AFRICAN HERP NEWS

No. 38 July 2005

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ISSN 107-6187

African Herp News

Newsletter of the Herpetological Association of Africa

No. 38 **July 2005**

HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

http://www. wits.ac.za/haa

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, herpetological survey reports, venom and snakebite notes, short book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles shall be considered for publication provided that they are original and have not been published elsewhere. Articles will be submitted for peer review at the Editor's discretion. Authors are requested to submit long manuscripts by e-mail or on disc in Word 6.0/7.0 format. Shorter articles may be submitted may be submitted as typescripts.

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.

Cover Photo: Namaqua Chamaeleon
(Photo Thomas Leuteritz)

EDITORIAL

This number sees the end of *African Herp News* under its present name. The *Afr can Journal of Herpetology*, under the outstanding editorship of Graham Alexander, i now ISI-rated, making it one of only seven herpetological journals world-wide t achieve such a distinction. The Editorial Committee of the Association has suggeste that *African Herp News* undergoes a few changes to keep in step with the enhance status of the *Journal*, including a change of name.

Bill Branch suggested *Broadleyia*, to honour Don Broadley's contributions to bot the Association and to African herpetology, but Don has asked that this name not b used. The new name for AHN has not been definitively decided upon at the time c writing, but it seems that *African Herpetological Bulletin* is the most likely candidate.

The content of the newsletter will remain very much as before, but all submit ted articles (excepting announcements and obituaries) will be subjected to pee review. It will include articles that would not appear in AJH. The sections o Natural History Notes, Geographical Distribution, Venoms and Envenomatior and Herpetological Surveys (briefly annotated species lists resulting from loc surveys of amphibians and reptiles on the African continent and adjacent regions will be retained in their current format.

Election of new Committee

All paid-up African members of the Association are invited to nominate candi dates for the Committee of the HAA, utilising the form included with this editio of the newsletter, not later than 31 August 2005.

8th HAA Symposium

Please refer to the announcement on page 36 of the newsletter for details o the next HAA Symposium, to be held at Potchefstroom in November 2006.

Angelo Lambiris,
Interim Editor

ADDITIONAL RECORDS TO THE HERPETOFAUNA 0F NALUT PROVINCE, LIBYA

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ABSTRACT

A total of 23 herpetofaunal species, including 2 frogs, 15 lizards, 5 snakes and one tortoise were reported from Nalut, Al-Jomayyel and Wazen provinces in Libya during the period November 2003- June 2004. Of these, 2 frogs and 16 reptile species were added to Nalut herpetofauna. This study confirms the occurrence of *Scincopus fasciatus* in Libya (Sindaco, 1995) and suggests the prevalence of *Uromastyx acanthinura* in the Libyan west. In contrast, some species such as *Mesalina rubropunctata* was rare in western Libya.

INTRODUCTION

In North Africa, herpetological activities had always been focused on Egypt and Maghreb countries, Tunisia, Morocco and to a lesser extent Algeria (e.g., Boulenger, 1891; Anderson, 1898; Doumergue, 1901; Bons, 1958; Marx, 1968; Blanc, 1978, 1979; Blanc and Ineich, 1985; Le Berre, 1989; Bons and Geniez, 1996; Saleh, 1997; Geniez et al., 2004; Nouira and Blanc, 2004). In fact, only little attention has been paid to the Libyan fauna (Werner, 1909; Scortecci, 1935; Schnurrenberger, 1959; Kramer and Schnurrenberger, 1963; Schleich, 1984, 1987,1989; Laurent et al., 1997; Oliverio et al., 2000; Schätti, 2004). Recently, Schleich et al. (1996) reviewed the Libyan herpetofauna, reporting about 50 species from Libya, but mentioning no exact location data for almost a half of these species. Moreover, they reported nothing from Nalut province, showing clearly the shortage of herpetofaunal information on this area. During the past decade, some additions to the Libyan herpetofauna were made. For example, Sindaco (1995) reported *Scincopus fasciatus* for the first time from

Libya as a preserved specimen in the "Museo regionale di scienze naturali" in Italy. Frynta *et al.* (2000) reported two species of frogs and 25 species of reptiles from different localities in Libya, covering mostly the north eastern and western corners of the country, in addition to some regions in the extreme southern west. From Nalut province, they recorded 4 geckos, *Stenodactylus petrii*, *S. sthenodactylus*, *Tarentola mauritanica* and *Tropiocolotes tripolitanus* and one snake, *Cerastes cerastes*. Pieh and Perälä (2002) described a new subspecies of desert tortoises from Libya, *Testudo graeca cyrenaica*. However, Libya is still the country to be least studied herpetologically in North Africa and the herpetofaunal database in this country, especially in the west, is still deficient. The goal of this study was to find out the herpetofaunal community in Badr village in the extreme northern west and to record ecological notes on species whenever possible.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Site

The study was carried out in Badr (32° 2' 27" N, 11° 32' 38" E), Nalut province (Sha'beyyat Nalut), Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Republic (Jamahireyya) during the period from November 2003 through June 2004. Badr, a fairly large village, 200 km south west of Tripoli, covers an area of about 40 km^2 and has a population around 19,000 people. Human settlements are dispersed in the desert and each is surrounded by a limestone brick fence. Most of areas between houses are natural, with rough sand soil, boulders and sparse vegetation. However, cultivated trees such as *Eucalyptus* sp. and *Salix* sp. are usually found around houses. The village is traversed by tar roads which connect its quarters. The study site was subdivided into 4 stations: St. #1: Badr village; St. #2: a desert at northern periphery of Badr; St. #3: Ain (water spring) Al-Khenjari, about 8 km north of Badr and St. # 4: Badr agricultural project (mixture of green and deserted areas), about 7 km south of Badr. The herpetofaunal samples were collected during day and night by hand and rubber bands during 12 field excursions. Voucher specimens were deposited in Paris Natural History Museum (MNHN) collections and in the personal collections of one of us (AAI). Location coordinates were determined by using GPS 300, Magellan, USA.

RESULTS

Two species of amphibians and twenty species of reptiles were recorded from Badr during our study. The lacertid lizard, *Acanthodactylus scutellatus*, which is common in Badr, was also collected from Sha'abeyyat Al-Jomayyel (32° 51' N, 012° 3' E). A single snake, *Coluber algirus*, not recorded from Badr, was sampled from the Wazen town (32° 01' N, 010° 37' E), Sha'abeyyat Wazen at about 120 km from Badr. The following is a checklist of amphibians and reptiles recorded during this study. In brackets are the register numbers of specimens in MNHN collections.

I. CLASS: AMPHIBIA
Family: BUFONIDAE
1. Green Toad, *Bufo viridis* Laurenti, 1768
(MNHN 2004.0482): Found in Badr drinking water station at St. # 4, active during most seasons and in warm days during winter.

Family: RANIDAE
2. Water Frog, *Rana saharica* Boulenger, 1913
(MNHN 2004.0480-0481): A common frog in water springs and rain pools. Some individuals were collected from Ain Al-Khenjari during sunny days in January and February. At slightest danger, this frog hides itself in the bottom which is difficult to be seen, especially through the surface vegetation cover.

II. CLASS: REPTILIA
Order: SQUAMATA
Suborder: SAURIA
Family: AGAMIDAE
1. Desert Agama, *Trapelus mutabilis* (Merrem, 1820)
(MNHN 2004.0085): Two individuals were collected at night during spring and summer from firm sand soil, with gravel and sparse vegetation close to human settlements in Badr.

2. Bell's Dab-lizard, *Uromastyx acanthinura acanthinura* Merrem, 1820
(MNHN 2004.0093): A conspicuous agamid species in Badr. Four adults and two juveniles were collected from desert and agricultural project during spring. Several individuals of different ages were also brought to us, but we released them at their sight of capture.

Family: CHAMAELEONIDAE
3. Common Chameleon, *Chamaeleo chamaeleon chamaeleon* (Linnaeus, 1758)
(MNHN 2004.0087 & 0092): Three individuals were sampled from olive trees and edible fruits during March in Badr. Additionally, a big individual was captured near Nalut city.

Family: GEKKONIDAE
4. Turkish Gecko, *Hemidactylus turcicus* (Linnaeus, 1766)
Only one individual was observed inside a house on 14 February 2004. Amazingly, no more individuals were seen even during summer.

5. Petrie's Gecko, *Stenodactylus petrii* Anderson, 1896
(MNHN 2003.2962): Five individuals were found in sandy areas around Badr (St. # 2), mostly around shrubs in spring and summer. This species was most active between 2000 h to 2400 h.

6. Elegant Gecko, *Stenodactylus sthenodactylus* (Lichtenstein, 1823)
(MNHN 2003.2963): Two individuals were caught between 2000 h and 2300 h in May and June 2004, coexisting with *S. petrii* and *Tropiocolotes tripolitanus*.

