meaning "three," combined with *hédra* (ἔδρα) meaning "seat," "base," or "face of a geometric figure," with *ourá* (οὐρά) meaning "tail." The name literally translates to "three-faced tail" or "triangular-based tail," referring to the species' uniquely short and pointed tail. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "... Cauda curta, em forma de pyramide triangular ..." It translates to, "Short tail, in the shape of a triangular pyramid..."

Formation Notes: The formation follows the standard Greek derivational route: [(numeral) *treîs* (τρεῖς) --> (prefix) *tri-* (τρι-)] + [(noun) *hédra* (ἑδρά) --> (genitive) *hédra*s (ἑδράς) --> (stem) *hédra-* (ἑδρα-)] + [(noun) *ourá* (οὐρά) --> (genitive) *ourá*s (οὐράς) --> (stem) *our-* (οὐρα-)] + [(suffix) *-os* (-ος)] = *trihédrouros* (τριἑδρουρός) --> (Latinized) *trihedrurus*.

Grammar Notes: The transition from the Ancient Greek compound *tri-* (τρι-) + *hédra* (ἑδρά) + *ourá* (οὐρά) to the Latinized *trihedrurus* involves both phonetic assimilation and standard Latinization conventions for Greek diphthongs. (1) Diphthong Simplification (*ov* --> *u*): The "o" here is part of the Greek diphthong *ov* (*ou*), as seen in the stem of *ourá* (οὐρά), meaning "tail". In the process of Latinization, the Greek diphthong *ov* is systematically converted to the Latin vowel *u*. So, Greek *tri-hédra-our-os* changes to Latinized: *tri-hédra-ur-us*. (2) Vowel Assimilation and Hiatus: In the original Greek compound *trihédrouros* (τριἑδρουρός), the *o* (*o*) at the end of the second stem (*hédra-*) typically serves as a connective vowel. However, when Latinizing these complex compounds, Latin often favors a more fluid phonetic structure. The "o" is dropped through a process of vowel elision or assimilation to avoid hiatus (the jarring sound of two vowels in a row), resulting in the smoother *trihedrurus*. (3) Standard Latinization of Suffixes: Finally, the Greek masculine nominative ending *-ος* (*-os*) is always converted to the Latin second-declension masculine ending *-us*.

Atractus trilineatus WAGLER, 1828

The species epithet *trilineatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is the Latin adjective *trilineātus* ("three-striped," or "three-lined,") formed from the prefix *tri-*, the combining form of *trēs* ("three,") and the participial adjective *līneātus* ("lined.") The term *līneātus* itself derives from the Latin noun *līnea* ("line," "thread," or "string,") which stems from *līneus* ("flaxen") or *līnum* ("flax"). Combined with the adjectival suffix *-ātus* (meaning "provided with," or "having.") The name refers to the snake's distinctive pattern of three longitudinal stripes, one dorsal stripe and two lateral white stripes, running along the body. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension, three-termination, nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Grammar Notes: The formation follows the standard Latin derivational route: [(numeral) *trēs* --> (combining form) *tri-*] + [(noun) *līnea* --> (genitive) *līneae* --> (stem) *līne-* + (suffix) *-ātus*] = *trilineātus*.

Remarks: Johann Georg Wagler's use of "*trilineatus*" captures a classic descriptive approach in herpetology, where a primary visual characteristic is used as a diagnostic name. The Latin root *līnea* is particularly appropriate here, as it historically referred to a linen thread or string, mirroring the thin, continuous appearance of the snake's stripes.



Atractus trilineatus, Three-lined Ground Snake - Endeavour, Trinidad and Tobago - Saifudeen Muhammad
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/saifudeen_muhammad
 Creative Commons License

Atractus tritono PASSOS, MENESES-PELAYO, RAMOS, MARTINS, MACHADO, LOPES, BARRIO-AMORÓS & LYNCH, 2024

The species epithet *tritono* is a language-based eponymous noun referencing the "headbangers" and fans of heavy metal music through a musical metaphor. It is a Latinized noun derived from the Spanish word *tritono*, meaning "tritone," or the "devil's interval," a musical interval composed of three whole tones. The authors detailed their rationale for selecting this epithet based on the tritone's association with heavy metal bands like Black Sabbath, whose fans traditionally dress in black, mirroring the species' coloration. Grammatically, it is treated as a noun in apposition and remains invariant.

