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Newsletter of the Herpetological Association of Africa

Number 47 **MARCH 2009**

HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

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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 in Word 7.0 or Windows XP format.

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

COVER PHOTO *Chamaeleo calyptratus* Duméril, 1851.
Photo: Angelo Lambiris

EDITORIAL

This issue of *African Herp News* sees the introduction of colour on the front cover for the first time. Whether or not to have colour in the pages of the Newsletter was discussed at the General Meeting held last November, and it was felt that the costs are, at present, too high—about R900 per page for a 300 copy print run. However, colour photos can be reproduced in the pdf version of the Newsletter at no cost to contributors.

The 9th H.A.A.Conference, held at Sterkfontein Dam, was a resounding success and speaks well for the vigour of the Association, and the high standards of herpetology in Africa.

Members are urged to vote on the two matters indicated below, and also to submit nominations for the new H.A.A. Committee as soon as possible.

Angelo Lambiris,
Editor

Amendment to the Constitution

At the 2006 and 2008 HAA Symposia it was agreed that overseas members of the HAA should have voting rights. It is therefore requested that all African members of the Association vote on the following amendment to the HAA Constitution:

Paragraph 12: opening sentence to change from:

"Only African Honorary Members, African Life Members, and African Ordinary Members over the age of 18 years and in good standing have voting rights."

to:

"Only Honorary Members, African Life Members, and African Ordinary Members over the age of 18 years and in good standing have voting rights."

Votes to be sent to Mike Bates by post (Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa) or e-mail (herp@nasmus.co.za) no later than 31 May 2009.

African Journal of Herpetology

If the HAA journal (*African Journal of Herpetology*) was available to members in pdf format as well as a printed version, would you like:

A – both printed and pdf versions
B – printed version only
C – pdf version only
D – neither printed nor pdf versions

Please send your response to Dr. John Measey at measey@sanbi.org

African Herp News No. 47, pp. 2—20

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HERPETOFAUNA OF THE PASSENDRO AREA, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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INTRODUCTION

A survey of the herpetofauna of the Passendro, Ndassima and Ao areas north of Bambari in the Central African Republic (CAR) was commissioned as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment of proposed mining developments in these areas. This was undertaken under the auspices of environmental consultants ECOSUN cc and Golder France. The survey was conducted over a period of four weeks and divided into equal parts between the wet and dry seasons.

STUDY AREA

The study area comprised undulating, hilly country in the vicinity of the villages of Passendro (6°13'22"N, 20°42'55.8"E), Ndassima (6°6'30.66"N, 20°44'58.7"E) and the Aurafrique (Axmin) Base Camp (6°9'35.08"N, 20°47'58.02"E),. The closest localities listed by Chirio & Ineich (2006) are Bambari, approximately 60-80 km south of the study area and Seko, a similar distance to the east.

Exposed sheets of laterite dominate the lower slopes and valleys but are broken up along the upper slopes and on the crests of hills. Several rivers and streams subdivide the area. These are mostly perennial and flow within distinct channels, with banks overgrown by trees and grass, the latter especially along floodplains, dominated by tall *Hyparrhenia* spp. The largest river is the Ngoumbourou River, which flanks the area in the east, with several smaller streams traversing the area, of which the most important are the Baketa and Nguetepe. Soils varied in depth according to the underlying bedrock and tended to be mostly clayey and often gravelly with laterite nodules which baked extremely hard during the dry season.

The area falls within the southern Sudanese savanna and Congo-Guinean mesic savanna bioclimatic regions (Chirio & Ineich, 2006), also referred to as Guineo-Sudanian Savanna (White, 1963), incorporating three vegetation communities:

1. Gallery Forest 10–15 m tall with species such as *Myrianthus holstii*, *Albizia gummifera* and a *Cordia* sp. present along the rivers, streams and drainage lines, including emergent trees with buttress roots such as *Ceiba pentandra* growing 20–30 m high.

The undergrowth is dominated in more open parts by *Afromomum* spp. and Maranthaceae. Palms such as *Raphia* sp. and others are common along streams. The forest floor is covered in leaf litter with young trees, lianas, climbers and creepers in more open areas. Within the Gallery Forest humidity is high due to lack of air movement.

2. Mixed Dry Forest covers most of the area forming an open to almost closed canopy woodland 6–10 m tall comprised of mixed species including *Daniella oliveri*, *Parkeria biglobosa*, *Annona senegalensis*, *Anogeissus leiocarpus*, *Vitex* spp., *Terminalia* spp., *Encephalartus septemtrionalis* and many others. Tall grasses, mostly *Hyparrhenia* spp., dominate the field layer, reaching 3 m in height during the rainy season and becoming almost impenetrable at this time except along footpaths. Stingless bees, *Trigona* sp., are extremely abundant here during the dry season, affecting collecting activities amongst the trees. They were less insistent in more exposed sites.

3. Grassland occurs mostly on shallow soils on laterite caps. Dominant grasses are *Brachyachne* sp., *Loudetia simplex*, *Ctenium* sp. and *Hyparrhenia* spp., often together with woody shrubs and succulents such as *Combretum nigricans*, *Euphorbia darbadensis* and *Aloe schweinfurthii* among others in deeper soils.

The climate is warm to hot with high levels of humidity. Annual rainfall increases from north to south across CAR, from approximately 1800 mm in the Oubangui River valley to about 200 mm in the semi-arid north (Carron Brown in litt. 11 November 2008). It is generally recognised that the wet season lasts from June to October in CAR, with heavy storms occurring almost daily. The heaviest rainfall takes place during August and September. The dry season arrives with the harmattan (a dry north-east trade wind) and is centred on the November to May period.

Scattered villages are present, mostly restricted to the main roads through the area from Bambari to Ippy, surviving on a system based on shifting agriculture. Hunting of game is extensive, mostly during the dry season. All animals from platannas and snakes to elephant are consumed.

During the dry season, which extends over the period November to May, most of the area with the exception of gallery forest is burnt in order to permit hunting activities. At this time the soils are baked hard and most dead wood is incinerated by the frequent and hot fires which scour the countryside. Reptile and amphibian activity is highly seasonal with low activity during the dry season when fires ravage the countryside. This situation is very similar to that described by Barbault (1971, 1973, 1976) at Lamto in the Ivory Coast, with reptile and amphibian population peaks and lows corresponding to the climate and fire regimes.

METHODS

Actual observations were conducted over two periods, one during the dry season (11–25 January 2006) and the other during the wet season (14–30 August 2006).

