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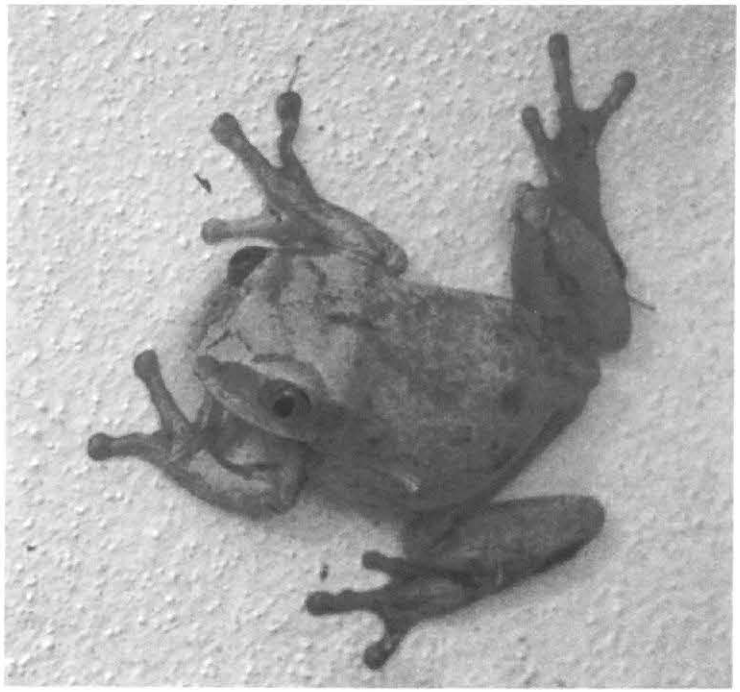

Number 39 January 2006

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 *African Herp News*, the Newsletter (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 or 7.0, or Windows XP 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 that the author's name and full Newsletter reference are given.

Cover Photo: Forest Tree Frog, *Leptopelis natalensis* (Smith, 1849)
(Shirley Anne Lambiris)

EDITORIAL

We must apologise for the delay in the appearance of this issue of the Newsletter, due to an array of unforeseen circumstances—hopefully these will not recur in future.

Members of the Association are reminded of two important events: firstly, election of a new Committee (ballot papers are enclosed for members living in Africa), and secondly, the 8th H.A.A. Symposium, to be held at Potchefstroom from the 24th to 27th November 2006 (see the enclosed announcement).

Angelo Lambiris,
Interim Editor

AVIAN PREDATION OF THE COMMON PLATANNA, *XENOPUS LAEVIS*

Grzegorz Kopij

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The Common Platanna, *Xenopus laevis*, is a widespread and common amphibian species in South Africa. Unlike other frogs, they are almost totally aquatic, virtually unable to jump, although they can crawl from one water body to another provided the terrain is moist enough to prevent them from desiccating. It inhabits stagnant pools in grasslands of arid and semi-arid regions, utilizing a variety of unique adaptations to exploit their environments. It may, for example, thrive even in very polluted sewage ponds (Passmore & Carruthers 1995). This species is also widespread and common throughout Lesotho (Ambrose 2004). Roma Valley (29° 28'S; 27° 44'E; 1650 metres a. s. l.) is an area within the lowlands of this country, where the Common Platanna is abundant. It is often encountered there in polluted dams, streams and oxidation ponds. There are several such oxidation dams on the campus of the National University of Lesotho located in this valley, where fairly large and stable population of the common platanna thrives (Ambrose 2001, 2004). I have conducted a census studies on water birds associated with these dams. Over 70 such surveys were conducted in each month from September 1998 through February 2002. In the course of these surveys, avian predation on the common platanna has been recorded on several occasions:

1. Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

On 29.05.1999, two adult birds, while swimming on water surface, caught adult platannas. Reed Cormorants are regular visitors to the NUL campus. A small breeding colony was situated c.1 km E of the campus (Kopij 2001).

2. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Probably the same immature bird preyed upon adult platannas on 17.04.1999; 31.08.2000; 03.09.2000; 29.09.2000; 14.11.2000. It preyed upon the platannas while standing on the dam's bank. It seems that the Common Platanna constituted staple food of this immature individual, which remained around the dams for almost two years.

3. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

A bird capturing platanna was recorded on 23.05.1999 and 31.08.2000. It preyed upon the platannas while standing in a reed island. It is does not breed on the NUL campus; but it is a fairly regular visitor to these dams (Kopij 2001).