Publication Quote: "The specific epithet 'triton' (= tritone in English) represents an interval between peaks of two musical notes that has exactly three whole tones. The so-called tritone effect is one of the most complex dissonances possible in Occidental Music. During the Middle Ages, this interval was considered lurid and called Diabolus in Musica ('devil in music.') Until the XVIII century, its use in melody was either avoided or severely restricted. The tritone causes a sensation of movement, which makes it highly explored in moments of tension in Classical Music, as in the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's 5th Symphony. In contrast, the tritone is an essential element of pioneering groups of Heavy Metal like Black Sabbath. We

named this species in honor for all headbangers and fans of extreme music usually dressed in black like *Atractus tritono*."

Music Notes: The tritone is an interval spanning three whole tones, such as the distance between C and F-sharp. Historically, its extreme dissonance led it to be dubbed the "devil in music" (*diabolus in musica*), and it was largely avoided in sacred Western music for centuries because it was considered unstable and unsettling. In the 20th century, however, this "tension" became a hallmark of heavy metal; the band Black Sabbath famously used the tritone in their self-titled 1970 track to create a dark, ominous atmosphere that defined the genre's aesthetic. By naming this black-colored snake after the interval, the authors connect the biological world to the subculture of "extreme music" that embraced the interval's dark reputation.

Atractus turikensis BARROS, 2000

The species epithet *turikensis* is a geography-based toponymic descriptor of a broader region than the specific type locality. It is a Latin adjective formed from a place name (Mesa) *Turik* and the adjectival suffix *-ensis* meaning "of," or "pertaining to," yielding "of Mesa Turik." The name refers broadly to distribution of the species in Mesa Turik, Sierra de Perijá, Zulia State, Venezuela as the species' provenance, rather than to a precise locality the type species was collected from.

Geography Notes: Located within the Sierra de Perijá National Park, Mesa Turik is a critical high-altitude ecological enclave characterized by its isolated, tepui-like plateau environment. Rising to approximately 1,800 meters, this 120 km² limestone massif supports a pristine montane cloud forest with canopies reaching up to 50 meters, acting as a biological island that fosters high levels of micro-endemism. It serves as the type locality and exclusive habitat for several rare species, including the Mesa Turik ground snake (*Atractus turikensis*), the frog *Pristimantis turik*, and the lizard *Anolis euskalerriari*. Furthermore, its complex karstic topography contains significant cave systems, such as Cueva de La Pared Norte, which are essential for specialized cavernicolous fauna like the scorpion *Chactas viloriai*. Despite its remote location, the area's ecological integrity is vital for regional water resources, as it forms the headwaters for major rivers like the Palmar and Apón that sustain the Zulia region.

Atractus typhon PASSOS, MUESES-CISNEROS, LYNCH & FERNANDES, 2009

The species epithet *typhon* is a language-based noun referencing the snake's size through mythological analogy. It is a Latinized noun in apposition derived from the Ancient Greek name *Typhon* (Τυφών), a monstrous serpentine giant in Greek mythology. Grammatically, as a noun in apposition, the epithet is invariant and does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name serves as a symbolic reference to the species' "impressive aspect," as it is one of the largest members of the *Atractus* genus.

Mythology Notes: Typhon (Ancient Greek: Τυφών, romanized: Typhôn), also Typhoeus (Τυφωεύς, Typhōeús), Typhaon (Τυφάων, Typháōn) or Typhos (Τυφώς, Typhós), was a monstrous serpentine giant and one of the deadliest creatures in Greek mythology. Typhon was the son of Gaia and Tartarus (another source has Typhon as the son of Hera alone, while another makes Typhon the offspring of Cronus.) Typhon and his mate Echidna were the progenitors of many famous monsters. Typhon attempted to overthrow Zeus for the supremacy of the cosmos. The two fought a cataclysmic battle, which Zeus finally won with the aid of his thunderbolts. Defeated, Typhon was cast into Tartarus, or buried underneath Mount Etna, or in later accounts, the island of Ischia. Typhon mythology is part of the Greek succession myth, which explained

how Zeus came to rule the gods. Typhon's story is also connected with that of Python (the serpent killed by Apollo), and both stories probably derived from several Near Eastern antecedents. Typhon was (from c. 500 BC) also identified with the Egyptian god of destruction Set. In later accounts, Typhon was often confused with the Giants. (Wikipedia)

Remarks: By choosing the name of the "father of monsters," the authors emphasize the massive proportions and intimidating presence of this particular ground snake. It is a fittingly "epic" name for a species that stands out as a giant among its more diminutive congeners.