Various methods were adopted to compile a list of the species of reptiles and amphibians occurring in the area. These included using pitfall traps and drift fences, field traverses in various habitats, nocturnal surveys, especially for amphibians, as well as recording frog calls for later identification. Specimens were collected for later identification and where possible photographs taken, particularly of reptiles captured, identified and released. Photographs taken by Axmin personnel and by Nigel Voaden in particular, greatly contributed to the list of species recorded.

Reptiles are housed in the collection of the Natural History Museum (Paris), while amphibians are in the collection of A. Channing (University of the Western Cape, Cape Town), together with photographs and records of calls (CD).

A CD of relevant photographs will also be forwarded to the Natural History Museum, Paris, as an aid to the verification of taxa named in this paper.

SYSTEMATIC ACCOUNT

AMPHIBIA

ANURA

Family ARTHROLEPTIDAE

***Arthroleptis poecilonotus* (Peters, 1863) Mottled Squeaker**

A single individual was collected on a sandbank of the Ao River in Gallery Forest. This is the first record of this species for the CAR.

***Arthroleptis sylvaticus* Laurent, 1954 Forest Squeaker**

Uncommon, recorded from a pitfall trap in Gallery Forest along the upper Baketa River. This represents a substantial range extension for the species, having previously been recorded only from the extreme south-western corner of the CAR (Burger, Largen & Amiet 2004).

Family BUFONIDAE

***Bufo* (= *Amietophrynus*) *camerunensis* Parker, 1936 Cameroon Toad**

An uncommon toad collected amongst leaf litter in Mixed Dry Forest, while moving about during the day.

***Bufo* (= *Amietophrynus*) *maculatus* (Hallowell, 1854) Flat-backed Toad**

The most common toad in the area occurring along the Ngoumbourou River at the Axmin Base Camp, in Gallery and Mixed Dry Forest and grassland. Males were heard calling throughout the area during the wet season.

Family RANIDAE

***Hoplobatrachus occipitalis* (Günther, 1858) Crowned Bullfrog**

An interesting aquatic frog inhabiting pools along streams and drainage lines during the dry season. During the wet season it even occupied rainwater pools along roads in the Passendro area. Very large (142 mm SVL) specimens were brought in by villagers from pools along the Ngoumbourou River.

Family PTYCHADENIDAE

***Ptychadena taenioscelis* Laurent, 1954 Dwarf Grass Frog**

Widespread in the area. Specimens were collected in Gallery Forest along streams. This is the first record of this species for the CAR.

***Ptychadena mascareniensis* (Duméril & Bibron, 1841) Mascarene Grass Frog**

Individuals were captured in shallow pools in grassland and were frequently heard calling from flooded grassland following rain.

***Ptychadena pumilio* (Boulenger, 1920) Pygmy Grass Frog**

Recorded from shallow, grassy, rainwater-filled pools on laterite as well as flooded grassland.

Family PHRYNOBATRACHIDAE

***Phrynobatrachus calcaratus* (Peters, 1863) Peters' Puddle Frog**

Recorded from flooded grassland along the banks of the Ngoumbourou River following rain. Choruses of these frogs were deafening at such times.

***Phrynobatrachus cornutus* (Boulenger, 1906) Horned Puddle Frog**

These frogs were recorded only along streams in Gallery Forest during the dry season. This record represents a substantial range extension for the species, having previously been recorded from the extreme south-western corner of the CAR (Amiet & Burger 2004).

***Phrynobatrachus natalensis* (Smith, 1849) Common Puddle Frog**

Widespread but uncommon. Individuals were collected along streams in Gallery Forest as well as in flooded grassland along the Ngoumbourou River.

Family PIPIDAE

***Xenopus fraseri* (Boulenger, 1905) Fraser's Clawed Frog**

A single individual was collected in a seasonal rainwater pool on a laterite cap

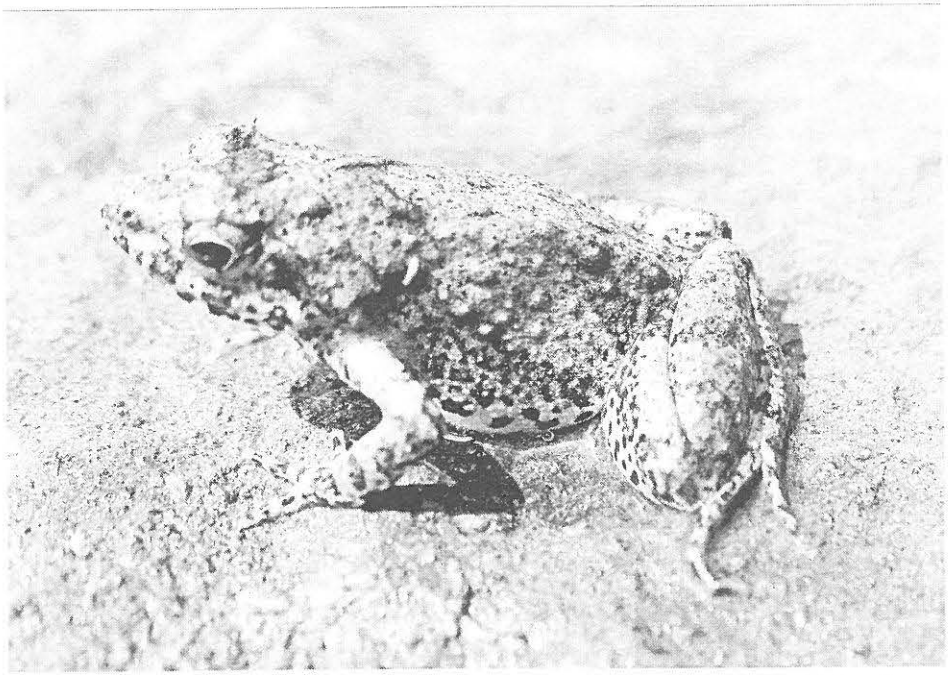


Fig. 1. *Phrynobatrachus cornutus*. Ao River. Photo: N. Jacobsen

in grassland.

***Xenopus sudanensis* Perret, 1966 Sudan Clawed Frog**

Several individuals of this species were brought in by villagers together with Crowned Bullfrogs captured in pools along the Ngoumbourou River in the dry season. Joger (1990) listed *X. laevis sudanensis* as occurring at Koumbala, substantially to the northeast of Passendro.