7. Moorish Gecko, *Tarentola mauritanica* (Linnaeus, 1758)
(MNHN 2004.0082): The most common gecko in the area, active throughout the year with a notably lesser number during winter, found everywhere, on walls of inhabited and abandoned houses and on rock boulders. This species was essentially nocturnal, observed on buildings in dark and around electric lamps. It was also active inside buildings during day, but never exposed to the sun.

8. Tripoli Dwarf Gecko, *Tropiocolotes tripolitanus* Peters, 1880
(MNHN 2003.2964 - 2965): A nocturnal gecko, several individuals were collected from areas characterized by firm sand surface and gravels in St. # 2, coexisting with *Trapelus mutabilis* and *Acanthodactylus boskianus*.

Family: LACERTIDAE
9. Bosc's Fringe-toed Lizard, *Acanthodactylus boskianus* (Daudin, 1802)
(MNHN 2004.0083): A common lacertid lizard in relatively hard soil. Some individuals were collected from Badr agricultural project areas.

10. Nidua Lizard, *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* (Audouin, 1809)
(MNHN 2004.0089): found moving on the sand surface in Badr deserts even in sunny days in January. Three individuals were also collected from Al-Jomayyel in spring.

11. Red-spotted Desert-racer, *Mesalina rubropunctata* (Lichtenstein, 1823)
A single individual was collected during day from Badr Agricultural project in April (AAI pers. coll.).

Family: SCINCIDAE
12. Ocellated Skink, *Chalcides ocellatus ocellatus* (Forskål, 1775)
(MNHN 2004.0084): A single individual was captured from Ain Al-Khenjari on 21 March 2004. Some individuals were brought afterward to the lab by students from different farms in Badr.

13. Banded Skink, *Scincopus fasciatus* (Peters, 1864)
(MNHN 2004.0081): Two adults were captured during March in Badr.

14. Boulenger's Skink, *Sphenops boulengeri* (Anderson, 1896)
(MNHN 2004.0088): Some individuals of different ages were captured during winter and spring from agricultural project area.

Family: VARANIDAE

15. Desert Monitor, *Varanus griseus* (Daudin, 1803)

Conspicuous tracks were observed on the surface during spring and summer, but we did not see any monitor during our surveys.

Suborder: SERPENTES

Family: COLUBRIDAE

16. Algerian Whip Snake, *Coluber algirus* (Jan, 1863)

(MNHN 2004.0079): A single snake was captured from Wazen town during April 2003.

17. False Smooth Snake, *Macroprotodon cucullatus* (Geoffroy St. Hilaire, 1827)

A young snake was captured and killed by the guard on campus of Saqr Africa University in Badr on 27 November 2003.

18. Egyptian Cat Snake, *Telescopus obtusus* (Reuss, 1834)

(MNHN 2004.0080): Only one snake was captured from Badr in June 2004.

Family: VIPERIDAE

19. Horned Viper, *Cerastes cerastes cerastes* (Linnaeus, 1758)

(MNHN 2004.0078): Two adults were captured in March and April. One of these was captured from a house backyard in Badr.

20. Avicenna's Viper, *Cerastes vipera* (Linnaeus, 1758)

(MNHN 2004.0086): an adult was captured from a sandy area during March 2003. Due to the nature of coarse Badr soil, *C. cerastes* is probably more common than *C. vipera* in this area.

Order: CHELONII

Family: TESTUDINIDAE

21. Spur-thighed Tortoise, *Testudo graeca cyrenaica* Piehl and Perälä, 2002

A single female was brought to us from Badr. A photograph was taken and later identified by R. Bour; the specimen was released. It is the most common tortoise species in the area and many people keep them as pets.

DISCUSSION

Despite the vast area of Libya and characteristic variation of its desert topography, herpetofaunal records in this country are still lacking when compared to adjacent countries in northern Africa (Frynta et al., 2000). The recent book of Schleich et al. (1996) is considered the only source of information that compiled the literature of Libyan herpetofaunal records during the past century. The number of species recorded during the present study reflects the richness of herpetofauna in this area and possibly the whole province when compared to the number of species (2 frogs and 25 reptiles) reported by Frynta et al. (2000) from about 30 different localities in this country. Although our study added 2 frogs and 16 reptile species to the Nalut herpetofauna, more species, snakes in particular, are expected to be found in Nalut province if extensive field surveys are carried out during the whole summer. Our study also suggests the occurrence and prevalence of the agamid lizard, *Uromastyx acanthinura* in the Libyan west. This species which has been reported in different locations in Libya other than Nalut Province (Frynta et al., 2000; Wilms, 2004), was numerous in our study site. Additionally, our study confirms the occurrence of *Scincopus fasciatus* in Libya (Sindaco, 1995). In contrast, there is an indication of rarity of some species in western Libya such as *Mesalina rubropunctata*. This finding was also reported by Schleich et al. (1996). It is clear that Libya is the least-studied country in North Africa. Therefore, there is scarce information on the herpetofaunal records and a lot of work is waiting to be done in Libya.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Drs. Annemarie Ohler and Roger Bour for their identification of frogs and desert tortoise respectively. We also thank Jalal An-Najeh for his field assistance. We are grateful to students of the faculty of science at Saqr Africa University, especially Amna Al-Bahi, Jazya Masoud, Mariam Al-Ma'aiouf, Asmaa Mohammad Ali, Rabeea An-Najeh, Fadwa Al-Ajamy, Abdullah Assalla'a, Hatem and Reda Al-Housh for their help in collecting and preserving specimens.

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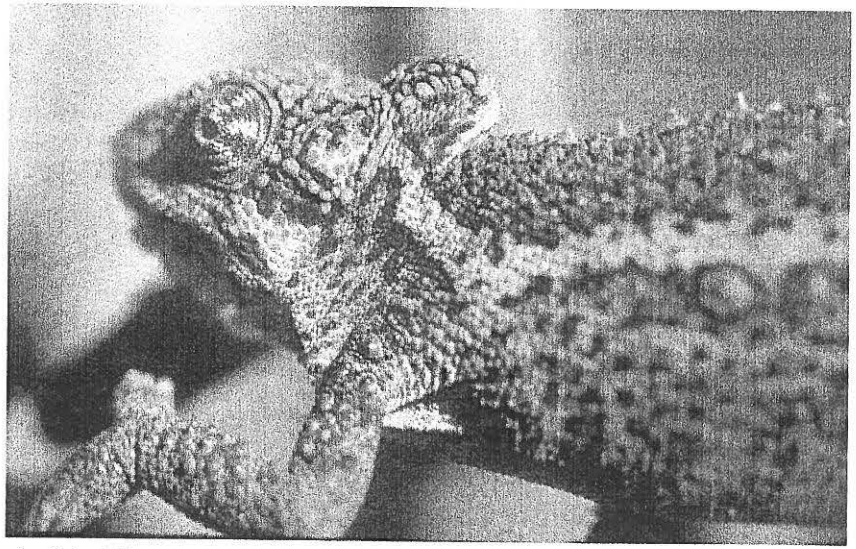

Angelo Lambiris

BREEDING BEHAVIOUR IN THE AFRICAN BULLFROG *PYXICEPHALUS EDULIS* PETERS, 1854

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INTRODUCTION

Whilst cycling through Mopane Bushveld (Savanna Biome) in the Hans Merensky Nature Reserve (Limpopo Province, RSA; 2330DA) on the morning of 18 February, 2004, after a heavy overnight rain storm of some 72 mm, we heard a loud chorus of *Pyxicephalus edulis*. We investigated and found a large group of African Bullfrogs in full breeding activity in a small (50 x 10 metre) rain-filled depression. We went home to collect the tape recorder and other equipment we needed for proper observation.

By the time we arrived back at the pond at 08h00, several egg-clutches had been laid, but the frogs were still fully active. Our observations proceeded from then on until 20h00.

OBSERVATIONS

Frog Counts:

The Bullfrogs were counted to give an indication of the numbers involved, and to monitor increasing or decreasing activity.

Counts were: 08h30:47 individuals,
09h30:48 individuals,
10h30:49 individuals,
11h30:52 individuals,
12h30:49 individuals,
13h30:21 individuals,
14h15: 0
15h30:0
18h00:0
20h00:5 male Bullfrogs spaced unevenly in the pond, but each in near vicinity to egg-clutches. These five males remained in those vicinities for the following few days, and gave occasional and sporadic single calls at night. Unfortunately, continuous disturbance, including attempts to catch the animals, thereafter by visitors to, and staff of, the Eiland Spa seemed to drive these frogs away. The pond dried within a week thereafter and all developing tadpoles died.

