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Newsletter of the
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HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

FOUNDED 1965

The HAA is dedicated to the study and conservation of African reptiles and amphibians. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the African herpetofauna. Members receive the Association's journal, *African Journal of Herpetology* (which publishes review papers, research articles, short communications and book reviews - subject to peer review) and newsletter, *African Herp News* (which includes short communications, life history notes, geographical distribution notes, venom and snakebite notes, short book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE:

Articles will be considered for publication provided they are original and have not been published elsewhere.

Articles may be submitted for peer review (at least two reviewers) at the Editor's discretion. Lists of reviewers will be published in the newsletter from time to time.

Authors are requested to submit long manuscripts on disc or by e-mail in Word 6.0 format.

The views and opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Editor.

Articles and news items appearing in *African Herp News* may be reprinted, provided the author's name and newsletter reference are given.

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Dr. Angelo Lambiris.

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EDITORIAL

Members of the Association must be wondering what has happened to the Journal—we apologise for the fact that there was no issue in 1999, but this was the result of matters beyond our control. The problems have been addressed and dealt with. We shall in future meet our commitment to producing two Journals per year.

You will notice with this issue of the Newsletter that we have found another printer—the previous one could not produce anything acceptable. We are currently getting enough contributions to produce two issues of the Newsletter per year, but can only give value to members by producing three or four issues if you send in more articles! Our hearty thanks to those who have contributed this year, and also to the referees who commented on some of the articles. Two wish to remain anonymous, but thanks are due to Prof. John Poynton and Ms. Kate Richardson.

The last two years have eaten heavily into the Association's financial reserves, and it is clear that subscriptions will have to be increased if we are to keep going. Because no Journal was issued this year, we shall not increase the subscription in the year 2000 as originally intended, but shall have to do so in 2001. Hopefully, with increased Journal and Newsletter production members will feel that they are still getting value for money—to the best of my knowledge, our Association has the lowest subscription anywhere for a society that produces a peer-reviewed professional journal as well as a newsletter.

We had hoped to hold another symposium in September next year, but again a series of unforeseen and largely uncontrollable events have effectively demolished Geraldine Pieterse's heroic attempts to get things under way. One of the less creditable obstacles was the unbelievable tariffs charged by an organisation which seems to have changed its mission statement from conservation to fleecing tourists.

Turning to other matters, it is time for a new Committee to be elected. All but one of the present committee members have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election though of course other full Association members may be nominated as well.

The exception is Frank Farquharson, who has carried out the Herculean task of Secretary/Treasurer since 1992, with great competence and distinction. He feels that a break would be welcome, as well as giving some of our younger blood a chance to take up the reins. Frank will be a hard act to follow, and we thank him for his efficiency and his dedication to the interests of the Association. Who would like to follow in his footsteps?

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish you all well over the festive season and in the new year.

Angelo Lambiris

Chairman and Newsletter Editor.

COVER ILLUSTRATION:

Nile Crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*. Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe. Sketch by A.J.L. Lambiris

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF UNCOMMON *PACHYDACTYLUS*

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Geckos of the genus *Pachydactylus* are represented by at least 20 species in Namibia (Branch, 1998). Although many, such as *P. turneri* and *P. punctatus*, are nearly ubiquitous, most species are characterised by restricted ranges and many species are only encountered infrequently. There is little evidence that would suggest that any members of the genus are endangered in Namibia. Rather, the apparent rarity of some species may reflect the combination of low collecting effort in some areas and habitat types, and moderate to extreme habitat specialisation by the geckos. During recent field work in central and northern Namibia (Erongo and Kunene Regions) we collected specimens of three poorly known *Pachydactylus* species. In one case (*P. fitzsimonsi*), the new material represents a significant range extension relative to published records. In a second instance (*P. fasciatus*), we report a minor range extension but also confirm the occurrence of the species in central Namibia for the first time in more than 50 years. Finally, in the case of *P. caraculicus*, we provide additional localities to supplement the only Namibian records, published nearly 30 years ago (Haacke, 1970).

PACHYDACTYLUS FITZSIMONSI Loveridge, 1947 (FitzSimons' Thick-toed Gecko)

Namibia; Kunene Region; Khorixas District; 22.7 km N of Ugab River crossing on road from Brandberg West Mine, ca. 540 m (2014CC, 20°47'17"S, 14°06'41"E); 24 July 1998; A.M. Bauer, W.R. Branch and J.L. Wright; California Academy of Sciences, CAS 206955. Adult female, 87.2 mm SVL.

The southernmost published locality records for *Pachydactylus fitzsimonsi* were plotted in grid squares 2016AA and 1914DC (Visser, 1984). The new record represents an extension of 160 km west by southwest of the first record, and 120 km southwest of the latter. Considerable confusion has existed over the identity of this and other members of the *Pachydactylus bibronii* complex. This form was recognised as specifically distinct from both *P. bibronii* and *P. turneri* (as *P. laevigatus*) by Benyr (1995). In contrast to most individuals of *P. fitzsimonsi*, which are boldly patterned (Branch, 1998), CAS 206995 has a nearly uniform oatmeal ground colour with only very weakly-developed and incomplete darker cross bands. This specimen's scalation is intermediate between that typical of *P. fitzsimonsi* and that characterising *P. turneri*, with relatively large, flattened dorsal scales forming more of a pavement than discrete rows of tubercles. Despite the morphological intermediacy of this specimen, we have referred it to *P. fitzsimonsi* on the basis of mitochondrial DNA sequence data. These data are nearly identical to those from typical *P. fitzsimonsi* from the northern Kaokoveld (1731AC), and differ significantly from sequences derived from *P. turneri* from northern Namibia (several localities). Because mitochondrial DNA is maternally inherited, the possibility remains, however, that CAS 206955 represents

a hybrid between a male *P. turneri* and a female *P. fitzsimonsi*.