4. Giant Kingfisher *Ceryle maxima*

On 08.04.1998 a bird was observed at dusk to plunge from the electric wire and to catch an adult platanna. The bird transported the prey to a woody pole and batted it against the wood (Ambrose & Maphisa 1999). On 01.05.2001 a male was recorded capturing an adult platanna. The Giant Kingfisher visited dams only occasionally (Ambrose & Maphisa 1999, Kopij 2001).

5. Hamerkop *Scopus umbetta*.

Observed on several occasions while preying upon the Common Platanna. It preyed upon them while walking along the dam's shore. Three-four nests occupied by Hamerkops were located in weeping willows growing around an oxidation pond (Kopij 2001).

The Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, and White-breasted Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax lucidus*, probably also preyed upon the Common Platanna, but this was not evidenced.

In two heronries located in small farm dams, i.e. Wolwekop (29° 40'S, 26° 45'E), and Geluk (29° 26'S, 26° 32'E), Dewetsdorp district, Free State, South Africa, the Common Platanna constituted an important diet of Reed Cormorant chicks (36% of dry biomass consumed) (Kopij 1996); it was recorded in the diet of African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* chicks (4.5% of dry biomass consumed) (Kopij et al. 1996); 18.7% of dry biomass consumed by African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* chicks (Kopij 1997) and 18.2% of dry biomass consumed by White-breasted Cormorant chicks (Kopij 1998). It is interesting to point out that in these two heronries and elsewhere the Common Platanna has not been recorded in the diet of the Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, although other amphibian species, such as *Rana angolensis*, *Cacosternum boettgeri* and other were often preyed upon (Kopij 1999, 2003, 2005).

The closely related Tropical Platanna *Xenopus muelleri* has also been recorded as a avian prey. In Mkuzi Game Reserve, KwaZulu/Natal, Haagner & Haagner (1997) observed the Woolly Necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* and the Hamerkop preying upon this species.

It is important to mention that while Common Platannas are not known to be toxic to any animal, they possess chemical defenses which give protection against both predators and diseases. They also generate organic compounds called magainins which have powerful antibiotic, antifungal, antiparasitic, and antiviral actions. The mildly fishy smell they exude is supposed to repel many vertebrate predators.

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THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REPTILE CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT AND ITS VIRTUAL MUSEUM

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SARCA Project Coordinator, Avian Demography Unit, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701

The southern African Reptile conservation Assessment (SARCA) was launched in May 2005 and will run until early 2009. Its primary aim is to carry out and publish a comprehensive conservation assessment for all 350+ species in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. The project receives funding and logistical support from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and is coordinated from the Avian Demography Unit (ADU) in Cape Town. Needless to say, it is the members of HAA who will actually drive this project forward with their participation, their expertise and their passion for reptiles.

A major step in the conservation assessment process is the compilation of a database of distribution records which includes as many old and new data as we can possibly get. Such a database will provide critical information for the application of internationally accepted assessment criteria, drawn up by IUCN. This will lead to objective classifications of species as Threatened (i.e., Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable), or Near Threatened, or of Least Concern, or Data Deficient. When such classifications are published for all species, together with distribution maps, conservation authorities will be equipped to include reptiles in conservation plans for the region, something which does not happen at present.

SARCA has made good progress in acquiring data from those vital repositories, the museums. In addition, a major effort is underway to capture records from the published literature, as well as the collections and databases of conservation agencies and private individuals. This is one important way in which HAA members can contribute to SARCA. Many of you will have accumulated hundreds of field records in notebooks or spreadsheets, and these can help to swell the SARCA database. If you wish to contribute your records, please get in touch with Marius Burger, the Project Herpetologist, on sungazer@iafrica.com. Marius will liaise with you on the best way to make your data available to SARCA.

Marius is presently leading a series of field surveys which will continue throughout the summer season. These surveys specifically target high-priority areas identified by a gap analysis carried out by Barend Erasmus and Brian Maritz at Wits University. By far the majority of the top 100 high-priority grid cells lie in the Northern Cape, so that is the province that is receiving most attention this summer. Marius makes use of volunteers to help him in the field, so that is another opportu-

nity to assist the SARCA cause. If you are able-bodied and keen, get in touch with Marius at the same email address and he will place you on the long waiting list of people eager to participate!

There is a third way in which you can become a SARCA participant and contribute valuable data to the SARCA database. What's more, it's easy and fun. If you go to the SARCA website (www.saherps.net) you will find a link to the "virtual museum". The SARCA virtual museum is the brainchild of Professor Graham Alexander at Wits, editor of the HAA journal, and has been designed and implemented by René Navarro, IT Manager in the ADU. A virtual museum collection is one that exists in cyberspace, not in bottles on a shelf. You cannot touch or dissect the specimens, but neither do they lose their colour over time! And, of course, most of the specimens in the virtual museum are still alive and kicking in the wild. Furthermore, because it is an online collection in cyberspace, it is available to everyone who is connected to the internet, and thereby becomes a powerful educational and research tool.