Family HYPEROLIIDAE

***Afrixalus fulvovittatus* (Cope, 1861) Yellow-striped Leaf-folding Frog**

A common frog found in flooded grassland, calling extensively while clinging to grass culms. According to Pickersgill (2007) there seems to be some doubt as to whether specimens from Passendro are *A. fulvovittatus* as both *A. vittiger* and *A. quadrivittatus* are very similar. Schiøtz (1999) included all within the *A. fulvovittatus* complex but was of the opinion that more than one taxon was present. Pickersgill (2007) suggested that specimens from CAR belonged to the *A. quadrivittatus* complex, based on colour pattern and the distribution of asperities. However, when

examining photographs of living specimens from CAR it would seem that the colour pattern agrees more with typical *fulvovittatus*, although differing in the absence of shadow stripes.

***Hyperolius acuticeps* Ahl, 1931 Sharp-snouted Reed Frog**

A dimorphic reed frog collected clinging to grass culms along drainage lines in Mixed Dry Forest. Most individuals were green with pale, dark-edged dorsolateral stripes. More rarely, green, unstriped individuals were collected with dark asperities along the back and with yellow feet. This is the first record of this species for the CAR.

***Hyperolius balfouri* (Werner, 1907) Balfour's Reed Frog**

A large, common, distinctively marked reedfrog that appears to be more solitary than other species. Frequently seen and heard calling loudly while clinging to grass culms, sometimes even from the tops of the inflorescence.

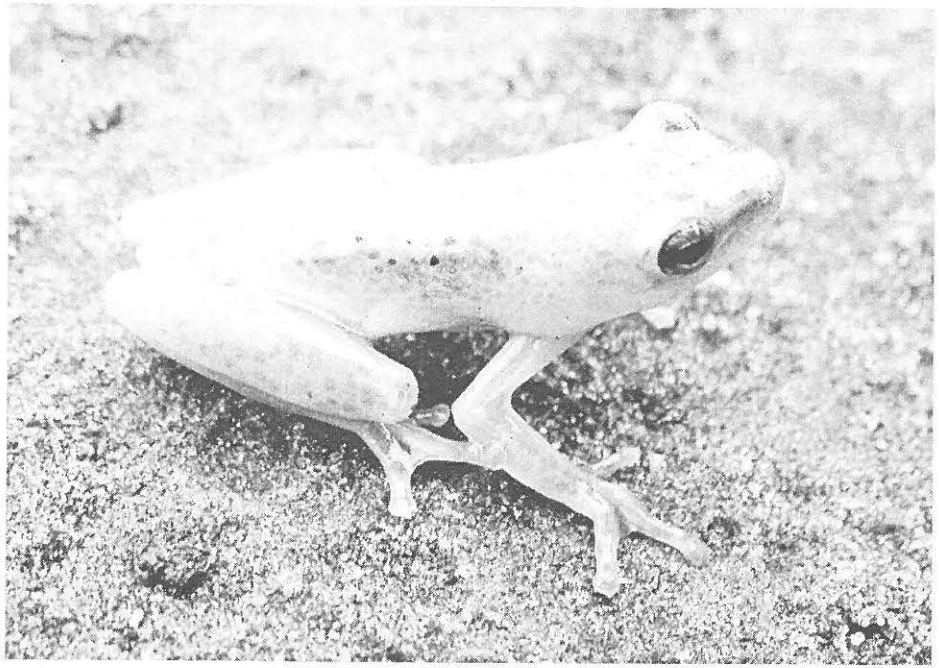


Fig. 2. *Hyperolius acuticeps*, yellow-footed phase. Passendro. Photo: N. Jacobsen

***Hyperolius viridiflavus pallidus* Mertens, 1940 Plain Reed Frog**

A common reedfrog in the area. Individuals were collected while calling from flooded grassland flanking the Ngoumbourou River and in a clearing in Gallery Forest along the Nguetepe stream.

***Kassina senegalensis* (Duméril & Bibron 1841) Bubbling Kassina**

Widespread. Individuals were heard calling from grassland in the area following rain. No specimens collected.

Family LEPTOPELIDAE

***Leptopelis* sp. Tree Frog**

Unfortunately no individuals of this frog were captured. Individuals were heard and recorded calling from the branches of trees flanking rivers in the area. It was not possible to link its call to any species.

REPTILIA

SAURIA

Family GEKKONIDAE

***Hemidactylus brooki angulatus* (Hallowell, 1852) Brook's House Gecko**

Uncommon but widespread. Recorded from Mixed Dry Forest and laterite caps, occurring in holes in rotting trees. Also found on the walls of houses. A pair of eggs of this species was collected under a lump of laterite on bedrock. MNHN 2007.0073-4

***Hemidactylus mabouia* (Moreau de Jonnes, 1818) Tropical House Gecko**

The Tropical House Gecko was recorded from the walls of houses and huts in the Axmin Base Camp area.

***Lygodactylus gutturalis* (Bocage, 1873) Uganda Dwarf Gecko**

A single individual of this species was collected in a pitfall trap in Mixed Dry Forest during the dry season. It appears to be uncommon, perhaps as a result of the frequency and intensity of fires at this time of the year. MNHN 2007.0072

Family AGAMIDAE

***Agama agama* (Linnaeus, 1768) Common Agama, Rainbow Lizard**

Widespread and common on trees and walls of houses in Gallery Forest and

Mixed Dry Forest, as well as on laterite caps. MNHN 2007.0071

***Agama doriae* (Boulenger, 1885) Nigeria Agama**

Only recorded from laterite caps in grassland. Apparently common, although juveniles are difficult to distinguish from the next species. MNHN 2007.0068

***Agama paragama* (Grandison, 1968) False Agama**

Similar to the previous species. Juveniles were found on laterite caps in grassland while both adults and juveniles were seen.crossing vehicle tracks during surveys Common during the wet season.. MNHN 2007.0070

Family CHAMAELEONIDAE

***Chamaeleo gracilis* (Hallowell, 1842) Slender Chameleon**

A photograph taken by N. Voaden confirmed the presence of this species in the area. It appears to be rare as none were seen during the survey periods.

Family SCINCIDAE

***Trachylepis affinis* (Gray, 1838) Brown Skink**

An uncommon skink captured in pitfall traps in Gallery Forest. MNHN 2007.0080-81

***Trachylepis maculilabris* (Gray, 1845) Speckle-lipped Skink**

This skink was the most common in the area, inhabiting both Gallery Forest and Mixed Dry Forest. As in West Africa, the species survives the pyrrhic dry season as juveniles, becoming adult during the wet season from June to October when eggs are laid. MNHN 2007.0067, 2007.0075-76

***Trachylepis quinquetaeniata* (Lichtenstein, 1823) Five-lined Skink**

A common skink in the area, mostly on rocky outcrops and hills, including the Axmin Base Camp, where several individuals were often seen basking on a sheet of corrugated iron. MNHN 2007.0077-78; 2007.0082-83

***Trachylepis perroteti* (Duméril & Bibron 1839) Perrotet's Skink**

An uncommon skink recorded in Mixed Dry Forest. MNHN 2007.0079

***Lygosoma afrum* (Werner, 1902) Peters' Writhing Skink**

A single immature specimen of this species was collected in a pitfall trap in Mixed Dry Forest during the dry season. It appears to be rare as no other individuals were seen or trapped. MNHN 2007.0069

Feylinia currori **(Gray 1845) Curror's Legless Skink**

A single adult specimen of this species was collected from a pitfall trap in Gallery Forest along the upper Baketa Stream. MNHN 2007.0086

Family VARANIDAE

Varanus exanthematicus **(Boie, 1792) Savanna Monitor Lizard**

An unconfirmed sighting of this species from Mixed Dry Forest was reported by the botanists working on the project, during the wet season survey period.