The gecko was collected in a vertical crevice in a granite outcrop surrounded by sand in the vicinity of Gaias Spring. Other species collected in the immediate vicinity were *Pachydactylus scherzi*, *P. punctatus* and *Rhoptropus bradfieldi*.

PACHYDACTYLUS FASCIATUS Boulenger, 1888 (Banded Thick-toed Gecko)

Namibia; Erongo Region, Karibib District; Farm Usakos West, 10 km E of Spitzkopf turnoff on Usakos-Hentiesbaai Road (2115CD, 21°57'08"S, 15°16'48"E); 21 July 1998; R. Babb, A.M. Bauer, W.R. Branch, A.C. Lamb III, P. Moler and J.L. Wright; California Academy of Sciences, CAS 206936. Adult female, SVL 41.7 mm, TL 42.4 mm.

The nearest published locality record supported by specimens is as Karibib (2115DD), approximately 50 km to the east (Bauer and Branch, 1991). The new specimen is the first documented occurrence from central Namibia in more than 50 years. The specimen agrees in morphology with a large series from the Kamanjab area (1914CB, 1914CD), but differs in colour, having a bolder and more well-defined alternating series of medium grey cross bands on a predominantly orangey-brown dorsum. Unlike previously collected specimens of *P. fasciatus* from Damaraland, which have been collected under stones (Haacke, 1965; Bauer and Branch, 1991) this specimen was found under the bark of a large fallen *Acacia* along with *Gerrhosaurus validus maltzahni*, *Mabuya variegata*, and *Mabuya spilogaster*.

PACHYDACTYLUS CARACULICUS FitzSimons, 1959 (Angolan Banded Thick-toed Gecko)

Namibia; Kunene Region; 44.3 km N of Okanguati on Epupa Falls Road (1731AC, 17°14'30"S, 13°14'00"E); 18 June 1993; A.M. Bauer, H.E. Robeck, D. King and J.V. Vindum; California Academy of Sciences, CAS 193804-5, National Museum of Namibia, SMW (catalogue number pending, ex Aaron Bauer Field Series, 1699); 43.4 km N of Okanguati on Epupa Falls Road (1731AC, 17°15'00"S, 13°14'00"E); 18 June 1993; A.M. Bauer, H.E. Robeck, D. King and J.V. Vindum; California Academy of Sciences, CAS 193799, SMW (catalogue number pending, ex AMB 1689); 41.9 km of Okanguati on Epupa Falls Road (1731AC, 17°17'S, 13°11'E); 29 July 1998; A.M. Bauer; CAS 206980; 34.3 km S of Epupa Falls on Okanguati Road (1713AC, 17°15'S, 13°14'E); 30 July 1998; AMB 5991-5993 (to be deposited in SMW; A.M. Bauer, W.R. Branch and A.C. Lamb III).

The distribution of this species in Namibia is limited to the Kaokoveld. The only published Namibian records are those of Haacke (1970), from Swartboois Drift, the Onjamu Mountains, Enyadi, and Sanitatas. The new records, which are all within a few kilometres of each other, lie 40 km southwest of the nearest record at Enyadi on the Kunene River (1731BA). All individuals were collected from horizontal cracks within boulders or in crevices between slabs of rock. *Pachydactylus fitzsimonsi* was collected syntopically at most of the sites. Other rupicolous reptiles collected in at least one of the sites were *Pachydactylus turneri*, *Rhoptropus barnardi*, *Hemirhagerrhis viperina*, and *Bitis caudalis*.

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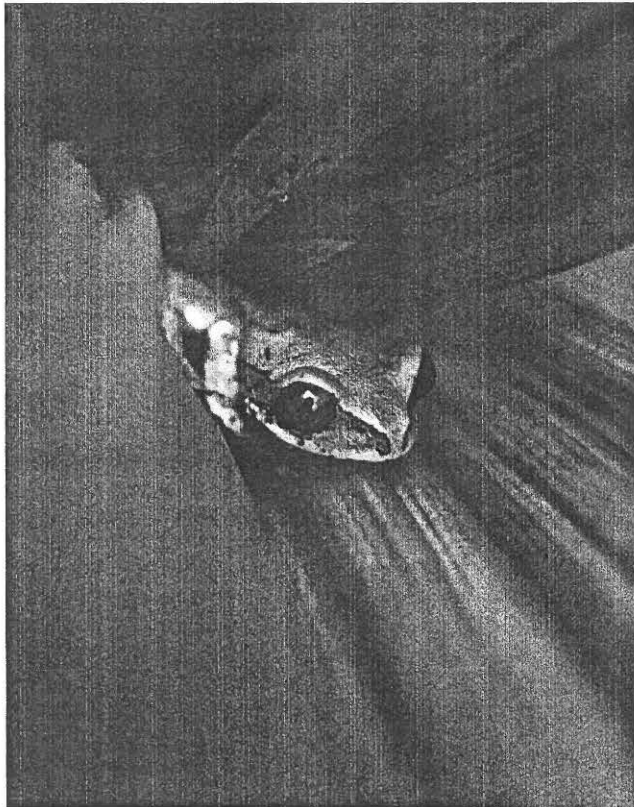
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Forest Tree Frog, *Leptopelis natalensis*, sheltering in an orchid. Hillcrest, Kwazulu Natal.
Photo: June Lambiris