The virtual museum comprises a collection of photographic records collected at any time, in any place, by anybody. Digital photos are emailed to me at sarca@adu.uct.ac.za, together with a small amount of supporting information. (This information and its format are vitally important. Please get full details on the project website before you start.) I process the record and René uploads it into the SARCA database where it becomes available to everyone, online. A panel of herpetologists, scattered around the country, then identifies the photographed species, online, and the ID becomes available to the observer through the virtual museum.

The system is working very well. The SARCA virtual museum has accumulated 700 records since June 2005. Of these, 480 have had their IDs confirmed and the balance are still in the process of being identified by at least two members of the panel. A total of 139 species have been positively identified so far, and the number of observers presently stands at 148. The top 10 species in the virtual museum, in terms of numbers of records, are:

1	*Agama atra*	29
2	*Geochelone pardalis*	21
3	*Chersina angulata*	18
4	*Lygodactylus capensis*	14
5	*Acanthocercus atricollis*	13
6	*Trachylepis margaritifer*	11
7	*Pachydactylus geitje*	11
8	*Bitis arietans*	10
9	*Trachylepis capensis*	10
10	*Hemidactylus mabouia/mercatorius*	9

It is not only common species that find their way into the virtual museum: amongst the special records obtained is the world's second record of *Scelotes montispectus* from Blaauwberg Conservation Area, near Cape Town.

I encourage all HAA members to become active participants in SARCA. I have outlined three ways in which you can make a contribution. If you're rich, you can also send money! – we still need to raise a few hundred thousand to meet the project's budget. Please be sure to visit the website (www.saherps.net) to get all the details before you begin submitting records to the virtual museum.

SARCA will transform what we know about our reptile fauna and how we go about conserving it. Now is the time to play your part in this exciting and important process.

FORAGING ACTIVITY, DIET, HABITAT AND DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE NATAL BLACK SNAKE, *MACRELAPS MICROLEPIDOTUS*

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INTRODUCTION

The Natal Black Snake, *Macrelaps microlepidotus* Günther, 1860, is a medium-sized snake that occurs from East London and Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape through KwaZulu-Natal as far north as northern Zululand, and possibly into southern Mozambique. (Broadley, 1990; Branch, 1998; Bourquin, 2004). This uniformly black snake superficially resembles the Purple-glossed Snakes, but can be differentiated from the latter by the single subcaudal scales (*Amblyodipsas* spp. have paired subcaudals).

Fifteen *Macrelaps microlepidotus* have been recorded from Southport, South Coast, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa (3030CB & 3030DA), between 30° 40'S - 30°41'S and 30°29' - 30°31'E.

RECORDS AND OBSERVATIONS

WRS (A) R-086 - December 1990; very large snake of approximately 107cm total length discovered foraging in open area in front of holiday home at 06h00; made no attempt to bite when handled; this large snake was photographed and released.

WRS (A) R-087 - 1990; juvenile snake recorded from the area; no further information available.

WRS (A) R-088 – 1991; juvenile snake was found sheltering inside of a rotting log in the Bendigo Nature Reserve.

WRS (A) R-089 – 1991; medium-sized snake caught in the early morning (06h00 – 07h00) foraging in the fallen debris and accumulated leaf litter of a palm thicket.

WRS (A) R-090 – 1991; sub-adult snake collected on Berea Road in late evening during rainy weather (22h00 – 23h00).

WRS (A) R-091 – 1991; a local labourer who knew that I collected snakes brought a specimen to the holiday home late in the evening; found on the road and he had it dangling from the end of a large branch; wet and rainy conditions.

WRS (A) R-092 – 1991; small adult snake found in the area during clearing operations whilst raking leaves and clearing bush.

WRS (A) R-093 – 1991; large adult road-killed snake found near the upper end of the nursery; had been raining during this period.

WRS (A) R-094 – 1991; sub-adult snake found in the area; retained and held captive and then later donated to the Transvaal Snake Park.

WRS (A) R-105 – December 1991; female snake of approximately 80cm total length captured in the area; gravid with posterior half swollen and distinctive bulges present when held upright; donated to FitzSimons Snake Park in Durban.

WRS (A) R-106 – December 1991; male snake of approximately 70cm captured in the

area; donated to FitzSimons Snake Park in Durban; this snake was photographed.

WRS (A) R-129 – 14 April 1992; sub-adult snake found foraging on the property; weather conditions were cold and overcast; snake moved rapidly when disturbed.

WRS (A) R-131 – 17 April 1992; adult snake found dead on the road.