Atractus typhon, Typhon Ground Snake - Eloy Alfaro, Ecuador - Frederic Griesbaum
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/frederic_griesbaum
Creative Commons License

Atractus ukupacha MELO-SAMPAIO, PASSOS, PRUDENTE, VENEGAS & TORRES-CARVAJAL, 2021

The species epithet *ukupacha* is a language-based noun referencing a fossorial lifestyle through analogy to a mythical realm. In Inca mythology, the term *Uku Pacha* represents the underworld, encompassing the dead and all things existing beneath the terrestrial or aquatic surface. The word *Pacha* in the Quechua language signifies "time and space," but in a broader sense, it denotes "land," or "Earth." According to the authors, "general legend considers fountains, caves, volcanoes, and any opening in the Earth's crust as a means of communication between Uku Pacha and Kay Pacha [the world of the living]." The authors chose this name to refer to the species' semi-fossorial (burrowing) lifestyle. As Quechua words do not follow Latin declension rules, the epithet is treated as an indeclinable noun in apposition.

Geography Notes: The type locality of the species is the Andes of southeastern Ecuador, specifically within the Zamora-Chinchipe province. This region is characterized by montane forests and high elevations, where these snakes utilize the leaf litter and topsoil as their primary habitat, a biological reflection of the *Uku Pacha* world.

Mythology Notes: In Andean mythology, Uku Pacha is not merely a place of death, but a domain of fertility and regeneration. It is one of the three levels of the Incan cosmos: Hanan Pacha (the celestial world above), Kay Pacha (the physical world we inhabit), and Uku Pacha (the interior world). It is often associated with the goddess Mama Pacha (Mother Earth) and is populated by various mythological creatures and deities related to the subterranean. By naming a semi-fossorial snake after this realm, the authors create a poetic link between the biological reality of an animal that lives hidden beneath the soil and the ancient spiritual belief that the interior of the Earth is a vital, populated space.



Atractus ukupacha - El Chaco, Ecuador - lui_23

https://www.inaturalist.org/people/lui_23

Creative Commons License

Atractus uroborus PASSOS, MENESES-PELAYO, RAMOS, MARTINS, MACHADO, LOPES, BARRIO-AMORÓS & LYNCH, 2024

The species epithet *uroborus* is a language-based noun referencing an ancient mythical symbol as an analogy for institutional reconstruction. The word *uroborus* is Latinized from the Ancient Greek *ouroboros* (οὐροβόρος), a compound of *ourá* (οὐρά) meaning "tail," and *borá* (βόρά) meaning "food," or "devouring." As a compound, it literally translates to "tail-devouring,"

though it formally refers to the ancient symbol of a serpent eating its own tail in a circular illustration. Grammatically, despite the *-us* ending, *uroborus* is treated as a noun in apposition, rendering it invariant, thus it does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The authors use this "symbol of eternal renewal" to honor the resilience of the Museu Nacional following the 2018 fire. Beyond a biological description, the name serves as a critique of the systemic neglect and lack of funding for Brazilian cultural and scientific institutions. By dedicating the species to those who resist "antidemocratic attitudes," the authors transform this taxon into a permanent scientific monument to cultural preservation and resistance.

Publication Quote: "The specific epithet *uroborus* corresponds to an ancient symbol depicting a snake eating its own tail. This myth arises in ancient Egyptian legends and entered Occidental Culture via Greek philosophers, being adopted as symbol in Gnosticism and Hermeticism and most notably in Alchemy... We employ this word herein in allusion to the reconstruction of the Museu Nacional (the Brazilian National Museum), after the tragic fire of 2 September 2018, which destroyed approximately 20 million irreplaceable items from archeological, artistic, ethnological, linguistic, paleontological, botanical, and zoological collections. After this devastating cultural and scientific tragedy, the institution has been working hard to rebuild the research structure that was lost. This tribute to Museu Nacional is also an alert for Brazilian governments that, unfortunately, prefer to invest more in pharaonic football stadiums than art, culture, and science. Accidental fires in the Museu da Arte Moderna, Instituto Butantan, and Museu da Língua Portuguesa are clear evidence of neglect in the past governments in relation to Brazilian Cultural Heritage. The maintenance of such scientific and cultural institutions in Brazil has become increasingly complex, not only due to the lack of material and human resources but, mainly, due to repeated attacks of the past government authorities on science, culture, and environmental protection and corresponding reductions in funding... This species is also dedicated to all areas of knowledge, ethnic groups, and less favored portions of society that bravely resist all these antidemocratic attitudes anywhere."