RECENT AFRICAN HERPETOLOGICAL LITERATURE: 19

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This survey covers the period 1997 to present, with a few earlier, overlooked papers. For brevity no articles in any HAA publication are included, neither are peripheral publications using *Xenopus laevis* (or any other African species) as a model in biochemical studies, etc. Where the distribution date is known to differ from the volume year this is included in brackets, as are notes of relevance. I thank Marius Burger (Cape Town) for early assistance in preparing this survey.

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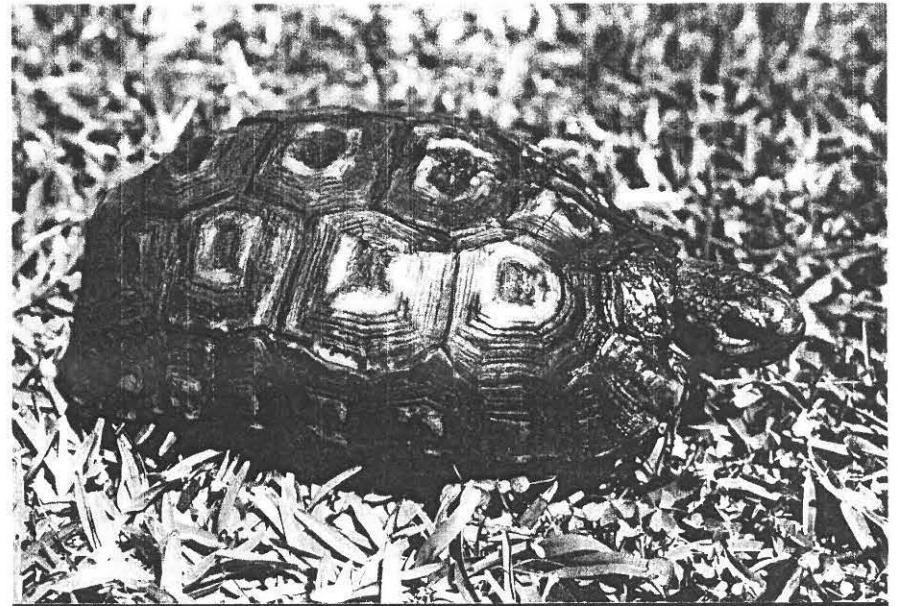
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Bell's Hinged tortoise, *Kinixys belliana belliana*, from Zululand. Photo: A.J.L. Lambiris

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

African Herp News publishes brief notes concerning the biology of the herpetofauna of the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **SCIENTIFIC NAME**; **Common name** (using Bill Branch's *Field Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, third edn., 1998, for reptiles; and Passmore & Carruthers' *South African Frogs*, 1995, for amphibians, as far as possible); **KEYWORD** (this should be one or two words best describing the topic of the note, e.g. Reproduction, Avian predation, etc.); the **Text** (in concise English with only essential references quoted and in abbreviated form); **Locality** (country, province or state, location, quarter-degree unit, and latitude and longitude if available; elevation above sea level; use metric units); **Date** (day, month, year); **Collector(s)**; **Place of deposition and museum accession number** (required if specimens are preserved). Submitted by: **NAME**, Address (in parentheses).

REPTILIA
CHELONIA

TESTUDINIDAE

HOMOPUS FEMORALIS**Greater Padloper****EGG AND CLUTCH SIZE**

At 15h45 on 1 November 1993 Mr. Colin King discovered a large female Greater Padloper digging a nest hole on his farm "Fairfield" (Winterberg Mountains, Tarkastad District, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa; 3226AD). Construction of the nest hole continued until 17h08 when egg laying commenced. By 17h13 three large eggs had been laid, and these were settled into place until 17h22, when the female started to fill in the nest hole. The eggs were not measured, and no further notes on egg development are available.

In 1999 Mr. King discovered the shell of another female Greater Padloper on his farm. Three large unlaidd, shelled eggs were present in the empty shell. The identification of the dried shell (which lacked skull and limbs) as *Homopus femoralis* was confirmed by the presence of 11 marginals on each side, the pronounced ridge on the bridge marginals 4-8, and the habitat and distribution details. The shell (PEM R15530) measured: carapace length (CL) 122 mm; plastron length 108 mm; carapace width 88 mm; carapace depth (CD, midshell) 52 mm. The eggs were ovoid in shape and measured 36 x 27 mm, 36 x 27 mm and 36 x 26 mm; they were too dry to weigh.