Breeding Behaviour:

The frogs were distributed in five groups (breeding arenas or leks) of calling males, each with a dominant male. One of us (HB) went into the pond and sat within the largest group (17 males) for a period of some two hours. Once accustomed to the observer's presence, the Bullfrogs ignored him as long as he remained motionless.

The dominant male of this group sat in water with a depth of some 10 cm, and defended his position from all the other frogs in the group by charging at them if they approached closer than about 50 cm. He defended extremely aggressively, both by charging at offending males, and often by biting them on the head area as well. Several bleeding males were observed in the group, and two dead males were found later with obvious head and side wounds. On several occasions lesser males (smaller, but adult satellite males) were thrown in the air by the dominant male. The satellite males continually circled the dominant male, and called while swimming around him. The dominant male called most frequently. Males called from the water, with head and vocal sac protruding above the surface. Satellite males also charged each other, but were not seen to bite or to toss each other in the air.

Amplexus within the particular group under observation was seen twice. On both occasions the female swam directly to the dominant male, ignoring the others, and amplexus and egg-laying proceeded immediately, the male clasping the female in a typical axillary position, the female arching her back to position her vent above water-level, and the male straddling as shown by the photograph on page 27 of Passmore and Carruthers, 1995. Amplexus displacement was not seen. No floating about on the water, as described by Passmore and Carruthers (op cit.), by amplexing pairs was noted.

Similar observations, at the same site, were made during the morning of 15 December, 2004, after an overnight downpour of 188 mm. Again the aggressive behaviour of dominant males was noted, and again dead males were collected. Mate selection, amplexus and egg-laying followed the same procedure as above, and the pond was quiet after 12h00. However, a weak and sporadic chorus of five males was heard calling from the grassy fringes of a flooded dam during the early evening. These frogs were quiet after 19h30, just after dark.

Frog measurements:

Three male *P. edulis* were collected for measurement:

1. SVL: 110,6 mm Mass: 125,4 g
2. SVL: 98,6 mm Mass: 113,9 g
3. SVL: 99,9 mm Mass: 118,4 g

No females were collected for measurements, but those observed were noticeably smaller than the males.

CONCLUSIONS

Pyxicephalus edulis is an explosive daytime breeder with breeding behaviour similar to that of *P. adspersus.* This confirms earlier observations by HB in the Kruger National Park (KNP), and is further confirmed by the observations of several farmers in the Hoedspruit and Phalaborwa regions. L. Minter (pers. comm.) also observed daytime breeding and aggressive behaviour by *P. edulis* in the KNP.

These observations on the breeding behaviour of *Pyxicephalus edulis* conflict with statements in Channing (2001) and Cook and Minter (2004), particularly with regard to time of breeding activity.

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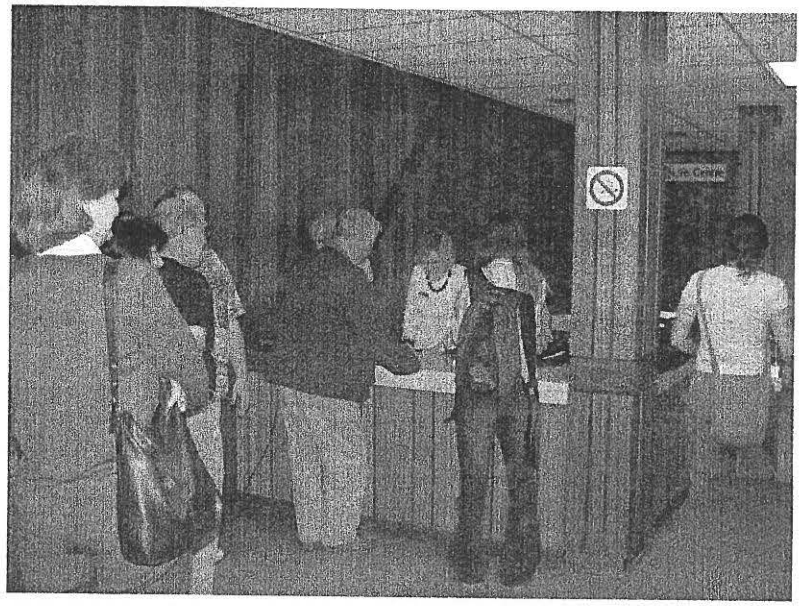
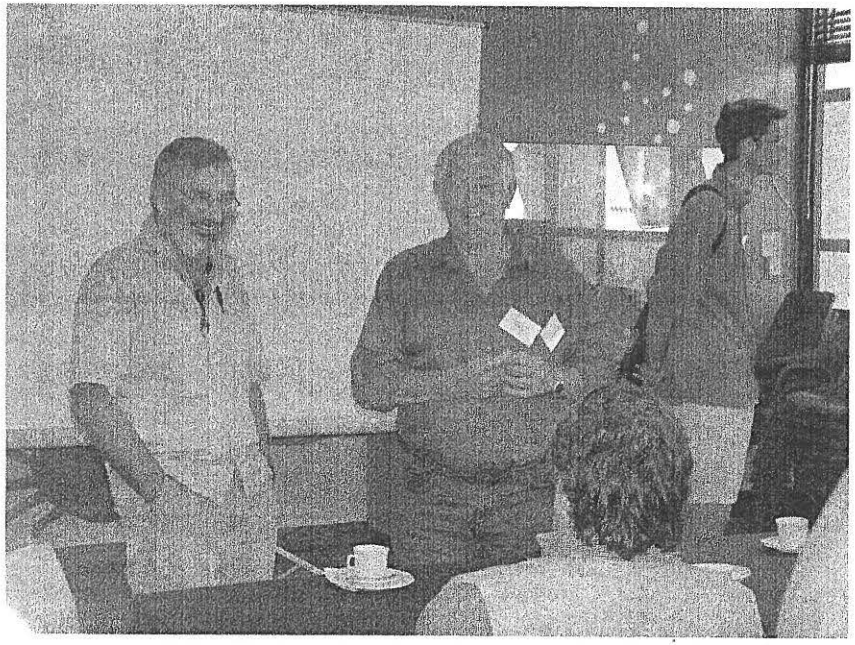
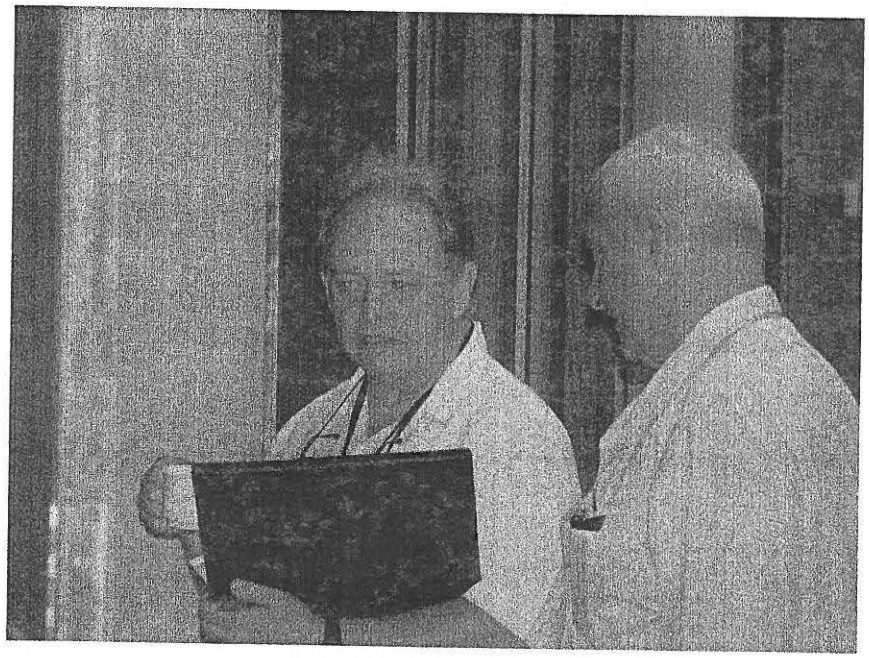
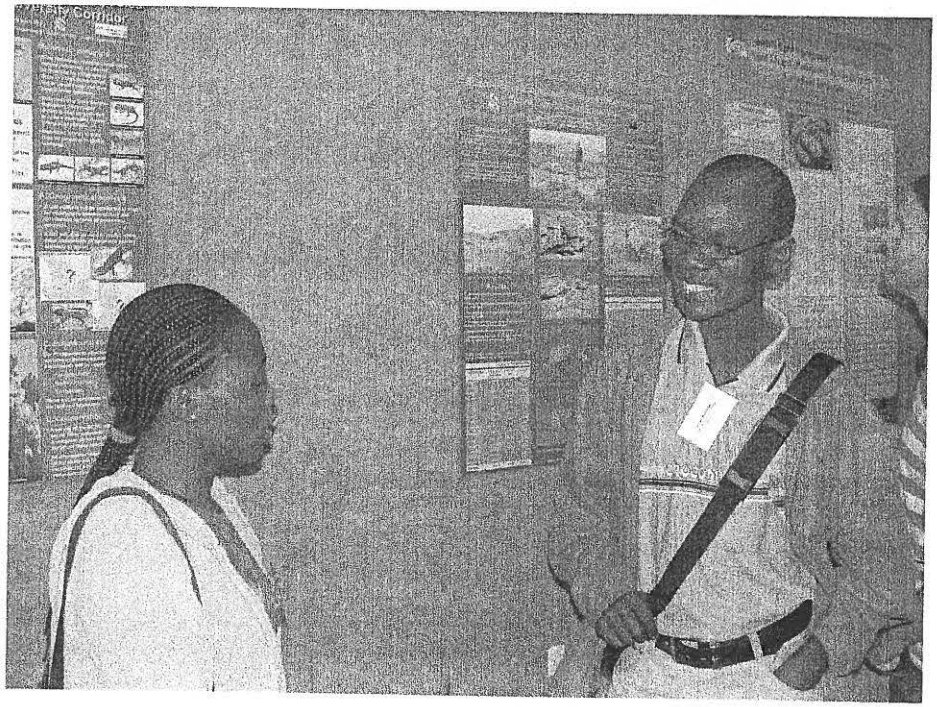
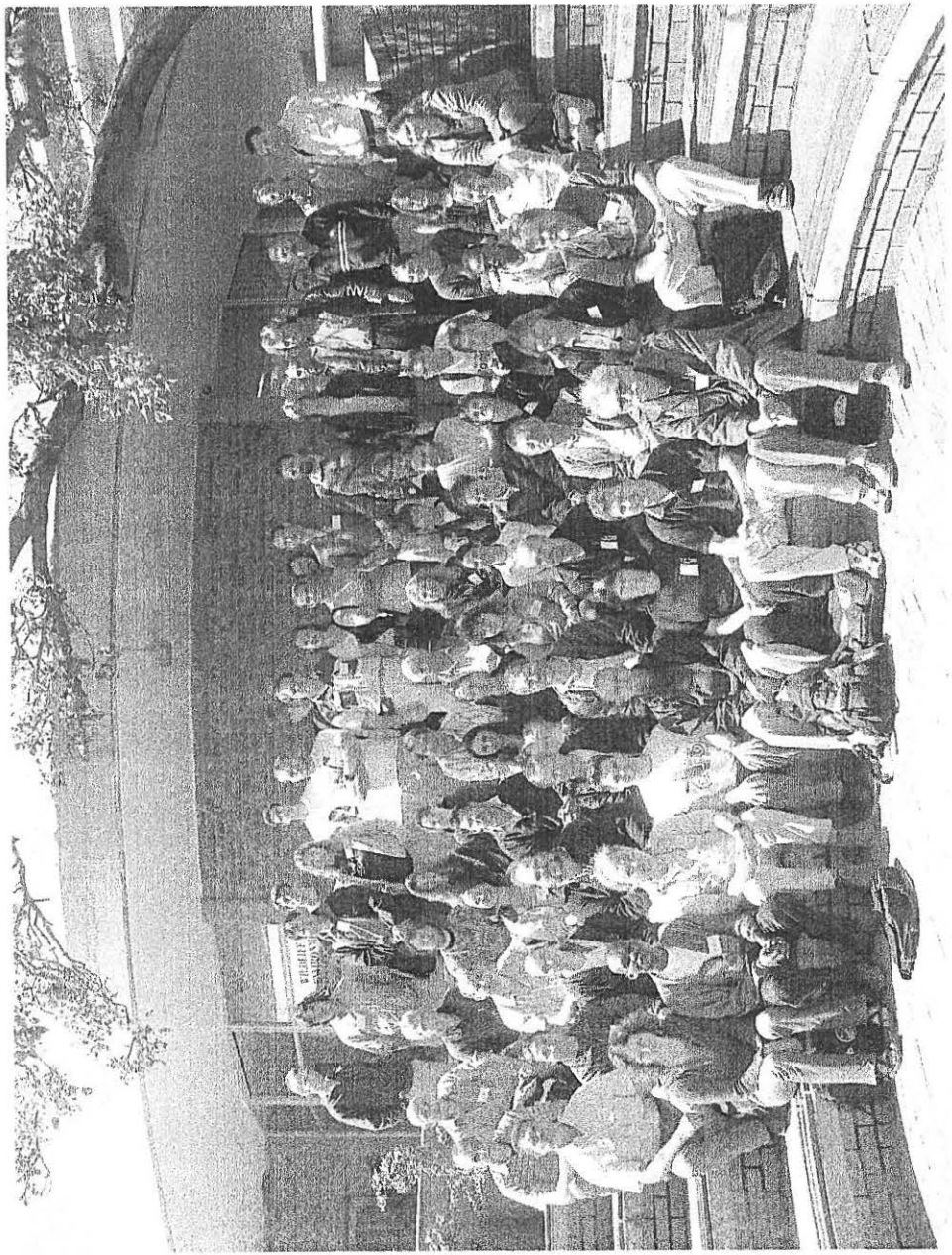
THE SEVENTH H.A.A. SYMPOSIUM PORT ELIZABETH, 2004