Atractus variegatus PRADO, 1942

The species epithet *variegatus* is a pattern-based descriptor of coloration. It is a Latin adjective *variegātus*, the perfect passive participle of *variegō* ("to make of various sorts or colors,"), itself derived from the adjective *varius* ("diverse," or "varied,") and the verb *agō* ("to act," or "to behave,") with the adjectival suffix *-ātus* indicating "provided with," or "clothed in." Together, *variegātus* translates to "variegated," alluding to "streaked," "spotted," or otherwise "marked with a variety of colors." It refers to the color pattern on species' head that is "variegated or mottled with dark brown." Grammatically, it is a nominative singular masculine adjective of the first/second declension and agrees in gender and case with the masculine generic name *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Castanho-pardo-avermelhada, com manchas irregulares, pardo-scuras, sobre o dorso; ao centro, quadrangulares, em duas séries; ateralmente, numerosas estrias da mesma cor; cabeça variegada ou mesclada de pardo-escuro; ventre quase inteiramente plúmbeo, brilhante." It translates as, "Reddish-brown, with irregular, dark brown spots on the back; in the center, quadrangular, in two series; laterally, numerous streaks of the same color; head variegated or mottled with dark brown; belly almost entirely leaden, shiny."

Atractus ventrimaculatus BOULENGER, 1905

The species epithet *ventrimaculatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is a compound Latin adjective *ventrimaculātus* "belly-spotted," formed from *venter* ("belly,") and *maculātus*,

the perfect passive participle of *maculō* (present infinitive *maculāre*) meaning "to stain," or "make spotted," and as a participle/adjective it means "stained", or "spotted." The name refers to the many speckled and spotted with black on the whitish colored belly of the species.

Publication Quote: "... lower parts whitish, much speckled and spotted with black."

Formation Notes: [(noun) *venter* --> (genitive) *ventris* --> (stem) *ventr-*] + [(interfix) *-i-*] + [(verb) *maculō* --> (stem) *macul-*] + [(suffix) *-ātus*] = *ventrimaculātus*.

Atractus vertebralis BOULENGER, 1904

The species epithet *vertebralis* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is a Classical Latin adjective *vertebrālis* meaning "vertebral," or "of or relating to a vertebra or the spine." It is formed from *vertebra* ("spinal column,") and adjectival suffix *-ālis* denoting "related to," or "pertaining to." The epithet refers to a black vertebral stripe edged with yellowish on the top of dorsum of this species that distinguishes it from most other *Atractus* species. Grammatically, it is a third-declension two-termination adjective agreeing in gender and case with the masculine generic name *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Brown above, with small black spots and a black vertebral streak edged with yellowish."

Atractus vittatus BOULENGER, 1894

The species epithet *vittatus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor. It is nominative singular Latin adjective *vittātus* meaning "banded," or "striped" formed from the Latin noun *vitta* ("band," "ribbon," or "fillet,") and adjectival suffix *-atus* meaning "provided with," or "having," yielding "striped." The epithet refers to the distinguishing characteristic of the presence of four black longitudinal lines running along its back and sides. Grammatically, it is a nominative singular masculine adjective of the first/second-declension, three-termination agreeing in gender and case with the masculine generic name *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Dark brown above, with four black longitudinal lines, the space between the inner and outer pair lighter, reddish brown; belly yellow, much spotted with black; two black stripes along the lower surface of the tail."

Atractus wagleri PRADO, 1945

The specific epithet *wagleri* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors brilliant German zoologist and taxonomist Johann Georg Wagler.

Remarks: Johann Georg Wagler (1800–1832) was a brilliant German zoologist and taxonomist who served as the director of the Zoological Museum in Munich. A protégé of the explorer Johann Baptist von Spix, Wagler took over the curation of massive South American collections following Spix's death, establishing himself as a premier authority on herpetology and ornithology. His major work, *Natürliches System der Amphibien* (1830), introduced a comprehensive classification system for reptiles and amphibians, including the naming of the poison-dart frog genus *Dendrobates*. In the field of ornithology, he published the *Monographia Psittacorum* (1832), which provided the first scientific descriptions of several parrots, including the now-extinct in the wild Spix's macaw. Wagler's career was tragically cut short at age 32 when he died from an accidental self-inflicted gunshot wound while collecting specimens in the field.