Varanus ornatus **(Daudin, 1803) Forest Monitor**

Several immature individuals of this species were brought in by villagers, having been collected along the banks of the Ngoumbourou River.

SERPENTES

Family TYPHLOPIDAE

Rhinotyphlops punctatus **(Leach, 1819) Speckled Blind Snake**

A fragmented specimen of this species was collected from the Axmin Village in Mixed Dry Forest. This specimen was of the blotched black and pale form described by Stucki-Stern (1979) and Spawls, Howell, Drewes & Ashe (2004). MNHN 2007.0084

Letheobia rufescens **(Chabanaud, 1916) Oubangui Gracile Blind Snake**

A decapitated specimen was collected along a recently scraped track through Mixed Dry Forest in the Ndassima area during the wet season. The individual was uniform pink with 20 rows of scales at midbody and 654 dorsal scales from behind the head to the tail tip. The tail terminated in a spike-like tip. MNHN 2007.0085.

Family LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE

Leptotyphlops narirostris **(Peters, 1867) Peters' Thread Snake**

A single dead specimen of this species was found on a vehicle track across a laterite cap and forwarded to L. Chirio for confirmation, this being only the second specimen from the CAR.

Family BOIDAE

Python sebae **(Gmelin, 1789) African Python**

Skin and photographs of this species from the area were obtained from Axmin personnel working in the area The snake is prized as a source of food by the local villagers.

Python regius **(Shaw, 1802) Royal or Ball Python**

Photographs were taken of a specimen killed for food by a local villager in Mixed Dry Forest. Additional photographs were received from Axmin personnel working in the area.

Family ATRACTASPIDIDAE

Atractaspis irregularis **(Reinhardt, 1843) Variable Burrowing Asp**

A single individual of this species was collected in Gallery Forest while foraging in the leaf litter along a drainage line during the dry season, but it subsequently escaped.

Family COLUBRIDAE

Lamprophis fuliginosus **(Boie, 1827) Brown House Snake**

The occurrence of this species is based on photographs of an individual taken by N. Voaden in the area.

Grayia smythii **(Leach, 1812) Smyth's Water Snake**

A juvenile of this species was brought in by villagers at Djoubissi and photographs by Axmin personnel of an adult killed for food along the Baketa Stream confirm the presence of the species in the area. MNHN 2007.0088

Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia **(Laurenti, 1768) White-lipped or Herald Snake**

Photographs of this species, taken by N. Voaden, confirm the presence of this species in the area.

Psammophis praeornatus gribinguiensis **(Angel, 1921) Ornate Grass Snake**

A single specimen of this species was collected under a lump of laterite on a laterite cap following the advent of a grass fire. This subspecies is endemic to the CAR and adjacent Cameroon

Philothamnus semivariegatus **(A. Smith, 1847) Spotted Bush Snake**

Photographs of this species taken by Axmin staff confirm its presence in the Passendro area.

Philothamnus **sp.**

A juvenile originally thought to be an unusual colour form of the previous species was obtained from artisan gold miners along the Baketa Stream on an adjacent laterite cap, photographed and released again. A subsequent evaluation of the photograph and comments from D. Broadley and L. Chirio (*pers. comm.*, 19 January

2009) suggests that it may be another taxon, but due to its juvenile colouration, it cannot be assigned to a particular species.

***Philothamnus bequaertii* (Schmidt, 1923) Bequaert's Green Snake**

An individual specimen that had entered a hut was captured and photographed in the Axmin Camp close to the Ngoumbourou River.

***Meizodon regularis* (Fischer, 1856) Eastern Crowned Snake**

The presence of this species in the area was confirmed from photos taken by Axmin personnel in the area.

***Boiga blandingii* (Hallowell, 1844) Blanding's Tree Snake**

The presence of this species was also confirmed by photographs taken by Axmin personnel of an individual killed for food.

***Psammophis phillipsii* (Hallowell, 1844) Olive Grass Snake**

Two dead-on-road specimens and a shed skin of this species were recorded from grassland on laterite caps and along the Ngoumbourou River. MNHN 2007.0089

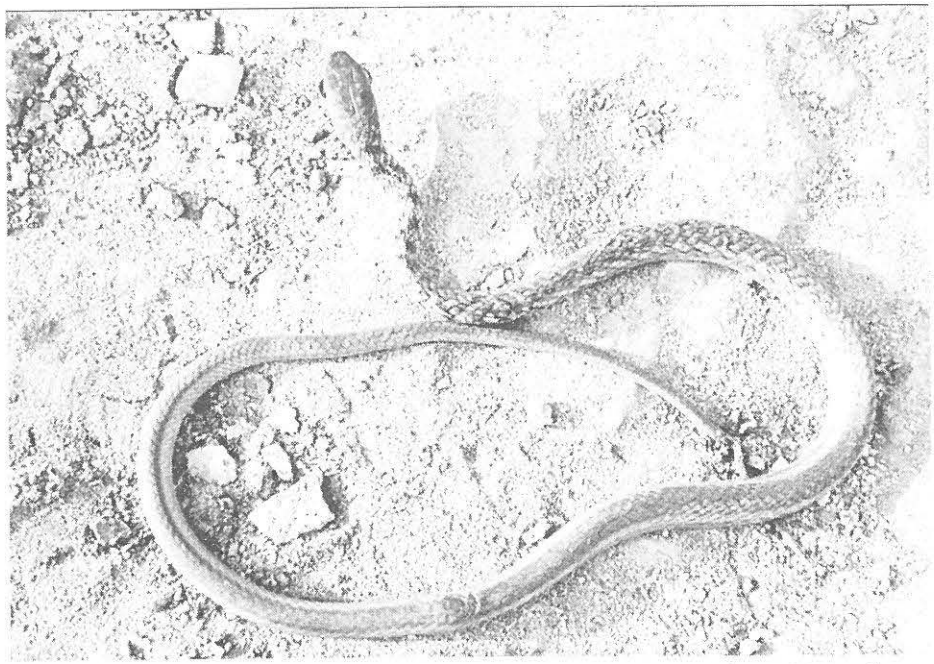


Fig. 4. *Phiothamnus* sp. Baeta Stream. Photo: N. Jacobsen

? *Scaphiophis albopunctatus* (Peters, 1870) Hook-nosed Snake

A photograph of the midbody section of what is likely to be this species was taken by Axmin personnel. It is of an individual killed in a prospecting trench in the Passendro area.