WRS (A) R-257 – November 1993; road-killed snake discovered on Berea Road during heavy rains.

WRS R-097 – 16 October 2001; male snake found active in Bendigo Nature Reserve at 08h50. The snake was foraging in some leaf litter and grass debris on the pathway; cloudy with occasional sun breaking through; temperature at ground level approximately 23°C; the snake measured s-v: 440mm +t: 90mm =TL: 530mm; made no attempt to bite when captured but struggled by spinning and swaying when held by the tail. A strong musky smell was evident from the cloacal region; this snake was photographed and later released.

WRS (A) R-094 ate a Cape Skink (*Trachylepis capensis*), two small Common River Frogs (*Afrana angolensis*) and five small weaner (fuzzy) mice (*Mus musculus*) during a single feeding session whilst held in captivity.

Yeadon (1997) reported on a 90cm Natal Black Snake that was feeding on the carcass of a Golden Mole and demonstrated scavenging behaviour in these snakes. Branch (*op. cit.*) records Rain Frogs (*Breviceps* spp.), small mammals, legless lizards and other snakes as forming part of this snakes' varied diet. It would appear that these snakes will eat almost any other vertebrate that they can swallow, whether it is alive or dead. It is interesting to note the activity patterns in these snakes, which varied from early morning sightings through to very late evening activity. At least three snakes were recorded actively moving about between 06h00 – 08h50, with an additional two snakes found on the road after 22h00 during rainy weather. The snakes that were handled never made any attempt to bite, although they were never restrained in a manner that would have forced them to bite in defence. A strong musk-like scent is produced by these snakes, cloacal glands, when handled. This may possibly act as a deterrent to predators.

Natal Black Snakes would appear to be common in suitable habitats and many specimens have been recorded from urban gardens. Their range of activity times, together with their varied diet, suggests that these snakes are suitably adapted to take advantage of many situations. The species should be monitored, however, due to the large-scale urban developments taking place along the coast of KwaZulu-Natal Province.

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NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA; SAURIA

GEKKONIDAE

Goggia lineata (Gray, 1838)
Striped Dwarf Leaf-toed Gecko

NEW NICHE

Goggia lineata is unique among other leaf-toed gecko species in that it is not strictly rupicolous. It has previously been reported amongst dead *Mesembryanthemum* bushes at Klipfontein (FitzSimons, 1938, cited in Branch *et al.*, 1995, *J. Herpetol. Assoc. Afr.* **44**(2): 33-54), in dead litter at the base of *Euphorbia* sp. in the Richtersveld National Park, in dead *Zygophyllum* sp. and under dead *Aloe romasissimus* and *A. erinacae* stems in the Sperrgebeit region, Namibia (Branch, 1994, *Herpetol. Nat. Hist.* **2**: 1-11), in dead *A. comptonii* stems (Branch and Bauer, 1995, *Herpetol. Nat. Hist* **3**: 47-89) and under *Acacia* bark in the Karoo National Park (Branch and Braack, 1989, *In*: Proceedings of the First H.A.A. Conference, Stellenbosch, W.R. Branch (ed). *J. Herpetol. Assoc. Afr.* **36**: 26-35) as well as under stones, boulders and strandline debris (Branch *et al.*, 1995, *J. Herpetol. Assoc. Afr.* **44**(2): 33-54).

On 23 September 2004 we stopped 47.7km north of Vanrhynsdorp to search for *Goggia lineata* in a rock outcrop adjacent to the Kliprand Road (31°22'48"S, 18° 53'08"E). We found the geckos in the stems of dead *Othonna* sp. (Asteraceae) (Figures 1 and 2). A live sample of the plant was collected and later identified by the National Botanical Institute (Figure 3). After these plants die, the stems and branches become hollow with multiple entrances. Dead plant material accumulates at intervals within the stems, leaving patches that are relatively cool and moist that the geckos appear to prefer.

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Fig. 1.

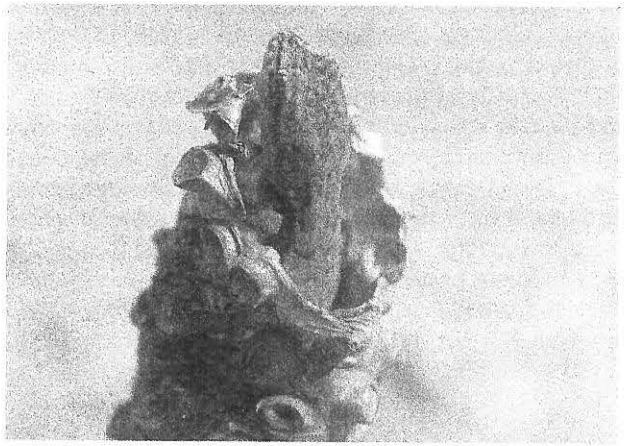

Fig. 2.