Relatively little data are available on clutch and egg size in *Homopus*. Bourquin and Boycott (1988, *The South African Tortoise Book*. Southern Book Publishers; 148pp.) record a clutch size of 1-2 eggs measuring 29.0-35.2 x 25.0-27.3 mm. The shell of the dead female *H. femoralis* is not exceptionally large; Bourquin and Boycott (*op. cit.*) record females up to CL 160 mm and CD of 70 mm. The Common Padloper (*H. areolatus*) is closely related to the Greater Padloper, but does not grow as large (maximum CL 120 mm, CD 60 mm). Clutch sizes of 2-4 eggs have been recorded (Bourquin and Boycott, *op. cit.*).

It is thus likely that three egg clutches, and perhaps more, in the Greater Padloper are not unexpected.

Submitted by

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SAURIA

CHAMAELEONIDAE

CHAMAELEO TIGRIS; Seychelles Chamaeleon
SIZE AND BREEDING

On 12 October 1996, a captive adult female Seychelles Chamaeleon was obtained from a local Seychellois in the town of Victoria, Mahé, Republic of the Seychelles. The animal was transported to the nearby Cousine Island where it was housed in a large outdoor cage in which a pot-plant was placed. On 6 November it developed a swollen eye and was subsequently unable to catch its prey. On 12 November it laid five eggs on and in the soil in which the pot-plant was standing, but was too weak to dig a deep nest-hole, laying three of the eggs on the surface and two just under the surface of the soil. Because the eye showed no signs of healing the animal was killed and preserved, and is lodged in the Cousine Island collection.

There has been controversy as to whether the species is viviparous or ovoviviparous, or both (Cheke 1984, in Stoddard (ed.): *Biogeography and ecology of the Seychelles Islands*. W. Junk, The Hague) and Cheke (*op. cit.*) indicates a clutch size for the species being 3 to 4. He gave no egg measurements.

The five eggs weighed between 0.5 and 0.7 g (mean 0.62 g) and measured 15.7 x 9.0, 15.2 x 8.3, 14.3 x 8.2, 14.2 x 9.2, and 14.2 x 9.0 mm.

The freshly dead female measured 81 mm snout-vent length, and 78 mm tail length, and weighed 9.9 g. The maximum snout-vent length is recorded as 88 mm (Cheke, *op. cit.*).

No other specimens of this endemic Seychelles chamaeleon were seen on Mahé, and only one badly damaged road kill was seen on Praslin, even though a fair amount of walking was carried out on both islands, in habitats suitable for the species. Although Henkel and Schmidt (1995, *Amphibien und reptilien Madagaskars, der Maskaren, Seychellen und Komoren*. Verlag Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart) indicate that the species is particularly common in and near the Vallee de Mai on Praslin, no chamaeleons were seen there during two walks into and through the area during 1996.

Submitted by

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GERRHOSAURIDAE***CORDYLOSAURUS SUBTESSELLATUS*****Dwarf Plated Lizard
MAXIMUM SIZE**

Branch (1998, *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, 2nd ed., Struik Publishers, Cape Town, 399 pp.) listed average sizes of 35-45 mm SVL for this species, with a maximum of 55 mm SVL. The largest particular specimen for which a size has been published, however, is TM 19162 from Rehoboth measuring 53 mm snout vent length + 104 mm tail length (FitzSimons, V., 1943, *Mem. Transvaal Mus.* 1: xv + 528 pp, 24 pls., 1 map). On 25 July 1998, three specimens of *Cordylusaurus subtessellatus* were collected in an area of broken calcrete substratum 0.4 km northeast of the junction of the Palmwag-Sesfontein Road (3706) on the Sesfontein-Opuwo Road (3704) at 19°08'S, 13°44'E (1931BA), Opuwo District, Kunene Region, Republic of Namibia. The largest of these was CAS 206966, an adult male, measuring 57.1 mm SVL = 79.4 mm TL (of which the last 24.5 mm were regenerated). This represents an 8% increase in maximum SVL for the species. Specimens exceeding 45 mm SVL are rarely encountered, especially in the Western and Northern Cape Provinces of South Africa. Experience with this species throughout its range suggests that there may be a south to north cline in increasing body size.

Submitted by

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SERPENTES**COLUBRIDAE*****PROSYMNA FRONTALIS*****South-western Shovel-Snout
REPRODUCTION**

On 19 January 1999 a gravid female was found moving on the ground at around 10h00 in central Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia (22° 35'S, 17° 05' E, elevation 1740 m a.s.l.). Total length of the specimen is 310 mm. Three eggs appeared in the holding container on 26 January, measuring 39 x 12, 37 x 10, and 39 x 11 mm. After three days the eggs were placed in an incubator, on a damp vermiculite bed where the temperature was maintained at between 28 and 32°C.

Hatching occurred between 15 and 20 March, giving an incubation period of between 48 and 53 days. Total lengths of the hatchlings were 140, 140 and 145 mm, and weights were 1.27, 1.28, and 1.32 g respectively.

Broadley (1980, *Occ. Pap. Natl. Mus. Rhod. B.* 6(7): 481-556, summarised reproduc-

tion parameters for all species in the genus, but no data were available for *P. frontalis*. Subsequent literature, popular as well as scientific, has not rectified this omission. The number of eggs laid in this instance is within the reported range for the genus, but the size of the eggs is the largest reported. The specimens are deposited in the National Museum of Namibia (NMWN:R 6688-6891).