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, eg. 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.

Notes submitted in an incorrect format or style will be returned to the authors.

AMPHIBIA : ANURA

MICROHYLIDAE

***Phrynomantis bifasciatus bifasciatus* (A. Smith, 1847)**
Banded Rubber Frog

UNNATURAL MORTALITY

On the 14 March 2004 the security fence tripped continuously from 21h30 at 46 Dwyka Street in Erasmuskloof, Pretoria, Gauteng; South Africa (25°48'54"S, 28 16'28"E; 1546 m a.s.l.). After closer inspection, a dead female Banded Rubber Fro (*Phrynomantis bifasciatus*) was found underneath one of the wires. The frog was a adult with a snout-vent length of 53mm and weighing 17.2g. The frog was deposited i the Transvaal Museum (TM 85060).

It had rained that day and the frog was probably electrocuted because it wa earthed, otherwise it would have crawled underneath the wire. The security wall was a least 2.25m high, which meant the frog must have climbed to at least that height. Th Banded Rubber Frog has been recorded in North Gauteng and this confirms its pres ence at the southeastern conner of Pretoria (L.H. du Preez. 2004, *Phrynomantis bifa ciatus* (Smith, 1947), pp 199-201 in Minter, L.R., M. Burger, J.A. Harrison, H.H Braack, P.J. Bishop and D. Kloepfer, eds. *Atlas and Red Data Book of the Frogs*

South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. SI/MAB Series No. 9. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.).

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REPTILIA : CHELONIA

TESTUDINIDAE

Psammobates oculiferus (Kuhl, 1820)
Kalahari Tent Tortoise

DIET

The natural diet of *Psammobates oculiferus* is poorly known. Only one study of the diet of this species appears to exist (Rall & Fairall, 1993, *S. Afr. J. Wildlife Res.* **23**: 63-70). Neither this study, nor the information on the species' diet in several field guides (Branch, 1988, *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers; Boycott & Bourquin, 2000, *The Southern African Tortoise Book*, privately printed) mention arthropods to be part of their diet.

On 8 January 2004 an adult male *P. oculiferus* was noted on the road between Hotazel and Vanzylsrus, South Africa. It was avidly feeding on the remains of a giant millipede that had recently been killed by a vehicle. Although I had passed the tortoise with my vehicle to less than 50 cm, it continued to feed and took at least five more bites after I had approached it for the second time.

One day and night before the observation there had been thunderstorms, bringing approximately 30 mm of rain. As a result, many millipedes were crossing the road. Road-killed millipedes are an easy prey for *P. oculiferus*, and might be a regular food item when available.

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Kinixys spekii Gray, 1863
Speke's Hinged Tortoise

BREEDING and FEEDING

Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, RSA; 2330DA. 16 March, 2004: 15h30. Mopane Bushveld (Savanna Biome).

Whilst walking during the afternoon of 16 March, 2004, in the Hans Merensky

Nature Reserve, we came across a mating pair of Speke's Hinged Tortoise, *Kinixys spekii*. A second male approached and attempted to dislodge the first, but was successfully rebuffed. The second male then, perhaps in a fit of displacement behaviour, proceeded to feed on the fallen fruit of a Marula tree, *Sclerocarya birrea.*

Submitted by
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REPTILIA : SAURIA

GEKKONIDAE

Hemidactylus mabouia (de Jonnes, 1818)
Tropical House Gecko

MORTALITY

On 6 October 2004, at 12h05, an adult *Trachylepis punctatissima* was seen running with a sub-adult *Hemidactylus mabouia* held in its jaws. It ran up a tree and proceeded to 'smear' its victim against the tree's rough bark. The gecko had already lost its tail and was still alive. This was observed in the grounds of the Limpopo Department of Finance, Economic Affairs and Tourism in Polokwane, Capricorn District, Limpopo (23°55'S, 29°27'E; 2329CD). I was unable to observe the interaction further and predation can therefore not be confirmed.