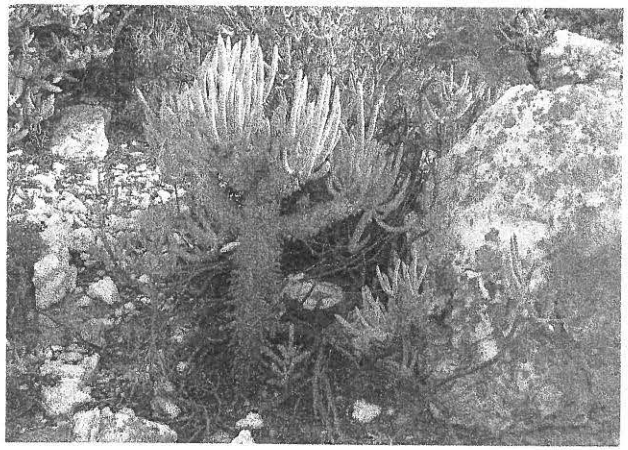

Fig. 3.

CHAMAELEONIDAE

Chamaeleo dilepis (Leach, 1818)
Common Flap-necked Chameleon

NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY

Chameleons are traditionally viewed as diurnally active lizards. The author has recorded two incidents of nocturnal activity whereby Flap-necked Chamaeleons were moving across the road. The following notes are provided:

Field reference number: WRS (A) R-869; 17 November 1998; R516 W/S3, BelaBela (Warmbaths) region, Limpopo Province, South Africa; 24°54'S; 27°40'E (2427DC – Rooiberg); a medium-sized chameleon, crossing over the tarred road, at 22h49; no moon visible; weather conditions warm and humid.

Field reference number: WRS R-061; 3 December 2000; R516W/S3, BelaBela (Warmbaths) region, Limpopo Province, South Africa; 24°54'S; 27°42'E (2427DC – Rooiberg); a young male of snout-vent length 100 mm, crossing the tarred road, at 18h40; first-quarter phase moon; weather warm.

A search in the popular and scientific literature did not uncover references to nocturnal activity in these chameleons. All other records of chameleon sightings at night by the author, of both Dwarf Chameleons (*Bradypodion* spp. and Flap-necked Chamaeleons, has shown them to be sleeping or resting on branches and reed stems, occasionally exposed towards the extremities of such plants. It is well known that chameleons are easy to locate by torchlight in the evenings, as they become a pale yellow colour, which stands out consciously in the beam of light.

It is debatable whether or not the above two records demonstrate nocturnal activity or if the chameleons were somehow disturbed from their nocturnal resting site. It is interesting that both chameleons were active during a dark phase evening (i.e. there was no bright moonlight) and purely coincidental that they were recorded from almost the same localities. Both sides of the road have thick bushveld vegetation and therefore more than adequate trees and bush that the chameleons could have sheltered in. Crossing over a vast expanse of tarmac seems like unusual behaviour.

The R516 refers to the road number and W/S3 has been allocated by the author in reference to West – Section 3.

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REPTILIA: SQUAMATA; SERPENTES

VIPERIDAE

Bitis arietans (Merrem, 1820)
Puff Adder

SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

During September, 2004, an ecological study of the puff adder, *Bitis arietans*, was initiated at the DeHoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape. This study is ongoing, and forms part of wider research which also included the southern adder, *B. armata* (see this volume).

At 08h30 on 22 October, an adult female puff adder, (SVL 720mm, field no. DPA02), was found on the side of a dirt road half concealed coiled beneath dead vegetation at 34°28'00"E, 20°26'24"E, altitude 54m. The snake was captured, and given a photo ID plus ventral scale clips, and released within ten minutes. At 10h00 on 30 October the female DPA02 was found within a metre of the first capture. This female was subsequently observed again at the following times and dates, all within ten metres of the place of origin: 16:30, 10 November; 07h00, 4 December; 18h50, 12 December.

A female, first described as immature, but probably subadult, (SVL 580 mm, field no. DPA03) was found in dune thicket at 18h00 on 25 October, at 34°27'00"S 20°26'06"E, altitude 23m. This female was recaptured within five metres of the site of origin at the following times and dates: 10h00, 30 October; 22h00, 12 November; 07h30, 3 December.