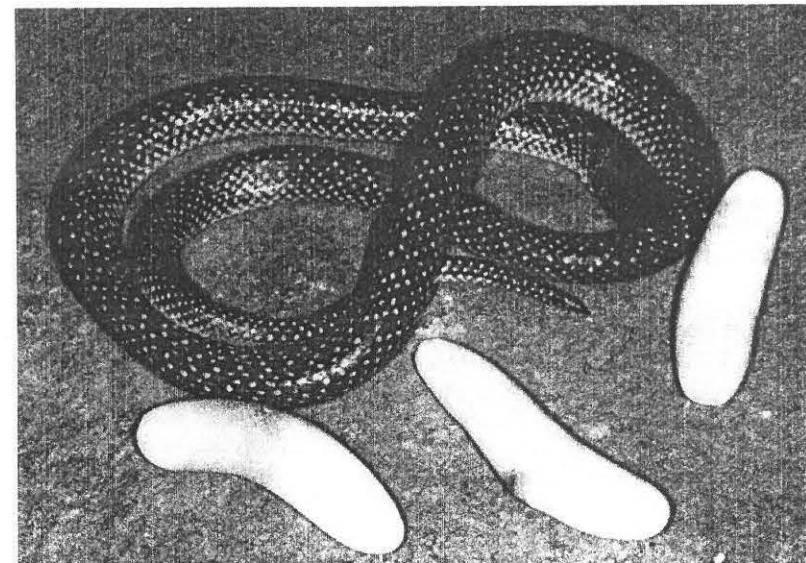


Fig. 1: *Prosymna frontalis* with eggs. Windhoek, Namibia. (Photo: M. Griffin)

Submitted by

M. GRIFFIN (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, P.B. 13306, Windhoek, Namibia) and J. HAUCH (P.O. Box 96179, Windhoek, Namibia).

ELAPIDAE

**PSEUDOHAJE GOLDII (Boulenger, 1895); Goldie's Tree Cobra
DIET**

Bogert (1942, *American Museum Novitates* 1174: 1-9) found the remains of a large arboreal frog in the stomach of a *Pseudohaje goldii* from Cameroon (MCZ 7853). Laurent (1960, *Annales du Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Tervuren* 84: 1-86) recorded a specimen which had eaten a terrestrial anuran, *Bufo funereus* Bocage, 1866. Isemonger (1962, *Snakes of Africa. Southern, Central and East*. Nelson, Cape Town: pp. i-viii + 1-236) specified that this largely arboreal snake feeds on lizards and small mammals. Fitzsimons (1962, *Snakes of Southern Africa*. MacDonald, London: pp. 1-423) called the *Pseudohaje* the Frog-eating Arboreal Cobras. Roux-Estève (1965, *Cahiers de la Maboké* 3(1): 51-92) mentioned that the stomach of the specimen MNHN 1964.520 contained a frog, without further indication on its specific identity (we unfortunately could not trace the frog in the MNHN collections). Pitman (1974, *A Guide to the Snakes of Uganda*. Codicote, Wheldon & Wesley, pp. i-xxii + 1-290) reported that *P. goldii* feeds principally, if not entirely, on amphibians. Courtois and Chippaux (1977 *Serpents venimeux en Côte d'Ivoire*. Institut Pasteur de Côte d'Ivoire: 1-79) stated that it feeds on rodents and birds. Stucki-Stirn (1979, *Snake Report* 721. Herpeto-Verlag, Teuffenthal: pp. vii + 1-650) reported that this snake feeds on amphibians and fishes. Phelps (1984, *Poisonous Snakes*. Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset: pp. i-viii + 1-237) said that its diet consists almost entirely of amphibians and specified that it is an expert swimmer. Although, according to the above-mentioned literature, *P. goldii* species preys on five vertebrate classes, Spawls & Branch (1995, *The Dangerous Snakes of Africa. Natural history. Species directory. Venoms and snakebite*. Blandford, London: pp. 1-192) mentioned that it is known to eat only amphibians. We here add two documented cases of predation on fish and amphibian preys, respectively.

In the stomach of the specimen IRSNB 3759 (deposited on April, 18, 1946), an adult female (SVL 875 mm, tail length 270 mm, ventrals 192, subcaudals 84) collected by Rev. Father Van Woensel in Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Uele, Zobia, we found a fish *Xenomystus nigri* (Günther, 1868) (Osteoglossiformes, Notopteridae) (IRSNB 22172; standard length from tip of snout to base of caudal fin 83.6 mm). The fish had been ingested head first. This fish species, occurring in the Upper and Lower Guinea basins, the Niger-Tchad basin, Nile basin and Central Congo basin, lives in slow-moving waters and in swamps.

The stomach of the specimen MNHN 1895.354 (entered in the collections on July, 24, 1895), a female (SVL 595 mm, tail length 174 mm, ventrals 193, subcaudals 84), collected by M. Viancin in Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Haut-Oubanghi, Abiras, Yakoma, contained an adult male *Bufo* cf. *regularis* Reuss, 1834 (SVL 45.5 mm), a terrestrial anuran, ingested head first.

The compilation of these records illustrates the eclecticism of the food of *P. goldii*. It also shows that this otherwise largely arboreal species has, at least occasionally, both a terrestrial and aquatic behaviour. As *X. nigri* is usually met close to muddy bottoms, this prey may indicate that *P. goldii* is likely to show an active foraging behaviour under water.