Haagner (1997, *Hemidactylus mabouia*. Tropical house gecko. Predation. *African Herp News* **26**: 25) recorded predation on *Hemidactylus mabouia* by both *Homopholis wahlbergii* and *Pachydactylus turneri*. This record is, however, significant in that it constitutes an interaction between a diurnal predator and this nocturnal gecko.

Acknowledgement
Bill Branch is thanked for commenting on the content.

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CHAMAELEONIDAE

Chamaeleo dilepis Leach, 1819
Flap-necked Chameleon

PREY

On 16 June 2005 at 07h30 an adult (SV 15 cm, T 14 cm) Flap-necked Chameleon

(*Chamaeleo dilepis*) was observed being attacked by two adult Senegal Coucals (*Centropus senegalensis*) at Nkwazi Lodge situated approximately 20 km east of Rundu on the Okavango River in northern Namibia. The chameleon was knocked out of a Silver Terminalia (*Terminalia cericea*) tree and harassed on the ground. Throughout the encounter the Flap-neck Chameleon was actively hissing and attempting to bite the Senegal Coucal which was worrying the cloacal region of the chameleon, and in the process injuring the back and hind legs of the chameleon.

According to Maclean (1993. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town) the diet of the Senegal Coucal includes small rodents, reptiles, birds and bird eggs. Branch (1998. *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town) includes, as predators of the Flap-necked Chameleon, snakes, monkeys and birds such as the Crowned Hornbill.

Such predator/prey interactions are possibly not unique albeit rarely witnessed as an anecdotal reference to a Burchell's Coucal (*Centropus superciliosus*) attacking and killing a Black Mamba (*Dendroaspis polylepis*) in the vicinity of the Limpopo River in northern South Africa indicates (Fairhead, *pers. com.*).

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AGAMIDAE

Agama agama (Linnaeus, 1758)
Red-headed Rock Agama

NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY

Very recently, O.S.G. Pauwels *et al.*, 2004, *Afr. Herp News* **37**: 20-21, reported on nocturnal activity in an adult female *Agama agama* which they observed at Tchibanga, Nyanga Province, Gabon, on 9 April 2003. The specimen was observed on a house wall, close to a neon light, preying upon nocturnal insects attracted by the light. It was in close syntopy with some *Hemidactylus mabouia*. The authors claimed this to be the second reported instance of nighttime activity in this species, the first one also having been reported by Pauwels *et al.* (*Herp Review*, "2003, in press"), but actually appeared in Vol. **35**(2): 164-165, along the same main road, 115 km north of Tchibanga.

With this note I want to remind the readers that I had reported on nocturnal activity in *A. agama* already 30 years ago (W. Böhme, 1975, Zur Herpetofauna Kameruns, mit Beschreibung eines neuen Scinciden. *Bonner zoologische Beiträge*, **26**: 2-48), and as my old reference was published in German, I shall literally translate the respective paragraph:

"A remarkable ethological observation, elucidating the plasticity of this commensal was made in Douala" (On December 27, 1973) "Around 22.00 h, longtime after sunset, several individuals of all age classes assembled under a street-lamp in the city" (close to the German Seamen's Mission) "in order to prey upon winged, swarming termites, which fell down with singed wings in large numbers. *Bufo maculatus* and *Hemidactylus mabouia* resident at this place were participating in this hunt. For members of the otherwise strictly diurnal agamids, this is a very unusual phenomenon."

Pauwels *et al.* thought this behaviour to be geographically restricted to Gabon and found this remarkable because of the huge range of this species. My old observation indicates a wider distribution of this phenomenon and argues for a high ecological plasticity of *Agama agama* rather than for a peculiarity of the Gabon population.

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SCINCIDAE

Panaspis wahlbergii (A. Smith, 1849)
Wahlberg's Snake-eyed Skink

PREDATION

On 30 June 2005 I observed a Brown-Hooded Kingfisher (*Halcyon albiventris*) dive from its perch on a Jacaranda tree and seize an adult Wahlberg's Snake-eyed Skink (*Panaspis wahlbergii*) on open lawn in our garden at Hillcrest, 25 km west of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (2930DD). Instead of returning immediately to its perch to consume its meal the bird remained on the lawn, barely three metres from me, holding the lizard for at least half a minute before flying back to the tree and swallowing its prey. I had ample opportunity to observe the lizard closely and see that it was a male (as evidenced by the salmon-pink underside) about eight centimetres long.

According to McLachlan & Liversidge (1972. *Roberts' Birds of South Africa*, 3rd edition. John Voelker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town) the Brown-hooded Kingfisher includes lizards in its diet, but they do not indicate which species have been recorded. Other authorities consulted (Newman, 1983. *Birds of Southern Africa*, Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg; Stuart Irwin, 1981. *The Birds of Zimbabwe*, Quest Publishing, Harare) were equally uninformative. Branch (1998. *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town) does not give any predators for this little lizard, and a search through other herpetological literature at my disposal has been no more enlightening. This appears to illustrate how many gaps there are sill left to fill with respect to the biology of not only some of our commoner reptiles, but also of the so-called "higher vertebrates" which on the face of it have

been well studied!

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Trachylepis capensis (Gray, 1830)
Cape Skink

SIZE

On 6 December 2003, in heavily grazed mountain grassland on the summit ridge of the Lebombo Mountains in the Manyiseni region, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (26°58"54"S, 31°59'42"E; 2631DD) we collected a very large female Cape Skink (*Trachylepis capensis*). Measurements for the skink were: snout-vent length (SVL) 136 mm; tail length 163 mm (tip lost and partially regenerated; and live weight 61.5 g.

Another very large female Cape Skink was also captured in October 2002, in mountain grassland on the summit of the Lebombo Mountains, but about five kilometres south of Ingwavuma. On capture it was of similar size to the Manyiseni female, but after being kept in captivity for over a year, during which it fed regularly on grasshoppers, and occasionally on small *Platysaurus lebomboensis*, it measured: SVL 138 mm; tail length 170 mm; and live weight 76.4 g.

Both of these exceptionally large females surpass the previously largest recorded size (SVL 135 mm) for the species (Branch, 1998, *Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers, Cape Town). Moreover, both were exceptionally heavy-bodied.

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Trachylepis margaritifer (Peters, 1854)
Rainbow Skink

COMMENSALISM

Number 7 Antelope Road, Matseumhlope, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, borders the Hillside Dams, and a large syenite rock outcrop extends well into the garden. Three species of *Trachylepis* occur on the property, and when I first moved into the house 20 years ago *T. margaritifer* and *T. varia* were found only on the kopje, while *T. (striata) wahlbergii* lived around the house and garden, but was rarely found on the kopje.

During the last 12 months or so, *T. margaritifer* have largely deserted the kopje and started living around the house, retreating under flower-pot stands and rocks bordering the fishpond when disturbed. *T. wahlbergii* still occurs around the house, but gives way to the adult Rainbow Skinks in any dispute over refuges. From January 2005 several clutches of eggs (apparently laid in plat pots, etc.) have hatched out and the surroundings of the house and yard are alive with hatchlings of *T. margaritifer. T wahlbergii* is now the commoner species on the kopje.

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REPTILIA : CHELONIA

TESTUDINIDAE
Geochelone pardalis (Bell, 1828)
Leopard Tortoise

PREY

Leopard tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis*) remains were found beneath the nest of a Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) on the farm Swartfontein in western Namibia. Swartfontein farm lies partly on the escarpment between the Namib Desert and the Namibian interior in the general area known as Spreetshoogte Pass. Two Verreaux's Eagle nests, approximately 11.5km apart, are known in the area, one being on high escarpment cliffs while the other was in an area of granite 'kopjes' set back about 4 km from the true escarpment. Both nests seem to lie within the territory of one pair of eagles, although only the granite kopje nest had *G. pardalis* remains. Approximately 8 broken carapaces indicating at least 6 individuals of *G. pardalis* were located below the nest situated on a cliff face. The size of the *G. pardalis* individuals preyed upon, as determined from the carapace remains, indicate that only adult *G. pardalis* individuals were preyed upon. The area below the escarpment nest also was littered with klipspringer skulls and the remains of one baboon.