Atractus wagleri, Wagler's Ground Snake - Villa de Leyva, Boyaca, Colombia - Javier David Quiroga Nova
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/javierdavid>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus weneri PERACCA, 1914

The specific epithet *weneri* is an eponymous descriptor. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It honors prolific Austrian zoologist and explorer Franz Werner.

Remarks: Franz Werner (1867–1939) was a prolific Austrian zoologist and explorer who became one of the most influential figures in herpetology during the early 20th century. Born in Vienna, he developed a lifelong passion for reptiles and amphibians at a young age, eventually authoring over 550 scientific publications and describing hundreds of new taxa, including roughly 400 species and subspecies of reptiles and amphibians. Despite a long-standing personal rivalry with Franz Steindachner, the director of the Vienna Natural History Museum, which initially barred him from the museum's collections, Werner amassed an enormous private collection of over 9,000 specimens. He held a professorship at the University of Vienna from

1919 until his retirement, and his work extended beyond academia into popular science; his 1910 book *Amphibien und Reptilien* is credited with popularizing the hobby of terrariophilia among German speakers. His legacy survives through the numerous species named in his honor, such as Werner's catfish and Werner's leaf-toed gecko.



Atractus weneri, Werner's Ground Snake - San Antonio Del Tequendama, Cundinamarca, Colombia - neljupiter
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/neljupiter>
Creative Commons License

Atractus xaxi ESQUEDA, ROJAS-RUNJAIC, PRUDENTE, BAZÓ, NAVARRETE, CAMARGO-SILLET, ORTIZ, CORREA, GUERRERO & URRÁ, 2025

The species epithet *xaxi* is a geography-based toponymic noun with a historical reference. It is a Latinized noun derived from the indigenous place name *Xaxi*, the historical designation for the town now known as Jají. Grammatically, *xaxi* functions as a noun in apposition, making it invariant; it does not change to match the gender of the genus *Atractus*. The name refers to the species' type locality and distribution in Jají, located in the Mérida state of Venezuela.

Remarks: The name *xaxi* serves as a linguistic bridge to the pre-colonial history of the Mérida Andes. Originally the toponym used by the Chamas tribes, the first indigenous settlers of the region, the word underwent a morphological transformation following the arrival of Spanish colonists in 1580, eventually becoming the modern name Jají. The Chamas (also referred to as the Chama or Tatuy) were the primary indigenous inhabitants of the valley where the city of Mérida, Venezuela, now stands. Like other groups in the Timoto-Cuica cultural complex, the Chamas were highly advanced farmers. They are significant for developing sophisticated stone-

lined canals (called *acequias* by the Spanish) to transport water from high mountain streams to their crops. They utilized *andenes* (terraces) to cultivate the steep slopes of the Andes, a technique they shared with the Chibchan cultures of Colombia and the Incas of Peru. They successfully grew staples like maize, potatoes, and various legumes in high-altitude environments. The Chamas and neighboring tribes provided fierce resistance to the Spanish conquistadors. Because of "hostile activities" from the local indigenous groups (including the Chamas and the Mucujún), the first settlement of Mérida had to be moved several times between 1558 and 1560 before it reached its current location. Although they were eventually brought into colonial "indoctrination towns" (like San Antonio de Mucuño) for religious conversion and labor, their linguistic influences persisted in regional Venezuelan Spanish. Archaeological sites in the Chama Valley have yielded ceramics and stone artifacts that demonstrate their cultural importance and links to broader Andean trade networks.

Atractus zebrinus (JAN, 1862)

The species epithet *zebrinus* is a pattern-based morphology descriptor of coloration. It is Latin adjective *zebrīnus* ("zebra-patterned,") formed from the noun *zebra* ("Zebra,") and the adjectival suffix *-īnus* ("pertaining to.") The epithet refers to the distinctive zebra-like dorsal pattern of this species, characterized by approximately 42 black transverse semi-bands on a reddish body. Grammatically, it is a first/second-declension three-termination nominative singular adjective, agreeing in gender and case with the masculine genus *Atractus*.