We take the opportunity of this note to point out that this species was described in honour of Sir George Taubman Goldie (Boulenger, 1895, *Annals Mag. Nat. Hist.* (6) 16: 34). Therefore the very often encountered common name "Gold's Tree Cobra" is inappropriate. We suggest to use the English common name "Goldie's Tree Cobra" (see David & Ineich,

1999, *Les Serpents venimeux du monde: systématique et répartition*. Dumerilia, Paris, 3: 3-499).

Acknowledgements

We warmly thank Prof. A. Dubois (MNHN, Paris) and Prof. J.B. Rasmussen (Zoological Museum, Copenhagen) for commenting on the text, and Dr Annemarie Ohler (MNHN) for confirmation of the identification of the toad.

Submitted by

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PSEUDOHAJE NIGRA (Günther, 1858)**Black Tree Cobra
DIET**

Very little is known about the biology and the diet of *Pseudohaje nigra*. Cansdale (1961, *West African Snakes*. West African Nature Handbooks. Longmans, London: pp. i-vi + 1-74) reported that it appears to feed mostly on amphibians, and that a specimen from Ghana kept for several years at London Zoo fed entirely on frogs and toads. According to Hughes (1976, *Bull. I.F.A.N.* (A), 38 (2): 457-466), this Ghanaese specimen was not traced in collections, so that its specific identity could not be checked, as *Pseudohaje goldii* (Boulenger, 1895) also occurs in that country. Spawls & Branch (1995, *The Dangerous Snakes of Africa. Natural history. Species directory. Venoms and snakebite*. Blandford, London: pp. 1-192) stated that it "probably eats amphibians, maybe mammals".

We here present a documented case of predation by *P. nigra* on a bufonid species. The stomach of the specimen MNHN 1986.1809, an adult male (SVL 1576 mm, tail length 428 mm, ventrals 186, subcaudals 81, dorsal scale rows at midbody 13) collected by Madame Françoise Xavier (Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) in Liberia, Nimba, "grassfield savanna, Nimba research" on July, 17, 1969, contained the partly digested remains of two specimens of *Bufo maculatus* Hallowsell, 1854, ingested head first. The stomach also contains a dozen of large black ants and a beetle which were certainly ingested by the toads.

The grassfield savanna at Nimba is a very open environment with few trees. According to Laurent (1972, *Amphibiens. Exploration du Parc National des Virunga. Fondation pour favoriser les Recherches scientifiques en Afrique, Brussels*: 1-125 + pl. I-XI), *Bufo maculatus* inhabits open environments, like forest clearings, sides of rivers and outskirts of villages.

The predation on a terrestrial amphibian in a grassfield savanna by a tree cobra seems to offer an interesting contribution to the biology of this little known species.

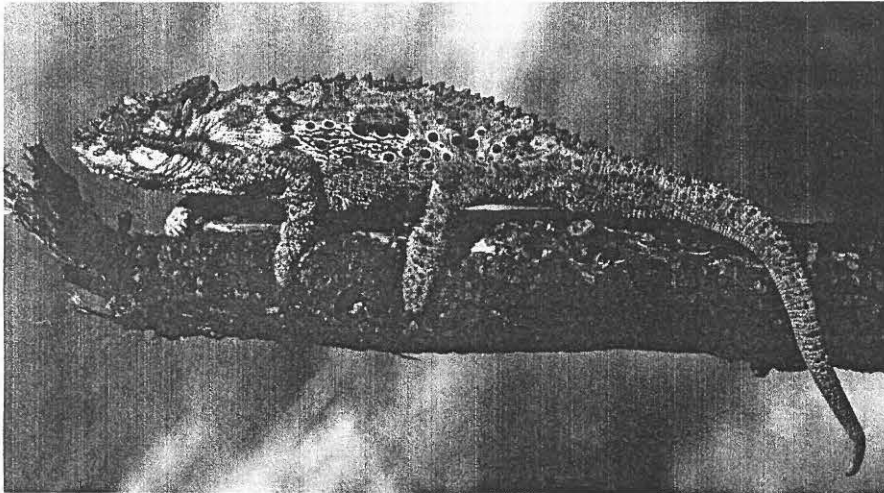
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We are indebted to Prof. Alain Dubois and Dr Patrick David (MNHN, Paris) and

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Karoo Dwarf Chamaeleon, *Bradypodion karrooicum*. Queenstown, Eastern Cape. Photo: A.J.L. Lambiris.

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African Herp News publishes brief notes of new geographical distributions (preferably at least 100 km from the nearest published record) of amphibians and reptiles on the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

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AMPHIBIA

ANURA

RANIDAE

***PTYCHADENA MAPACHA* Channing, 1993; Mapacha Grass Frog**

Namibia; Rundu district, Ojmatako River near tar road bridge (1720CD, 17°58'S, 20°28'E); 21 April 1998; Dr. N.H.G. Jacobsen and W.D. Haacke. Four juvenile to adult specimens (TM 82265 - 82268) deposited in the Natural History Museum (Transvaal Museum) of the Northern Flagship Institution, in Pretoria, of which TM 82267 and 82269 have been transferred to the National Museum of Namibia in Windhoek. The only previous records are from the surroundings of Katima Molilo (1724CB) in the Eastern Caprivi Strip, Mukwe district, Namibia. This sample extends the range by just over 3½° or about 370 km to the west into the main part of Namibia. It also confirms the occurrence in the Okavango system and therefore the probability exists that it will be present in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, as well as in Angola.