G. pardalis are usually preyed upon as juveniles by a variety of mammalian, reptilian and avian predators while adults are preyed upon by humans (Boycott & Bourquin 2000. *The Southern African Tortoise Book.* Russel Friedman Books, Halfway House). Another threat to adult *G. pardalis* include veld fires (Branch 1998. *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa.* Struik Publishers, Cape Town).

According to Steyn (1982. *Birds of Prey of Southern Africa.* David Philip Publishers, Cape Town) the Verreaux's Eagle is extremely prey specific with Dassies (*Procavia capensis*) very rarely constituting less than 90% of its prey and reptiles – including tortoises – occasionally preyed on. The tortoise species included in the diet

are however not indicated. Maclean (1993. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town) states that reptiles are "less often" included in the diet of Verreaux's Eagle.

Hawes (2005. Feeding habits of Verreaux's Eagle. *Africa – Birds & Birding*, February/March 2005: 9-10) recently documented *Chersina angulata* (Angulate tortoise) as constituting 36.7% of the prey of Verreaux's Eagle in the Cederberg in the Western Cape. Our observation indicates that Verreaux's Eagle in Namibia preys upon non-juvenile *G. pardalis*. *G. pardalis* are probably selected for due to their relatively larger size than most other species occurring in Namibia or their abundance in the area. Steyn (2005. Prey of Verreaux's Eagle. *Africa – Birds & Birding*, June/July 2005: 9-10) suggests that Verreaux's Eagles may exploit a locally abundant food source whenever available. The extent to which tortoises are included in the diet of Verreaux's Eagle in Namibia is unknown and warrants further investigation.

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REPTILIA : SERPENTES

COLUBRIDAE

Mehelya nyassae (Günther, 1888)
Black File Snake

DIET

On 31 October 1990 a large (348 + 95 mm) female Black File Snake (*Mehelya nyassae*) was collected in Dune Forest scrub on the edge of the garden of Madlangula House overlooking the third lake in the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve, Ingwavuma District, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (2732DD, 26°56'S, 32°50'E). The snake was struggling with a large dead prey item that it had partially swallowed headfirst. The snake was killed and after death a large (167 mm SVL) Golden Legless Skink (*Typhlosaurus aurantiacus*) was removed from the snake's throat. The head of the skink showed signs of digestion indicating that the skink had been ingested (at least partially) some time prior to the snake being killed.

Although *M. nyassae* is known to feed on snakes and a variety of semi-fossorial skinks, e.g. *Scelotes* and *Panaspis* (Shine, R., W.R. Branch, P.S. Harlow & J.K. Webb, 1995. Sexual dimorphism, reproductive biology and food habits of two species of African filesnakes (*Mehelya*, Colubridae). *J. Zool.(Lond.)* **240**: 327-340, this is the first record of predation on *Typhlosaurus*.

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Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia (Laurenti, 1768)
Herald Snake

MAXIMUM SIZE

In March 2003 three Herald Snakes (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*) were confiscate from a resident of Port Elizabeth who was in possession of the snakes without the rele vant permits from the Eastern Cape conservation authorities. The snakes were from a unknown locality, but believed to have been recently imported, illegally, from Zim babwe where they were probably wild-caught. This was supported by the pale uppe labials, which had only a faint red flush in all specimens. Herald snakes from the East ern Cape have prominent red upper labials, from which the common name Red-lippe Snake derives. However, snakes from Zimbabwe have white or dark brown lip (Broadley, D.G., & Cock, E., 1975, *Snakes of Zimbabwe*, Longman Zimbabwe, Ha rare), whilst further north in East Africa the upper labials are usually white (for whic reason it is known as the White-lipped Cat Snake). The largest of the confiscated serie (PEM R5516) is a giant male that measures 751 + 140 = 891 mm in length. This easil exceeds the previous maximum sizes published for males of the species (696 mm SV] [810 mm TL]), Bulawayo, Broadley & Cock, *op. cit.*; 700 mm SVL, Keogh *et al* 2000, *Afr. J. Herpetol.*, **49**: 129-137; 701 mm SVL, Branch, 1998, *Snakes and Othe Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers, Cape Town).

Acknowledgements
I thank Ken Timmens (Bayworld Snake Park) and Mark Marshall (Nelson Mandel Metropolitan Municipality) for donating these snakes to the Bayworld (formerly Poi Elizabeth Museum) herpetological collection.

Submitted by
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Lamprophis capensis (Duméril & Bibron, 1854)
Brown House Snake

DIET

A sub-adult Brown house Snake (*Lamprophis fuliginosus*) was killed on 1 of Feb ruary 2004 at Plot 127, De Wildt near the R513 road between Pretoria and Brits (29

39'95"S, 28°00'30"E, 1385 m a.s.l.) Gauteng Province, South Africa. The snake was killed in a house at 06h00. After the snake had been killed it was obvious it had just fed, because there was a huge bulge in its digestive system. The snake was cut open at the bulge and it revealed a bat. The bat was identified as a Cape Serotine Bat (*Eptesicus capensis*) (Dr. I.L. Rautenbach, *pers. comm.*). The snake weighed 23.3g and the bat 8.1g. The snake was 43.5cm long and was deposited in the Transvaal Museum (TM 84994). In the standard literature there is one reference to Brown House Snakes preying on bats, but no species are mentioned (Branch, W.R. 1998. *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers, Cape Town; p. 399). Dr W.R. Branch said that although it was observed that Brown House Snakes could prey on bats, no definite species were known (*pers. comm.*). This seems to be the first documented case of a Brown House Snake preying on a particular bat species.

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Dipsadoboa aulica (Günther, 1864)
Marbled Tree Snake

FEEDING

Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, RSA; 2330DA. 27 February, 2004; 21h25. Mopane Bushveld (Savanna Biome).

Whilst recording frog calls at a dam (Dam # 4) in the Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, an adult male Marbled Tree Snake *Dipsadoboa aulica* (SVL 595 mm) was seen to attack and ingest a male Foam Nest Frog *Chiromantis xerampelina*. After grabbing f the frog by its head, the snake coiled around it for some five minutes before positioning it head-foremost for swallowing. Ingestion was complete within 45 minutes.

Submitted by
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Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia (Laurenti, 1768)
Herald Snake

FEEDING

Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, RSA; 2330DA. 12 February, 2004: 20h47. Mopane Bushveld (Savanna Biome).

Whilst monitoring the activity of frogs and recording their advertisement calls at Tsonga Kraal Dam in the Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, a Herald Snake *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* was observed feeding on a Mottled Shovel-nosed Frog *Hemisus marmoratus*. The snake had hold of the frog across its body for a while, then positioned it and swallowed it head-first. Duration of the ingestion process was not noted as the "attack and grab" were not seen. On completion of ingestion, the snake moved into dense scrub and disappeared.

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ELAPIDAE

Naja nigricollis woodi Pringle, 1955
Black Spitting Cobra

SCAVENGING

Little is known about foraging behaviour in southern African snakes. Since studies on this topic are scarce, opportunistic recordings may be valuable to help understanding the biology of these species. On 17 September 1004, 11h30, I found a Black Spitting Cobra (*Naja nigricollis woodi*) partially swallowing a road-killed Sand Snake (*Psammophis trinasalis*). This observation was made on the southern bank of the Orange River in the Vioolsdrif area, on the gravel road that runs along the river (28°42'07.4"S, 17°31'54.3"E, altitude 166 m [WGS84]).

When the snake was disturbed it regurgitated the roadkill and escaped. Based on the dehydrated appearance and extremely bad smell, the *P. trinasalis* appeared to have been killed some time before, perhaps 24 hours or more previously.

While *N. n. woodi* is known to prey on snakes, this appears to be the first record of scavenging in this species.

Acknowledgement
I would like to thank Andrew Turner for identifying the road-killed snake, interpreting the state that it was in, and reviewing an earlier draft of this note.

Submitted by
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GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

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.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **Scientific name**; **Common name** (for sources, see Natural History Notes); **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); **Comments** (including data on the size, colour and taxonomic characters, eg. Scalation, webbing, especially for taxonomically problematic taxa; and nearest published locality record (s) in km; references to be quoted in the text). **Submitted by**: **NAME**, Address.

Records submitted should be based on specimens deposited in a recognised collection. New South African province names must be used.

Notes submitted in an incorrect format or style will be returned to the authors.