Family NATRICIDAE

***Natriciteres variegata variegata* (Peters, 1861) Variegated Marsh Snake**

An immature specimen of this species was collected in Gallery Forest. MNHN 2007.0087

Family PROSYMNIDAE

***Prosymna ambigua bocagii* (Boulenger, 1897) East Africa Shovel-snout Snake**

The occurrence of this species in the area is based on a photograph taken by N. Voaden.

Family ELAPIDAE

***Naja melanoleuca* (Hallowell, 1857) Forest Cobra**

The presence of this species was confirmed from photographs taken by N. Voaden of individuals killed in the Axmin Mining Camp and from a large individual killed by fishermen in Mixed Dry Forest during the wet season. Photographs of an individual killed along the Baketa Stream confirmed its occurrence in this area.

***Dendroaspis jamesonii* (Traill, 1843) Jameson's Mamba**

Photographs of individuals killed in the area confirm the presence of this species, but it appears to be uncommon.

Family VIPERIDAE

***Causus lichtensteini* (Jan, 1859) Forest Night Adder**

A juvenile of this species was captured in a pitfall trap in Gallery Forest during the wet season, photographed and subsequently released.

***Causus maculatus* (Hallowell, 1842) Maculate Night Adder**

A specimen was collected in Mixed Dry Forest during the wet season. MNHN 2007.0091

***Causus rhombeatus* (Lichtenstein, 1823) Common or Rhombic Night Adder**

An individual of this species found in Mixed Dry Forest was collected and photographed. Joger (1990) listed the species as occurring in the CAR based on four specimens in the Natural History Museum, Paris. However, Chirio & Ineich (2006) were doubtful of the occurrence of this species in CAR, mentioning that this taxon has in the past been confused with *C. maculatus* as well as an as yet unnamed species from the border with Cameroon. One of the specimens listed by Joger (op cit) falls within the latter taxon. Both *C. rhombeatus* and *C. maculatus* were recorded from the Passendro area during this survey. This therefore appears to be the first valid report on the occurrence of this species in the CAR, although it was listed by Joger (op cit).

***Bitis arietans arietans* (Merrem, 1820) Puff Adder**

Several dead juvenile Puff Adders were brought in by gold miners from along the Baketa Stream, having been found moving about on laterite caps.during the dry season. MNHN 2007.0090; 2007.0092

***Bitis gabonica* (Duméril & Bibron, 1845) Gaboon Adder**

Photographs of an individual taken by N. Voaden in Gallery Forest along the upper Baketa Stream confirm the presence of the species in the area. It appears to be rare as no other individuals were recorded.

TESTUDINATA

Family PELOMEDUSIDAE

***Pelusios subniger* (Lacépède, 1788) Pan Hinged Terrapin**

A large male of this species was photographed in the village of Djoubissi, having been captured for food by a villager at Bakenga Head in the northern part of the area. This appears to be a new record for CAR although Joger (1990) referred to four specimens housed in the Natural History Museum, Paris. One of these has subsequently been identified as *P. chapini*, but the other three could not be located (Chirio & Ineich, 2006). The latter authors therefore excluded this species from their list. The specimen photographed clearly shows the constrictions in the plastron typical of *P. subniger*.

***Pelusios rhodesianus* Hewitt 1927 Variable Hinged Terrapin**

Photographs taken by N. Voaden confirm the presence of the species in the area. This is the first record of the species for the CAR and a northward extension of the known distribution of the species from the northern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Spawls, Howell, Drewes & Ashe 2004).

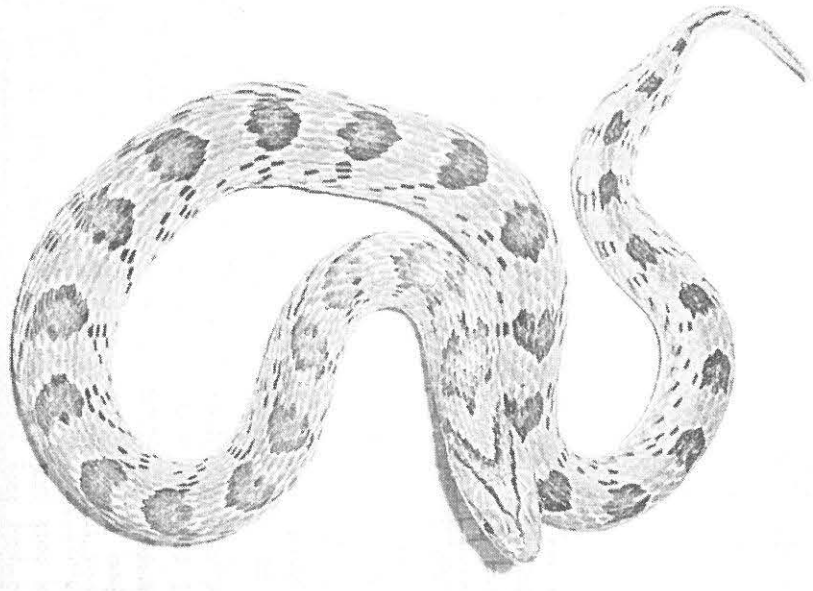
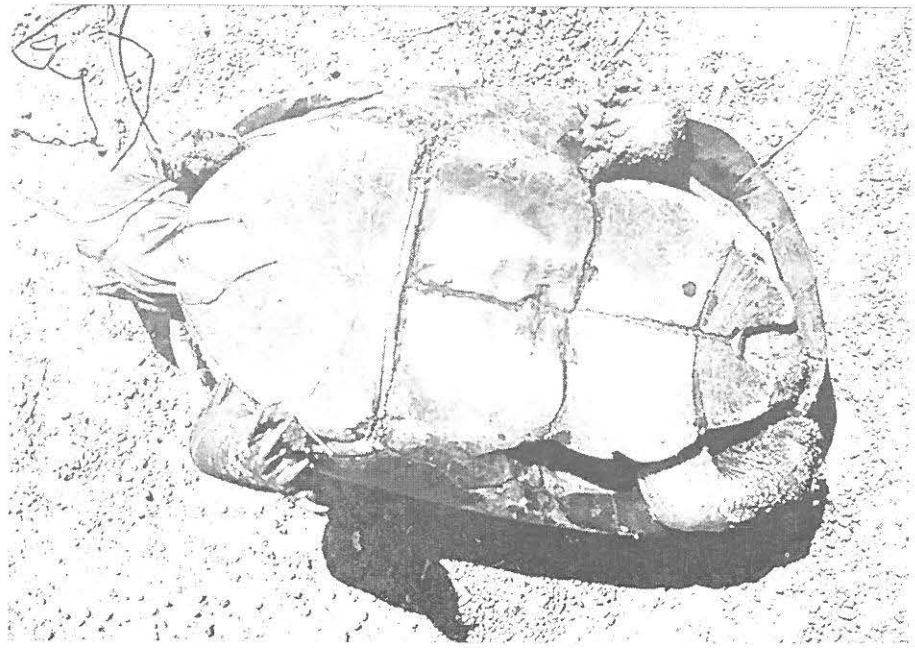