The frogs were found during the day along the shallow vegetated marshy edge of the Omaramba Omatako at a point where the water of the Okavango River pushes up its bed of the otherwise dry Omaramba to a point just beyond the bridge of the tar road which runs parallel to the Okavango.

We are indebted to the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism of Namibia for providing us with a collecting permit. A special word of thanks is due to Professor Alan Channing, University of the Western Cape, for correcting our initial identification attempts.

Submitted by

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REPTILIA SAURIA

SCINCIDAE

MELANOSEPS LONGICAUDA Tornier, 1900; **Pangani Black Limbless Skink**

Tanzania, Muheza District, Manga Forest Reserve, 5° 02'S: 38° 47'E (0538BB), altitude 240 metres; 26 August 1998; Frontier-Tanzania (a collaboration between the University of Dar es Salaam and the Society for Environmental Exploration in UK); Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe NMZB 15665. Found during the excavation of a quadrat for millipedes in leaf litter in coastal forest.

The specimen is broken in the middle, but measures ca. 64 + 22 mm. There are three supraoculars, four supraciliaries, two supralabials anterior to the subocular, 18 midbody scale rows, ca. 125 ventrals and 44 subcaudals. Colouration uniform black except for the pure white chin.

This fossorial skink has not previously been collected this century. The two syntypes came from "Masailand" and "Karagwe am Pangani" [= Korogwe on the Pangani River] and Tornier reported 19 midbody scale rows and 118-120 ventrals (Brygoo & Roux-Estève, 1981, *Bull. Mus. natn. Hist. nat. Paris*, 4e Ser., 3 (A): 1169-1191). The present specimen has a much shorter tail than the syntypes, but agrees in its small size. As the Manga Forest Reserve is only ca. 45 km northeast of Korogwe, there seems little doubt that this specimen should be assigned to *M. longicauda*, which resembles *M. rondoensis* Loveridge, 1942, of southeastern Tanzania in its small size (snout-vent length less than 100 mm) and low ventral counts (114-127), rather than the two large East African species *M. ater* (Günther, 1873) and *M. loveridgei* Brygoo & Roux-Estève, 1981, (snout-vent length more than 100 mm; ventrals 130-168).

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SERPENTES

COLUBRIDAE

PROSYMNA LINEATA (Peters, 1871); **Lined Shovel-snout**

Botswana - four localities: Kweneng district (1) Lentswelatau, north-east of Molepolole (2425BD); 1 June 1986; J. de Graaf; Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe NMZB 8306; (2) Lethakeng (2425AA); 25 October 1986; S. Spawls & J. De Graaf; NMZB 6674; (3) Gabane (2425DB); April 1987; F.W. Taylor; NMZB 8793; (4) Southern District, Jwaneng (2424DD) 22 & 23 December 1994; C.R. Tilsbury; NMZB 13892-3 (here sympatric with *P. bivittata*, NMZB 13894-5). All five specimens resemble the type, being dark brown to black above, each scale with a white apical spot [see Branch, 1988, *Field Guide to the snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, pl. 29(3)]. All scale counts fall within the previously accepted range.

The specimens from Jwaneng extend the range 500 km west-south-west from the type locality (Broadley, 1990, *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*, map 50). They also suggest that *P. lineata* should be recognised as a full species, which is at least parapatric with *P. sundevallii* (A. Smith, 1849) in eastern Botswana. There is a specimen of *P. sundevallii* in Vienna (NMW 19276) collected by Holub in "Bamangwalo-land". This specimen may well have come from Serowe, from where I have examined two specimens of *P. lineata* from the former "Insect Collection Serowe" of Per Forschhammer (?now in the National Museum of Botswana). One of these was black above with white-tipped scales; the other resembled many Zimbabwean specimens, being pale brown with dark longitudinal streaks and white flecks. Another zone of parapatry is in the Pietersburg area, as there are two specimens of *P. sundevallii* (TM 5452, PEM 1440/44) from Krabbefontein (2329DD), adjacent to Matlale (2329DA), the type locality of *P. lineata*, while there is another *P. lineata* (TM 5445) from Woodbush (2330CC). So far no specimens have been seen which could be considered hybrids.