Publication Quote: "Il corpo è superiormente di colore rossiccio ; la lesta ha Tari punii neri e sul resto del corpo sono delle semi-fascie trasversali, talvolta confluenti, delle quali se ne coniano 42 fino alla punta della coda..." It translates to, "The body is reddish in color on the upper side; the head has black spots and the rest of the body has transverse semi-bands, sometimes merging, of which 42 can be counted up to the tip of the tail..."

Remarks: While the word *zebra* is not of Classical Latin origin (likely entering European languages via Portuguese from a Congolese source), it was adapted into New Latin for biological nomenclature to describe any organism with bold, contrasting stripes. Giorgio Jan's description accurately captures the "confluent" (merging) nature of these bands, which creates the striking resemblance to the mammalian zebra.

Formation Notes: [(noun) *zebra* --> (genitive) *zebrae* --> Sstem) *zebr-*] + [(suffix) *-īnus*] = *zebrīnus*.



Atractus zebrinus - Petrópolis, Cascatinha, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Rod Nagual
<https://www.inaturalist.org/people/rod3>
 Creative Commons License

Atractus zgap ARTEAGA, QUEZADA, VIEIRA & GUAYASAMIN, 2022

The specific epithet *zgap* is an eponymous descriptor of an organization name. It is named after the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP), "a program seeking to conserve unknown but highly endangered species and their natural habitats throughout the world." The ZGAP grant program supports the fieldwork of young scientists who are eager to implement and start conservation projects in their home countries. The discovery of *A. zgap* was facilitated by a grant from ZGAP which supported the work on endangered Andean reptiles in Ecuador conducted by two of the authors Alejandro Arteaga and Jose Vieira. Grammatically, the acronym "ZGAP" is incorporated into the Latin taxonomic system as an indeclinable noun in apposition. By using the acronym *zgap* as an invariant noun in apposition, the authors bypass traditional Latin noun declensions while permanently linking the species' identity to the financial and organizational support that made its discovery possible.

Remarks: The Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP) [Zoologische Gesellschaft für Arten- und Populationsschutz e.V.], founded in 1982 and based in Germany, focuses its efforts on "forgotten" species that are often overlooked by larger conservation groups. Unlike high-profile "charismatic megafauna," ZGAP prioritizes less well-known mammals, birds, and reptiles that face a high risk of extinction but receive little public attention or funding. Through their Conservation Fund and various grant programs, they empower local scientists to conduct critical fieldwork, often leading to the description of species new to science, as seen in the case of the ZGAP Ground Snake (*A. zgap*), and the establishment of protected habitats.

Atractus zidoki GASC & RODRIGUES, 1979

The species epithet *zidoki* is an ethnonymic eponymous noun. It is a patronymic epithet, a proper name Latinized and put into the genitive case. The ending *-i* indicates that it honors a male individual. It indirectly honors the Wayâpi indigenous Indians of French Guiana by specifically naming their leader, Chief Zidok, as the honoree. The type locality of Trois-Sauts, Haut Oyapock, in French Guiana, is situated in the ancestral land of Wayâpis where the type specimens were found. The authors' decision to honor Chief Zidok was a deliberate move to differentiate this taxon from other species already named collectively after the Wayâpi. This choice serves as a specific recognition of indigenous sovereignty and leadership in the Upper Oyapock region during the time of the species' discovery.

Publication Quote: "Named after the indigenous Indians of Wayâpi on whose territory the type specimens were found. As there already existed several animal species dedicated to this ethnic group among the Acridians and Amphibians, authors chose the name of the leader, Chief Zidok."

Remarks: The Wayâpi (also known as Oyampis or Wayampis) are an indigenous group belonging to the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family, inhabiting the border regions of French Guiana and Brazil. Traditionally, they have maintained a lifestyle centered around the Upper Oyapock River, practicing shifting cultivation, fishing, and hunting in the dense Amazonian rainforest. In the late 1960s, the Wayâpi faced significant social and demographic changes as they transitioned from nomadic groups to more sedentary settlements like Trois-Sauts. Their deep ecological knowledge of the "Lost World" regions has been instrumental to biological research, as they have long shared their territory and expertise with visiting naturalists.