Fig. 5. *Causus rhombeatus*. Passendro. Photo: N. Jacobsen



Ffig. 6. *Pelusios subniger*, plastral view. Djoubissi. Photo: M. Jacobsen

Family TESTUDINIDAE

***Kinixys belliana belliana* (Gray, 1831) Bell's Hinged Tortoise**

Specimens of this species were photographed in Djoubissi village, having been collected by villagers in the area.

DISCUSSION

The herpetofauna of the Central African Republic is rich and diverse as a result of its location, situated in an area with a variety of habitats. It is located between the high diversity regions of Cameroon in the west, Chad to the north, the Congos to the south and Sudan in the east. Joger (1990) listed 184 species of reptiles and amphibians, including 134 reptile and 50 amphibian species, of which 67 were first records for the country. Subsequently, Chirio & Ineich (2006), after a protracted six year survey, incorporated 189 reptile species in a checklist of which 62 comprised new records for the country.

A total of 19 amphibian and 44 reptile (15 lizards, 26 snakes and three chelonians) species was recorded from the Passendro area during this survey. This adds to the list of species recorded from the country, as well as extending distribution

Fig. 7. *Peusios rhodesianus*. Djoubissi. Photo: N. Voaden

ranges of many species. Three amphibian and three reptile species not previously known from the CAR were recorded – *Arthroleptis poecilonotus*; *Ptychadena taenioscelis*; *Hyperolius acuticeps*; *Causus rhombeatus*; *Pelusios subniger*, *Pelusios rhodesianus*.

The species recorded includes a mixture of forest and savanna species from three of the principal bioclimatic regions, namely Congo-Guinean forests, Congo-Guinean mesic savannas and southern Sudanese savannas which, according to Chirio & Ineich (2006), have varying biogeographic affinities. Although previously included by these auhors within the Western and Central African Forest Species group, *Hemidactylus mabouia* is here relegated to the African Savanna Species group as it is mainly a savanna species. However it could also be considered a Generalist species as it is highly adaptable and inhabits a variety of habitats and vegetation types, as well as areas with varying climatic conditions. It is currently expanding its distribution range southwards. The amphibians and reptiles of Passendro are placed in the following biogeographic categories:(after Chirio & Ineich op cit)

Generalist Species

Hemidactylus brooki, *Agama agama*, *Python sebae*.

West and Central African Forest Species

Trachylepis affinis, *Trachylepis maculilabris*, *Varanus ornatus*, *Boiga blandingii*, *Grayia smythii*, *Natriciteres variegata*, *Dendroaspis jamesoni*, *Naja melanoleuca*, *Causus lichtensteini*, *Leptopelis* sp., *Hoplobatrachus occipitalis*, *Arthroleptis sylvaticus*, *Arthroleptis poecilonotus*, *Phrynobatrachus cornutus*.

Central African Forest Species

Feylinia currori, *Letheobia rufescens*, *Bitis gabonica*.

African Savanna Species

Hemidactylus mabouia, *Lygodactylus gutturalis*, *Agama doriae*, *Agama paragama*, *Chamaeleo gracilis*, *Trachylepis quinquetaeniata*, *Varanus exanthematicus*, *Python regius*, *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*, *Lamprophis fuliginosus*, *Meizodon regularis*, *Philothamnus semivariegatus*, *Prosymna ambigua*, *Psammophis phillipsi*, *Scaphiophis albopunctatus*, *Bitis a. arietans*, *Atractaspis irregularis*, *Xenopus sudanensis*, *Bufo maculatus*, *Phrynobatrachus natalensis*, *Hyperolius acuticeps*, *Hyperolius viridiflavus pallidus*, *Kassina senegalensis*.

Species from Savannas with Western Affinities
Trachylepis perroteti, *Rhinotyphlops punctatus*, *Leptotyphlops narirostris*, *Causus maculatus*, *Bufo camerunensis*, *Ptychadena pumilio*, *Phrynobatrachus calcaratus*, *Afrixalus fulvovittatus*, *Hyperolius balfouri*, *Xenopus fraseri*.

Species from Savannas with Eastern Affinities
Kinixys b. belliana, *Pelusios subniger*, *Pelusios rhodesianus*, *Lygosoma afrum*, *Philothamnus bequaerti*, *Causus rhombeatus*, *Ptychadena mascareniensis*, *Ptychadena taenioscelis*.

Species endemic to the CAR/Cameroon Savannas
Psammophis praeornatus gribinguiensis.

Habitat

It is apparent that many forest species have extended their ranges into the drier savanna regions by using gallery forest flanking the rivers running through the area. Within the study area a total of 12 (28%) such forest species were confined to gallery forest. The recorded localities of species such as *Phrynobatrachus cornutus* and *Arthroleptis sylvaticus* are widely separated from those previously recorded (Amiet & Burger, 2004; Burger, Largen & Amiet, 2004) and appear to be disjunct. This is likely to be a collecting artifact, although there are apparently no records from the densely settled areas around Bangui. However, human persecution, habitat destruction and the annual incidence of bush fires is impacting on the herpetofauna. Gallery forests are steadily being reduced in area, negatively affecting forest species and likely to result in local extinctions. The paucity of animals seen and trapped is indicative of this situation. Over two 10-day trapping periods during January and August, using pitfalls and drift fences, a total of 300 trap days and nights yielded only 22 reptiles and two amphibians.

As the area comprised mainly open to closed canopy savanna or dry woodland, the reptiles recorded were predominantly savanna species (26; 62%) - a mixture of eastern and western affinities.

