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# Waite's Blind Snakes (Squamata: Scolecophidia: Typhlopidae): Identification of Sources and Correction of Errors

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ABSTRACT. The majority of the 542 typhlopid specimens examined by Edgar Waite for his 1918 monograph of the family are identified, and their current status discussed. Most Waite records that do not correspond with the distribution based on modern records are shown to be in error, involving either misidentifications, misreadings of localities, or transposition of data. A few remaining problematic records are considered dubious due to a lack of supporting data.

*Ramphotyphlops batillus* (Waite, 1894), known only from the holotype from Wagga Wagga, NSW, is restored to the Australian fauna, and new data on the type are provided.

Probable paratypes for *Typhlops grypus* (SAM R849; QM J2947), *T. proximus* (AM R615, R145401–07, SAM R915) and *T. subocularis* (AM R2169) are identified. New data on dorsal scale counts are provided for *Ramphotyphlops leucoproctus* (377–394), *R. polygrammicus* (370–422), *R. proximus* (326–392), *R. wiedii* (381–439) and *R. yirrikalae* (447–450).

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Although a number of species of Australian typhlopid snakes had been described by European herpetologists in the nineteenth century, notably Wilhelm Peters and George Boulenger, it was the publications of Edgar Ravenswood Waite (Waite, 1893, 1894, 1897a,b, 1898, 1917, 1918a), culminating in a revision of the family in Australia (Waite, 1918b), that provided the basis of knowledge of the Australian typhlopid fauna. In the 80 years since Waite's final revision, despite several new species being described (Parker, 1931; Kinghorn, 1929a, 1942; Loveridge, 1945; Robb, 1972; Storr, 1983, 1984; Ingram & Covacevich, 1993; Aplin & Donnellan, 1993; Shea & Horner, 1997; Aplin, 1998; Couper *et al*., 1998) only one significant revision of Australian typhlopids has appeared (Storr, 1981). Waite's work, particularly his key, distribution maps and figures, has been the main source of much of the subsequent literature on Australian typhlopids.

Waite's typhlopid work set new standards for Australian herpetology by attempting to use all available material, not just the specimens available in a single institution. Despite this use of large amounts of material from diverse sources to derive his distribution maps, he provided precise locality data for few specimens, and cited museum numbers only for primary type specimens he had described. Many of the species were known from only a few specimens, from widely separated localities. Distribution maps and statements derived from these initial mapping efforts have often joined these widely-spaced sites to produce broad,