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SERPENTES / SAURIA

COLUBRIDAE / SCINCIDAE

PSAMMOPHIS BREVIROSTRIS AND **ACONTIAS** SP: **THE VALUE OF ROAD KILLS**

On 20 January 1992, whilst driving through the old Transkei, en route to Kosi Bay, GH stopped for a very flattened road kill near Marembeni, 23.4km SE of Mount Frere, Eastern Cape, in the valley of the Tina River, on the N2 road (31°03'00"S, 28°53'30"E; 3128BB). The specimens proved to be an adult *Psammodon brevirostris brevirostris* (for the taxonomic status of this species see F. Brandstätter, 1996, *Die Sandrennatter*, Die Neue Brehm-Bucherei Bd. 636, Westarp Wissenschaften, Magdeburg, 142 pp). It had an obvious stomach content that proved to be an *Acontias* sp. The snake (PEM R6895) had an approximate snout-vent length 810 mm and 158 ventrals. The fragmentary remains of the skink (AJL 3989; Angelo Lambiris private collection, Durban) lacked the head, an indeterminate portion of the forebody, and the proximal region of the tail. The scales were in 18 rows at the approximate midbody region, and were dark brown with darker margins on the dorsum, and paler on the ventrum. Due to damage, it was not possible to determine the species. It may be either *A. gracilicauda gracilicauda*, which is recorded from Umtata (3128DB; D. Broadley and A. Greer, A revision of the genus *Acontias* Cuvier (Sauria: Scincidae). *Arnoldia Rhod.* 4(26): 1-29, 1969), or *A. poecilus*, recorded from Leisure Bay (3130AAb; O. Bourquin and A. Lambiris, A new species of *Acontias* Cuvier (Sauria: Scincidae) from southeastern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Ann. Transvaal Mus.* 36(17): 223-227, 1996).

An additional subadult specimen (PEM R7677) of *P. b. brevirostris* from the Eastern Cape, was collected from Kloara, Ixopo District (30°07'S, 30°06'E; 3030AA), 24 September 1992 by GH and M. Burger. The only other recorded Eastern Cape specimen is from

Port St John (3129DA; Broadley (1990, *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*, rev. ed., Delta Books, Johannesburg, 386 pp).

This report includes the second and third records, including the most southerly record, of *P. b. brevirostris* from the Eastern Cape. It is also the first record of this diurnal snake feeding on a large, fossorial skink. If the skink is *A. poecilus* it is the first record for the Eastern Cape Province, and the sixth known specimen; if it is *A.g. gracilicauda* then it is the most eastern record for the Province. This interesting discovery indicates the value of road kills!

Submitted by

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The Society will achieve its aims by organizing formal meetings with lectures, discussions and other similar activities. These meetings will normally be held in connection with other herpetological meetings, such as congresses with international participation. Activities that include visits to private and public libraries, museums, research stations, antiquarian bookshops &c. will be other means of assembly. The founders also feel that a dedicated channel for publishing papers in the disciplines is lacking. A printed bulletin with brief articles, essays, bibliographies and news of people and events in our field will therefore be a central pillar of the Society. This will, as demands arise, be supplemented by a less formal newsletter that will be distributed either as a leaflet or e-mail.

The executive committee of five people is representing academic professionals, students and amateurs from Canada, Sweden and USA. The first bulletin was published in May 1999. Meetings were held in Pennsylvania, USA later in the summer. Members as a group were invited to an exclusive presentation of the library of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. The Academy is the oldest extant Natural History Museum in the United States and its exceptional book and journal holdings in herpetology were displayed.

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THE FIRST WORLD SUMMARY OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES IN ENGLISH

With a Systematic Review of Shaw's Nomenclature by Hobart M. Smith and Patrick David

GEORGE SHAW (1751-1813), an English naturalist who became Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum, is one of the most familiar names in herpetology. His volume on amphibians and reptiles in his series "General Zoology" comprises the first world review of herpetology in English. Shaw's book, published in 1802, covered 432 species which represent a large fraction of the species known at the time. Of these, Shaw described 109 as new and two dozen of his taxa survive, including some of the most familiar species in the world: *Ambystoma maculatum*, *Rana catesbeiana*, *Caecilia gracilis*, *Geochelone radiata*, *Ctenosaura acanthura*, *Python regius*, and *Bitis nasicornis*. The text includes scientific and common names, extensive references to previ-



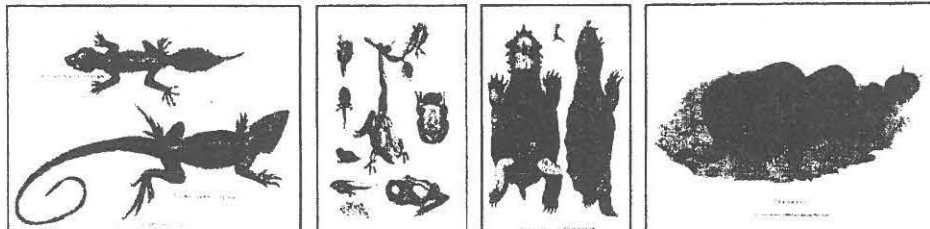
ous literature, natural history, and useful historical information. The 141 plates (see the samples at the bottom of this page) are typical of the era: excellent likenesses at their best, but sometimes amusing, fanciful, or even purloined from other works. Taken together, the text and plates represent an authoritative and classic survey at the start of the century during which herpetology became a science.

Hobart M. Smith (Boulder) and Patrick David (Paris) provide an extensive introduction in which Shaw's species are correlated with modern taxa. Many of Shaw's names have not been previously synonymized. They also provide a comprehensive index to Shaw's names.

Specifications: about 975 pages, 141 plates, format 6 x 9 inches (15 x 23 cm), clothbound, ISBN 0-916984-48-6. To be published November 1999.

■ G. SHAW: GENERAL ZOOLOGY: HERPETOLOGY • Pre-publication price to SSAR members US\$60 • Institutions and non-members US\$75
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