Most species of reptiles were terrestrial (22; 52%), eight (19%) arboreal, five (12%) fossorial, four (9%) species were aquatic and three (7%) were rupicolous *Philothamnus semivariegatus* may be both arboreal and rupicolous.

No endemic CAR species were recorded. although *Psammophis praeornatus gribinguiensis*, is a near-endemic (Chirio & Ineich 2006).

Passendro is roughly located in the south-central part of the country with the result that the species present comprise both western and eastern herpetofaunas, as indicated previously. It is apparent that a full understanding of the biogeography of CAR will only be possible when a survey of the eastern third of the country bordering Sudan and north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has been undertaken. During this brief survey new records for the Central African Republic were mostly of savanna species with eastern affinities and it is likely that others will be found.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thanks are due to Axmin for providing the facilities and logistics for such a survey. The assistance of Axmin personnel and Nigel Voaden in particular, in the office and in the field, as well as providing photographs of reptiles and mammals seen during geological traverses of the area and observed in villages, is gratefully acknowledged. Mr C. Carron Brown is thanked for permission to publish this article.

Thanks are due to Johann Rall for his support, organizational ability and friendship. Colleagues Peter Kimberg and Denis Beina are thanked for collecting specimens which they came across and without which more gaps in the list of species recorded would have been present. However, most thanks are due to Steven Dickinson for his support, drive and assistance in organizing and managing the whole project, of which this was but a small portion. His unfailing support in the field, sometimes under trying circumstances, cannot be underscored enough.

Finally, the assistance of D.G. Broadley, L. Chirio, I. Ineich and A. Channing in the identification of specimens, calls and photographs is gratefully acknowledged. M. Bates is thanked for constructive comments on the manuscript.

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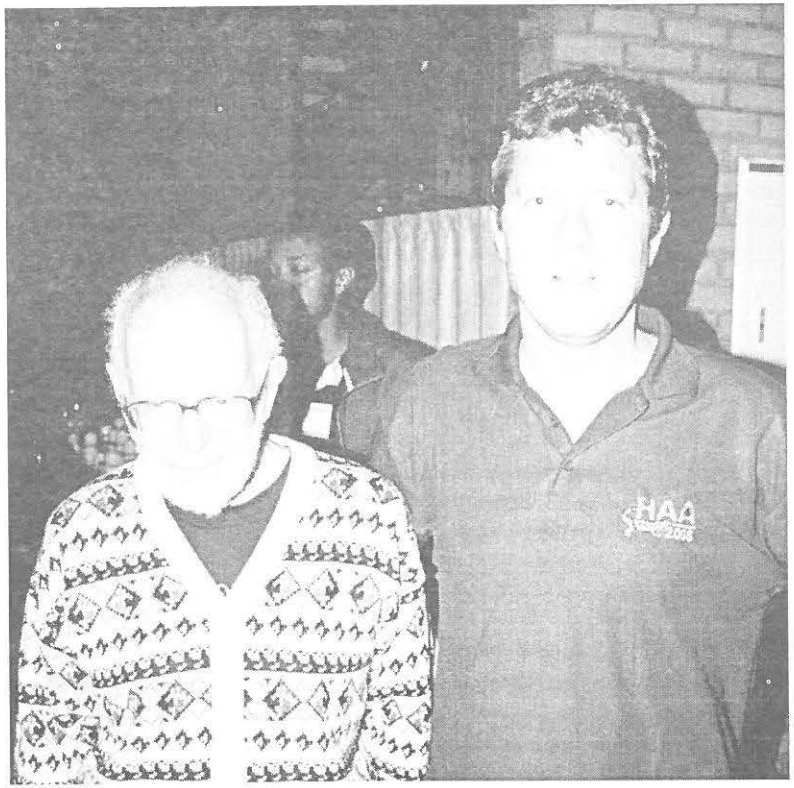


Don Broadley and Mike Bates at the H.A.A. Conference. Photo: D. Maguire

NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

Angelo Lambiris

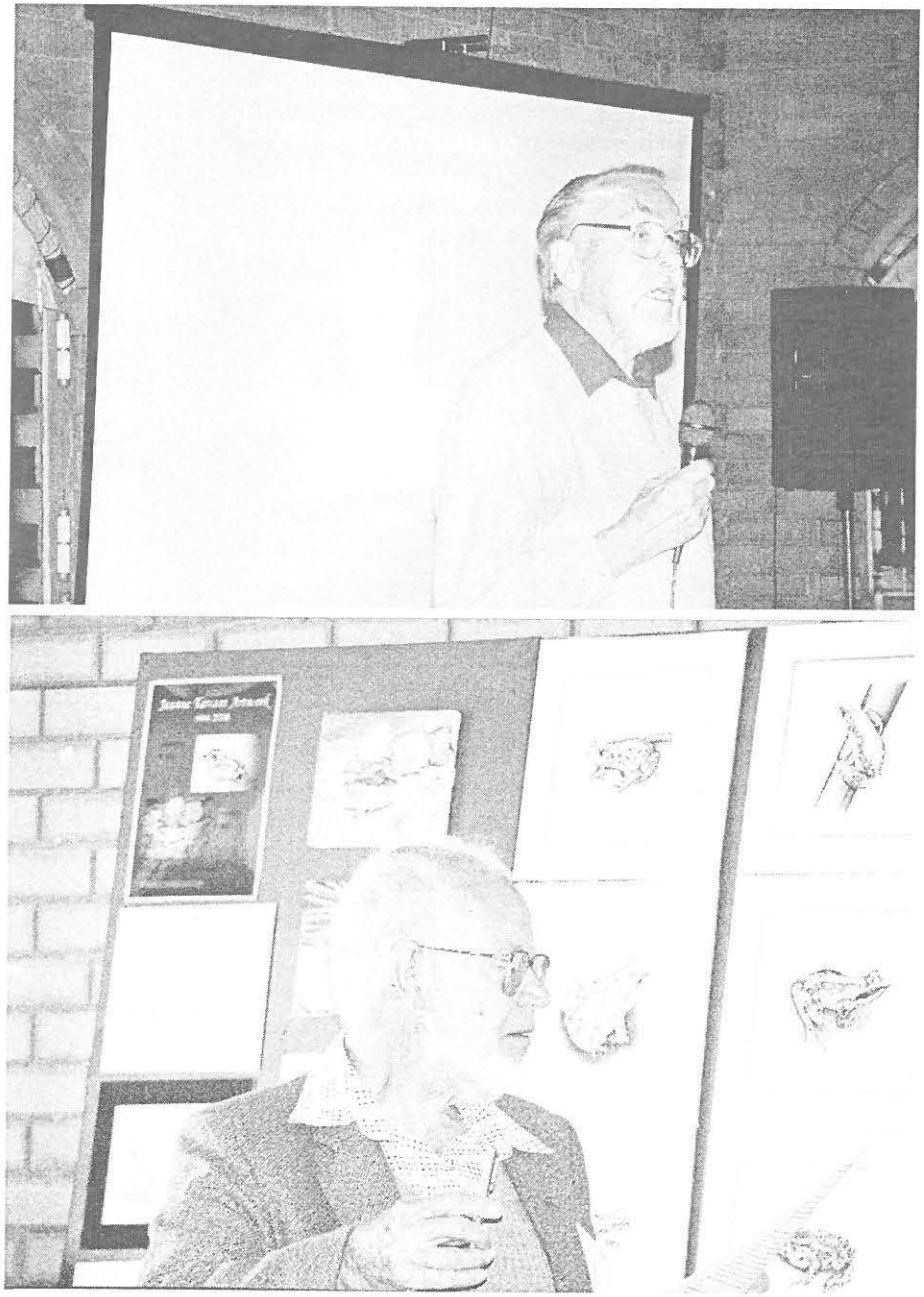
The ninth Conference and General Meeting of the Herpetological Association of Africa was held at Sterkfontein Dam, Free State, from the 26th to 29th November 2008 and was organised by Michael Cunningham and Kate Henderson. The Conference was preceded by a workshop, "Science, Pets and Permits: Collecting and Keeping Herps in South Africa".