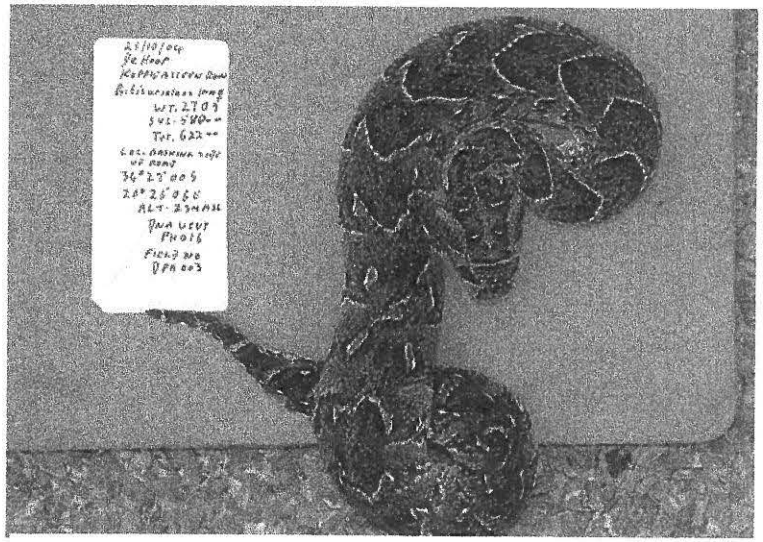

Fig. 1. *Bitis arietans* DPA03. Photo: Tony Phelps

Another female, (SVL 620mm, field no. DPA04), was also recorded on the same date as the previous snake, in fairly thick coastal fynbos, at 34°28'40"S, 20° 26'06"E, altitude 45m. This female was notable in that hardly any movement was recorded for subsequent recaptures at the following times and dates: 09h30, 29 October; 16h30, 4 November; 10h45, 8 November; 16:00, 11 November; 12h00, 13 November; 07h30, 5 December; 18h45, 10 December.

During this initial part of the research only one male from a total of fifteen was recaptured on more than one occasion. Interestingly, all the puff adders observed as actively moving were males, and it was assumed some of this must have been allied to mate-searching. As the research is ongoing it will be interesting to see if the females were actually situated in permanent refugia, or else in a temporary situation influenced by the mating period.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to CapeNature, and the staff at DeHoop Nature Reserve. Also my thanks to Ryno Bezuidenhout for his assistance in the field.

Submitted by

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Bitis armata (Smith, 1826)
Southern Adder

ARBOREAL BEHAVIOUR

Stout-bodied vipers, such as those found in the genus *Bitis*, are not usually noted for their arboreal behaviour. An ecological study of the southern adder, *Bitis armata*, was initiated at DeHoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape, during September, 2004. Of the first four snakes recorded, two were found in bushes in a mosaic of coastal fynbos at a height of 1.5 and 2 metres respectively. (Due to the vulnerable nature of the southern adder location details are not given here). Both were adult females, and one female was recaptured ten days later in another bush at a height of 1.8 metres; ten metres from the site of origin.

It was also noted that the tail was highly prehensile, and when manipulated with a snake hook each snake without exception would grip tightly with the tail to such an extent that the hook would have to be shaken, gently but firmly, to release the snake. This habit has not been observed with other dwarf adders in my experience, i.e. *B. cornuta, B. rubida*.

Other so called terrestrial vipers, such as *Echis* spp. *Vipera* spp. and *B. arietans,* often bask or lie in an elevated position when the ground is wet or cold, or even in a foraging or ambush situation (pers. obs). However, it appears that *B. armata* may well be specially adapted to at least a partial arboreal lifestyle. The research is ongoing.