AMPHIBIA: ANURA

RANIDAE
Hildebrandtia ornata (Peters, 1878)
Southern Ornate Frog

On 29 November 2004 at 22h00 two adult calling male *Hildebrandtia ornata* (PEM A7513-14) were collected whilst calling in the flooded margins of Nyala Pan, Phinda Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (27°50'20.1"S, 32°18'48.9"E; 2732CD). The pan had recently flooded after heavy rain. Other amphibians calling at the site included: *Ptychadena anchietae, Ptychadena mossambica, Phyrnomantis bifasciatus, Hemisus marmoratus, Cacosternum boettgeri, Afrixalus aureus, Leptopelis mossambicus, Kassina senegalensis, Tomopterna cryptotis, Tomopterna krugerensis, Chiromantis xerampelina,* and *Bufo fenoulheti.*

The southern limit of the Southern Ornate Frog was Mkhuze Game Reserve (2732CB), northern KwaZulu-Natal, based on a single tadpole record from Mboneni Pan (Lambiris, A., 1989, A Review of the Amphibians of Natal, *Lammergeyer* **39**: 1-210). The current record is more satisfactorily vouchered by adult frogs and extends the species' range southwards to the adjacent quarter-degree grid-square.

We acknowledge the assistance of CC Africa trainee rangers during the frog survey.

Submitted by
W. R. BRANCH, Department of Herpetology, Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa, and **A. G. KILPIN**, Phinda Private Game Reserve, Private Bag 6001, Hluhluwe, 3960, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

HYPEROLIIDAE
Hyperolius pusillus (Cope, 1862)
Water Lily Frog

South Africa, Limpopo Province, Hans Merensky Nature Reserve; 2330DA.

A healthy population consisting of at least 50 calling males has been recorded at the Tsonga Kraal Dam in the Hans Merensky Nature Reserve, in Mopane Bushveld (Savanna Biome), in February, March and December 2003, and January through December 2004.

Other populations occur elsewhere at suitable sites within the reserve. A specimen has been lodged in the private collection of L. Minter, and several others investigated as part of a study of the calls of South African frogs.

This distribution record was inadvertently omitted from the South African Frog Atlas Project (see Alexander 2004).

Reference

ALEXANDER, G.J. 2004. *Hyperolius pusillus* (Cope, 1862). Pp. 146-147 in Minter, L. R., M. Burger, J.A. Harrison, H.H. Braack, P.J. Bishop, and D. Kloepfer, eds. *Atlas and Red Data Book of the Frogs of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.* SI/MAB Series No. 9. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Submitted by
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REPTILIA : SAURIA

GEKKONIDAE
Lygodactylus chobiensis FitzSimons, 1935
Chobe Dwarf Gecko

Zimbabwe, Matobo District, Matobo National Park (Whovi Wild Area), Mpopoma Dam (2028CB); 20°33'S, 28° 23'E; alt. ca. 1250 m; 12-20 December 2003; C. Summers; Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe NMZB 17462.

This specimen is an adult male measuring 37+24 mm (tail truncated), with an entire mental, nostril pierced between two nasals and the first labial, tail with 8 dorsal scales per verticil and single subcaudals, 3 per verticil. The gular region is uniform black. A tail-less female taken at the same time will be deposited in the Matobo Na-

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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.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **Scientific name**; **Common name** (for sources, see Natural History Notes); **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); **Comments** (including data on the size, colour and taxonomic characters, eg. Scalation, webbing, especially for taxonomically problematic taxa; and nearest published locality record (s) in km; references to be quoted in the text). **Submitted by**: **NAME**, Address.

Records submitted should be based on specimens deposited in a recognised collection. New South African province names must be used.

Notes submitted in an incorrect format or style will be returned to the authors.

AMPHIBIA: ANURA

RANIDAE
Hildebrandtia ornata (Peters, 1878)
Southern Ornate Frog

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Submitted by
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REPTILIA : SAURIA

GEKKONIDAE
Lygodactylus chobiensis FitzSimons, 1935
Chobe Dwarf Gecko

Zimbabwe, Matobo District, Matobo National Park (Whovi Wild Area), Mpopoma Dam (2028CB); 20°33'S, 28° 23'E; alt. ca. 1250 m; 12-20 December 2003; C. Summers; Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe NMZB 17462.

This specimen is an adult male measuring 37+24 mm (tail truncated), with an entire mental, nostril pierced between two nasals and the first labial, tail with 8 dorsal scales per verticil and single subcaudals, 3 per verticil. The gular region is uniform black. A tail-less female taken at the same time will be deposited in the Matobo Na-

tional Park museum at Maleme Rest Camp.

This new locality represents a southern range extension for the species of nearly 200 km, as the previous Zimbabwean records lie within the Zambezi catchment area, extending into the north of Hwange District and the Midlands as far south as Kwekwe. This gecko has presumably been accidentally introduced to the Mpopoma camp site by tourists arriving from Victoria Falls or the Hwange National Park, where the species is common on buildings. At Mpopoma Dam it is sympatric with *L. stevensoni* (which is common on ablution blocks throughout the park) and *L. capensis* (probably introduced by visitors from Bulawayo). Other sympatric arboreal or rupicolous geckos which were recorded there are *Pachydactylus turneri, P. tigrinus, Afroedura transvaalica, Homopholis wahlbergii, Hemidactylus mabouia* (probably also introduced from Bulawayo) and *H. tasmani.*

Submitted by
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CHAMAELEONIDAE
Chamaeleo namaquensis Smith, 1831
Namaqua Chameleon

South Africa, Western Cape Province, Tierberg, (Botterkreel 3322AB), 33° 09'53.7"S 22°15'59.2"E, alt. 761m; 11 March 2003.

Chamaeleo namaquensis occurs in western karroid areas of southern Africa including the Namib Desert from southern Angola through to South Africa, succulent karoo in the winter rainfall area of Namaqualand, and the Nama karoo biome of Namibia and South Africa (Branch 1998). This record represents a range extension over the southern Karoo Plain. It has previously been collected in the Calvinia District (3120CB; Branch, 1990), as far south as Fraserburg (3121DC; Branch, pers. comm.), also in the flats around the Karoo National Park near Beaufort West (3222BC), approximately 100km to the north (Branch & Braack, 1989). The southern most record of this species (SAMZR01167) is in the Breede Valley (from the Worcester Division; 3319CA), 275 km further to the West. The Tierberg specimen was a juvenile with a SVL of 4 cm. This species has also been noted at this locality on a list of reptiles found at the Tierberg Karoo Research Centre (Milton et al., 1992).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Bill Branch (Port Elizabeth Museum) for identifying this specimen, Denise Hamerton (South African Museum) for access to museum specimens, and thanks to Sue Milton and Richard Dean for providing access to the Tierberg Karoo Research Centre.

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Submitted by
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SCINCIDAE
Typhlacontias rohani Angel, 1923
Kalahari Burrowing Skink

Zimbabwe, Matobo District, Driefontein Farm (2028CB); 20°34'S, 28°20'E; alt. ca.1300 m; 26-30 November 2003; M. Phiri; Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, NMZB 17446.

This subadult specimen measures 60 + 32 mm. Midbody scale rows 18; ventrals 131; subcaudals 71; five supralabials, the second entering the orbit, other head shields typical.

This specimen represents a southern range extension of ca. 100 km from Maraposa on the Victoria Falls road (Haacke, 1997, *Bonn. zool. Beitr.* **47**: 139-163). Driefontein Farm adjoins the western boundary of the Matobo National Park (Whovi Wild Area) west of Mpopoma Dam, and there must be an extensive relict pocket of Kalahari sand in this area, i.e. south of the watershed between the Zambezi and Limpopo catchments. Small pockets occur in the suburbs of Bulawayo, but the only Kalahari fossorial reptile recorded there is the melanistic phase of *Acontias occidentalis* (Broadley & Greer, 1969. *Arnoldia Rhod.* **4** (26): 1-29). It is interesting to note that a specimen of *A. occidentalis* ploughed up at the same time as the *Typhlacontias* represents the olive green, white-bellied, *broadleyi* phase, which is normally found on granite and schist substrates and is the only phase recorded from the Matobo National Park.

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Varanidae
Varanus albigularis albigularis (Daudin, 1802)
Rock Monitor

South Africa, Western Cape, Oudtshoorn, 3322CA (33°35' 20.9" S 22° 12' 25.1"E at an altitude of 368m). According to Branch (1998:210) *Varanus albigularis* is absent from the Western Cape. On 30 April 2005 *Varanus albigularis* was documented having an extended distribution into the Western Cape. The first report of *V. albigularis* (Figure 1) presence was brought to the authors' attention on the mentioned date at the above locality. After the first report several other confirmed sightings were reported to the author, which ruled out the possibility of the species to be introduced as the locations reported were randomly distributed. According to De Jong (pers.comm., 2005) two specimens were removed earlier that month from human habitation. A fourth confirmed sighting was documented on 9 February 2005 of a road kill specimen (Figure 2) in Meiringspoort, 3322BC (33° 22' 20"S 22° 33' 20"E) (Cape Nature pers.comm., 2005).

The Oudtshoorn specimen (Figure 1) was a male with a snout ventral length of 500 mm and total length of 908 mm, and weighing 2.9 kg. Freshly shed skin was preserved in 75% ethanol for possible future DNA sequencing request (Sample No. EL023).