Atractus zidoki, Zidok's Ground Snake - Maripasoula, French Guiana - Arnaud Aury
https://www.inaturalist.org/people/arnaud_auray
Creative Commons License

*

Selected Resources:

1. Wagler, J. 1828. Auszüge aus seinem Systema Amphibiorum. Isis von Oken 21: 740-744
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/13245244#page/377/mode/1up>
2. Savage, J. M. (1960). A revision of the Ecuadorian snakes of the colubrid genus *Atractus*. Miscellaneous Publications Museum of Zoology University of Michigan, (112), 1–86.
<https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/items/9b169bbf-d28a-4f92-b085-1dfa059a6051>
3. Passos, P., Fernandes, R., Bérnils, R. S., & de Moura-Leite, J. C. (2010). Taxonomic revision of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest *Atractus* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Dipsadidae). Zootaxa, 2364(1), 1–63.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280555672>
4. Passos, P., Mueses-Cisneros, J. J., Lynch, J. D., & Fernandes, R. (2009). Pacific lowland snakes of the genus *Atractus* (Serpentes: Dipsadidae), with description of three new species. Zootaxa, 2293(1), 1–34
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335117118>
5. Passos, P., & Lynch, J. D. (2010). Revision of *Atractus* (Serpentes: Dipsadidae) from middle and upper Magdalena drainage of Colombia. Herpetological Monographs, 24(1), 149–173.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261936816>
6. Giraudo, A. R., & Scrocchi, G. J. (2000). The genus *Atractus* (Serpentes: Colubridae) in north-eastern Argentina. Herpetological Journal, 10(3), 81–90.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287005980>
7. Arteaga, A., Quezada, A., Vieira, J., & Guayasamin, J. M. (2022). Leaving no stone unturned: Three additional new species of *Atractus* ground snakes (Serpentes, Colubridae) from Ecuador discovered using a biogeographical approach. ZooKeys, 1121, 175–210.
<https://zookeys.pensoft.net/article/89539/>
8. Passos, P., et al. (2022). When the tail shakes the snake: Phylogenetic affinities and morphology of *Atractus badius* (Serpentes: Dipsadidae), reveals some current pitfalls on the snake's genomic age. Anais da Academia Brasileira de Ciências, 94(1)
<https://www.scielo.br/j/aabc/a/nmkzN8BjWvx3kTr4ZMzC6Fw/?lang=en>
9. Passos, P., Kok, P. J., Albuquerque, N. R., & Rivas, G. A. (2013). Groundsnakes of the Lost World: A review of *Atractus* (Serpentes: Dipsadidae) from the Pantepui region, northern South America. Herpetological Monographs, 27(1), 52–86.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259443411>

10. Almeida, P. C., et al. (2014). Morphological variation, polymorphism, and taxonomy of the *Atractus torquatus* complex (Serpentes: Dipsadidae). *Zootaxa*, 3860(1), 64–80.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289616734>
11. Melo-Sampaio, P. R., Passos, P., Fouquet, A., Prudente, A. L. C., & Torres-Carvajal, O. (2019). Systematic review of *Atractus schach* (Serpentes: Dipsadidae) species complex from the Guiana Shield with description of three new species. *Systematics and Biodiversity*, 17(3), 207–229.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333911234>
12. Uetz, P., Freed, P., Aguilar, R., Reyes, F., Kudera, J. & Hošek, J. (eds.) (2025) The Reptile Database, <http://www.reptile-database.org>, accessed [January 2026]

Acknowledgement

In preparing this document, original publications (when available online) were consulted for detailed information on each species; the Reptile Database was used for lists of valid species and type localities; Wikipedia was referenced for historical data; and Wiktionary for Latin grammar and epithet formation.

AI Tools Consulted: Generative AI tools were leveraged to assist with etymological and historical research. Specifically, both Open AI and Google's Gemini were consulted. Google's Gemini was used for clarifying the Greek and Latin etymology and grammar of selected species. Open AI's ChatGPT provided the overall review of the genus and additional details on references, and honorees bios as well as reviewing individual species etymology that I developed for the species. All AI-generated input was carefully reviewed and edited, and full responsibility for the accuracy and content of the manuscript remains with the author.

Online Versions:

Author's website

https://salimian.webersedu.com/SNAKES/PDF/Salimian_Atractus_Onomastic.pdf

Facebook posts

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/etymologyofsnakes/posts/848324664645854/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/etymologyofsnakes/posts/848329821312005/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/etymologyofsnakes/posts/848372741307713/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/etymologyofsnakes/posts/880995308045456/>

Citation

Salimian, M. (2025). *Atractus* Onomastic: Annotated Etymology and Taxonomy of the Genus *Atractus*. Retrieved from
https://salimian.webersedu.com/SNAKES/PDF/Salimian_Atractus_Onomastic.pdf