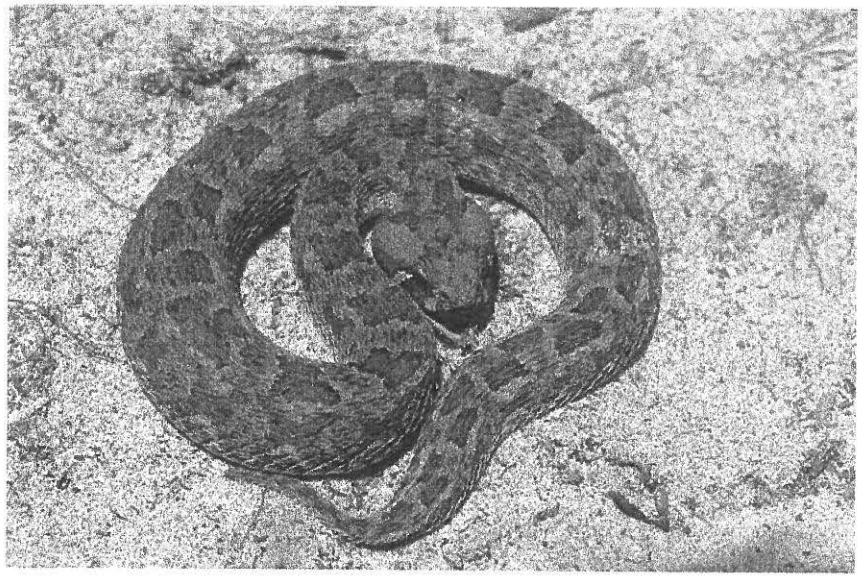

Fig. 1. Female *Bitis armata*. Photo: Tony Phelps

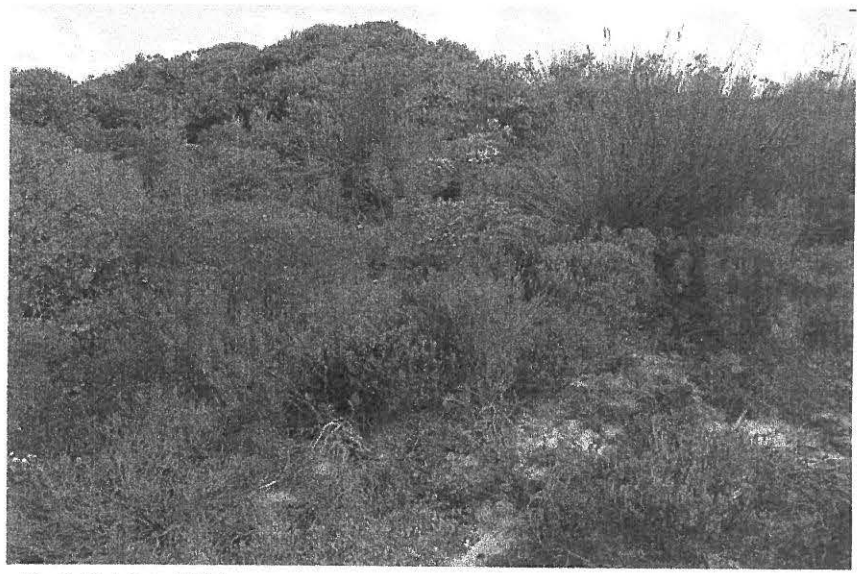

Fig. 2. Habitat of *Bitis armata* Photo: Tony Phelps

Acknowledgements

My thanks to CapeNature, and the staff at DeHoop Nature Reserve. Also to Ryno Bezuidenhout for his assistance in the field.

Submitted by

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GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

REPTILIA: SAURIA

GERRHOSAURIDAE

Cordylosaurus subtessellatus (A. Smith, 1844)
Dwarf Plated Lizard

South Africa: Augrabies Falls National Park; and additional localities in Namibia.

The Dwarf Plated Lizard is relatively common in Augrabies Falls National Park (AFNP; 28°35'S, 20°20'E), yet this locality is outside of its currently documented distribution. In September 2002 we captured and photographed a *C. subtessellatus* in AFNP. We then released it, later checking its reported distribution (as per Branch, 1998, *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*: 3rd ed., Struik, Cape Town) and realising it was outside of the documented range of the species.

Upon consulting the Transvaal Museum database, we found that although *C. subtessellatus* had been previously recorded in this locality, these observations had never been published. In fact, there were an additional six locality records *of C. subtessellatus* from outside of its currently recorded distribution. Here we add these records (Table 1), extending the currently recognised distribution of *C. subtessellatus* westwards throughout its range in Namibia. (TM is the Transvaal Museum voucher number.)

Table 1. Range extension localities of *Cordylosaurus subtessellatus*

Country	Locality	Grid	Lat (S)	Long (E)	TM
S. Africa	Augrabies Falls N.P.	2820CB	28°35'	20°20'	36759, 56193, 79847
Namibia	Etosha Game Reserve	1816DD	18°49'	16°56'	40056
Namibia	Etosha N.P., Halali	1916AB	19°01'	16°28'	56575
Namibia	Farm Uithoek 770	1917BC	19°19'	17°39'	45099
Namibia	Farm De Waal, (22)	2318BD	23°23'	18°48'	36384
Namibia	Farm Narudas, (268)	2718BD	27°24'	18°50'	3274

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REPTILIA: SERPENTES

COLUBRIDAE

Philothmanus hoplogaster (Günther, 1863)
Green Water Snake

South Africa, Western Cape Province, George District, Wilderness Heights on White's Road (3322DC). 25 August 2004. N.H.G. Jacobsen.

A male measuring 617 mm in total length (SVL = 412; T=205) was found on a warm sunny morning (10h00) crossing White's road on the seaward side of Wilderness Heights. It was captured, measured, photographed and released. Lepidosis and colour was very similar to that already recorded (FitzSimons, 1962, *Snakes of Southern Africa*; Broadley, 1983, *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*; Branch, 2003, *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*) being uniform green dorsally with bluish-green spots apically on the neck scales. Below greenish white with a yellowish tinge where the ventrals and dorsals meet. Interstitial skin black.