Acknowledgements
Special acknowledgement to my mentor Dr. Tony Phelps, and Ryno Bezuidenhout and Cape Nature.

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DE JONG, G. 2005. Pers.comm. Cango Wildlife Ranch. Oudtshoorn.
CAPE NATURE. 2005. Pers.comm. Swartberg Reserve. Oudtshoorn.

Submitted by:
JOHANNES ELS,P.O.Box 1767, Oudtshoorn, 6620, South Africa.

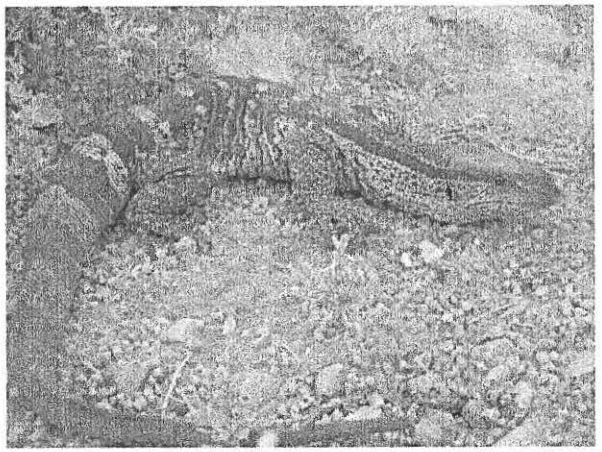

Figure 1.

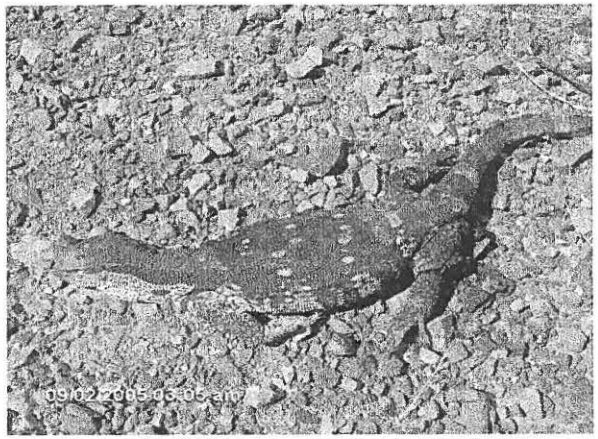

Figure 2.

REPTILIA : SERPENTES

ATRACTASPIDIDAE
Amblyodipsas ventrimaculata (Roux, 1907)
Kalahari Purple-glossed Snake

Zimbabwe, Matobo District, Driefontein Farm (2028 CB); 20°34'S: 28°20'E; alt. ca. 1300 m; 26 to 30 November 2003; M. Phiri; Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe NMZB 17450.

This specimen is a subadult female measuring 280 + 23 mm. Supralabials five, the second and third entering the orbit, the latter narrowly separated from the parietal

by the postocular [as in the synonym *A. v. websteri* (FitzSimons & Brain, 1958, *Occ. Pap. natn. Mus. S. Rhod.* **22B**: 202-203)], infralabials 5, the first three in contact with the anterior sublinguals, the third separated from its fellow; midbody scale rows 15, ventrals 192, anal divided, subcaudals 21, supracaudals reduce from six rows to four at the level of 10 subcaudals from the tip. Black vertebral stripe three scales wide, extending on to the parietals and petering out on the frontal, venter uniform cream. Such a narrow vertebral stripe has only previously been recorded in specimens from Namibia (Windhoek and Caprivi). Associated fossorial snakes ploughed up at the same time were *Atractaspis bibronii* (2), *Amblyodipsas p. polylepis* and *Aparallactus capensis* (2).

This specimen represents a southeastern range extension of 110 km from Sawmills siding (Broadley, 1971, *Occ. Pap. natn. Mus. Rhod.* **B4** (33): 629-697). Driefontein Farm adjoins the western boundary of the Matobo National Park (Whovi Wild Area) west of Mpopoma Dam and there must be an extensive relict pocket of Kalahari sand in this area, i.e. south of the watershed between the Zambezi and Limpopo catchments. It is anticipated that some amphisbaenians will eventually be recorded here, especially *Zygaspis quadrifrons,* which appears to be the principal prey of *A. ventrimaculata*, although *Typhlacontias rohani* is also taken.

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COLUBRIDAE
Philothamnus semivariegatus (A. Smith, 1840)
Spotted Bush Snake

South Africa, Northern Cape Province; Olifantshoek; 27°54'03.5"S, 22°37'56.3"E (WGS-84). 6 January 2004. Not collected.

One specimen was observed and photographed when it was actively moving around in a small rock formation at 13h00. The formation was located in a relatively narrow valley just north of Olifantshoek, and was overshadowed by a tree. The closest known locality for this species is in Namaqualand, at least 500 km southwest (Branch, 1998, *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers).

Although the habitat near Olifantshoek appears suitable for *P. semivariegatus* (A. Turner, *pers. comm.*), it is possible that this specimen was transported here accidentally. The fact that the species is very alert, agile and has good eyesight does not make this latter possibility likely.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank Ernst Baard, Andrew Turner, and Atherton de Villiers for

confirmation of the species name.

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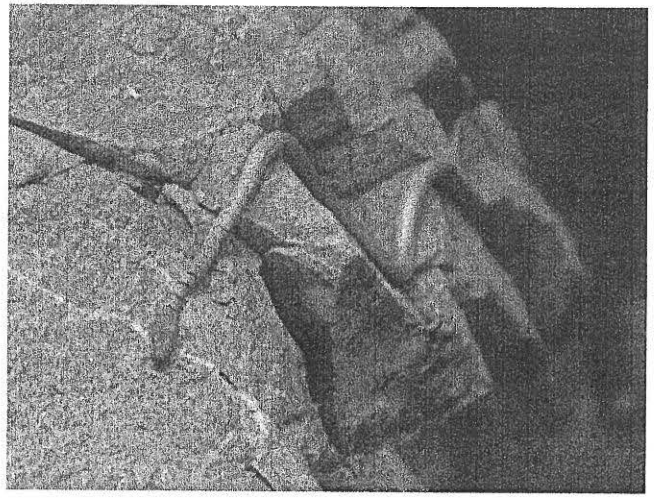

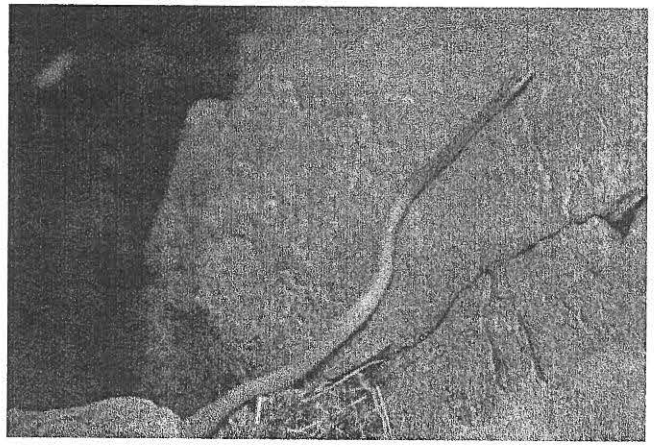

8th HAA Symposium
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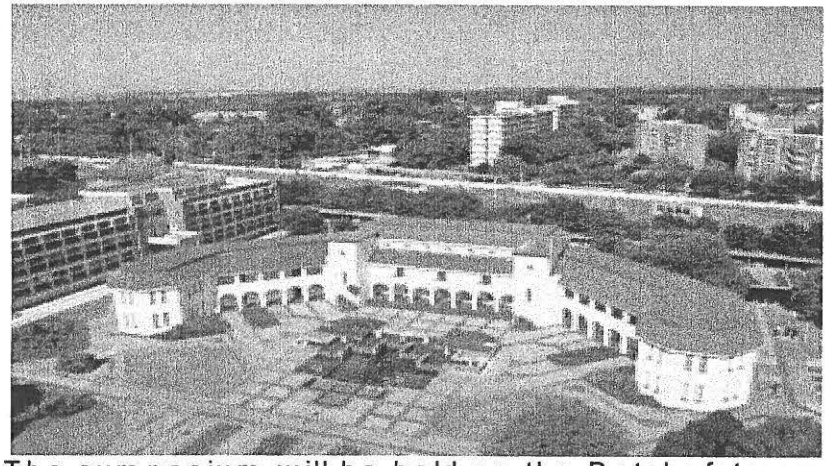

The symposium will be held on the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University and will be organized by Louis du Preez (drklhdp@puk.ac.za and Ché Weldon (drkcw@puk.ac.za).
Check the HAA website for updates (http://www.wits.ac.za/haa/2006conf.htm)

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