Lepidosis: Rostral broader than deep; internasals 2; prefrontals 2; frontal, parietals 2; nasals 2 (anterior and posterior to nostril); preocular 1; supraoculars 2); postoculars 2; temporals 1+1; upper labials 7-8, 4 and 5 entering orbit of eye. Lower labials 9, first pair in contact behind mental; 1-5 in contact with first sublingual. Ventrals 155; anal scale divided; subcaudals 101, paired.

FitzSimons (1962) in his monumental work *Snakes of Southern Africa*, listed two specimens, one a literature record (Boulenger 1910, *Ann. S. Afr. Mus.* **5**: 455-

538) from Knysna (3423AA) and the other from Avontuur (3323CA/CC), but exhibited doubt concerning its presence at Knysna. Subsequent works (Broadley, 1983, *op. cit.*; Branch 1998, *op. cit.*) have continued to express doubt concerning this locality as the snake appears not to have been recorded subsequent to these early collections. According to FitzSimons (*op. cit.*) the Avontuur specimen was housed in the Northern Flagship Museum (formerly the Transvaal Museum) but the location of the Knysna specimen was not stated, although it might be housed in the Southern Flagship Museum (formerly the South African Museum) in Cape Town, but he did not examine the specimen.

This record reaffirms the presence of this species in the Western Cape Province and extends the known range by 45 km to the west. It is the second individual observed on the south side of the ridge above Wilderness. The vegetation in the immediate vicinity has been opened up for farming but has in recent times been left fallow, leaving a mosaic of thicket, forested ravines and open grassy slopes, with scattered clumps of trees and shrubs, and appears to be some distance from water.

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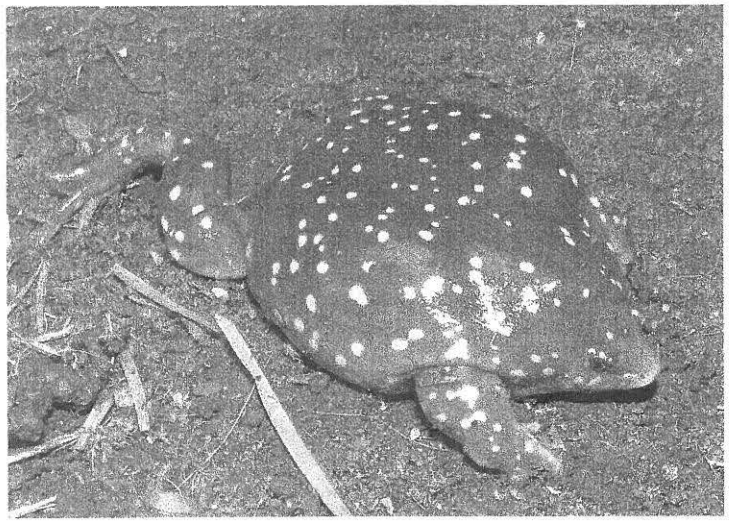

Spotted Shovel-Snout Frog, *Hemisus guttatus*. Photo: Angelo Lambiris

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Contributions (in Word 6.0, 7.0 or Windows XP) submitted in an incorrect format or style will be returned to the authors.

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African Herp News publishes longer contributions of general interest that would not be presented as either Natural History Notes or Geographical Distributions.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **TITLE** (capitals, bold, centred); **Author(s)**[1,2] (bold, centred); Author's address(es) (use superscripts with authors' names and addresses if more than one author); **HEADINGS** (bold, centred) and **SUBHEADINGS** (bold, aligned left) as required; **REFERENCES**, following the formats given below:

BRANCH, W.R., 1998: *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*. Third edition. Struik, Cape Town.

BROADLEY, D.G. 1994: The genus *Scelotes* Fitzinger (Reptilia: Scincidae) in Mozambique, Swaziland and Natal, South Africa. *Ann. Natal Mus*, **35**: 237-259.

COOK, C.L., & MINTER, L.R., 2004: *Pyxicephalus adspersus* Peters, 1854. pp. 303-305, *in* Minter, L.R., Burger, M., Harrison, J.A., Braack, H.H., Bishop, P.J., and Kloepfer, D. (eds.), *Atlas and Red Data Book of the Frogs of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. SI/MAB Series #9. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

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** (including author citation); **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.

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Photographs and figuresshould be submitted as separate JPEG files, and not embedded in the text. The name of the photographer should be given, if not the author or senior author of the article.

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