Workshop: Science, Pets and Permits: Collecting and Keeping Herps in South Africa

After a welcome from Dr. Ernst Baard of CapeNature, Prof. Aaron Bauer (Villanova University, U.S.A.) presented a fascinating and most informative talk, "World Perspective on Collecting and Permits", on some of the more commonly encountered issues and how to approach them.

The workshop then proceeded with a series of talks addressing a wide range of topics – Ernst Baard: An overview of legislation affecting the collecting and keeping of reptiles and amphibians in South Africa; Angelo Lambiris: Private reptile collections – past, present and future; Andrew Turner: Sensitivity of indigenous reptile species to collecting; Arno Naude: Reptiles in captivity: a pet-keeper's perspective; Nicola van Wilgen: Alien invaders and reptile traders; and Richard Boynton: Captive husbandry of indigenous reptiles.

These were followed by a general discussion session to seek common ground between conservation managers, keepers and researchers on the needs of an ideal permit system. Points for discussion included: Recognising the responsibility of collectors and keepers in protecting native fauna and the potential impact from exotic species and excessive collections; Recognising the educational and scientific value of reptile and amphibian husbandry and the contributions of keepers, breeders and biologists to our understanding of these animals; Recognising the value of collection data to conservation management; Recognising the need to put new information from husbandry in the public domain by publishing these observations; To find possible steps towards a robust, rapid and accessible national permit system that facilitates increasing knowledge while guarding against genuine threats. The workshop was followed by a most enjoyable Ice-breaker Dinner.



Above: Arne Schiøtz speaking after receiving his Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology Award. *Below*: Don Boadley giving the first plenary paper. (Photos: Shirley Lambiris)

The Conference

Prof. Neil Heideman (University of the Free State) gave the opening address, followed by the first Plenary address by Dr. Donald Broadley (Biodiversity Foundation for Africa), "Progress with Research on the Taxonomy and Systematics of the Reptiles of Sub-Saharan Africa." Plenary speakers for the following sessions were Dr. Arne Schiøtz (Denmark): "Habitat-Based Zoogeography; a Treefrog's Perspective"; Dr. Anthony Herrel: "Super lovers or fearsome predators? The evolution of cranial diversity and function in chamaeleons"; Prof. Eduard van Dijk (Stellenbosch): "Bones of Southern African Anura: Including their Implications"; and Prof. Mark-Oliver Rödel (Humboldt University): "West African Communities Along Habitat and Disturbance Gradients".

Papers presented by delegates covered a remarkable range of fields, which reflected very favourably on how the nature and scope of herpetology in Africa has developed over the last two decades. Especially pleasing was the considerably increased participation of students. Richard Boynton (Creatures and Critturs) gave a very informative slide show on husbandry of indigenous reptiles, and Mark-Oliver Rödel one on the frogs of West Africa.

Special Events

Friday evening saw three special events – the Banquet, followed by the HAA "Award for Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology" to Arne Schiøtz (presented by Prof. Alan Channing), and an auction at which books and papers (of which more than half were donated by Don Broadley) and art-work were sold, realising the remarkable sum of R23 000 – the highest ever at an HAA auction. Among the unique items donated by Don were a first edition of Pitman's *Snakes of Uganda*, Wilhelm Peters's *Natuwissenschaftliche Reise nach Mossambique*, and two volumes of Arthur Loveridge's hand-written note-books.

Arne Schiøtz needs no introduction to herpetologists. He has devoted his life to African tree-frogs and has published authoritative studies on these beautiful creatures whose taxonomy and systematics pose all but insurmountable problems to even the most experienced specialist. His 1999 book *Treefrogs of Africa* will be a lasting monument to his labours.

On Sunday there were two excursions – one for the more athletically adventurous, to the top of Mont-aux-Sources; the second, for those less inclined to tackle a high altitude 30-metre chain ladder, was to the Golden Gate Nature Reserve, with Lammergeyers and mating *Agama atras* providing highlights to a spectacular day.

Above: Mark-Oliver Rödel speaks on West African frogs. (Photo: Angelo Lambiris)
Below: Vibeke and Arne Schiøtz with Arne's award. (Photo: Shirley Lambiris)

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO HERPETOLOGY: ARNE SCHIØTZ

Michael Cunningham

Arne Schiøtz is a retired but active researcher at the Zoological Museum in the Natural History Museum of Denmark. He has been active in African herpetology since 1959, when he led a co-authored paper on gliding in *Holaspis*. He has since contributed over 25 publications on the distribution and taxonomy of African frogs. Although not a vast number, these publications are notable for their grounding in extensive field work involving collections of specimens, calls, and high quality photos, all accessible through the Danish Natural History Museum. Dr. Schiøtz's major contribution is his three books on the Treefrogs of Tropical Africa (especially Hyperoliidae, *Leptopelis* and *Chiromantis*). These major works covered West Africa, East Africa, and after a substantial break, the whole of Africa. This is a taxonomically difficult and incompletely resolved group (particularly *Leptopelis*, *Afrixalus* and *Hyperolius*, and Dr. Schiøtz's careful documentation of calls and ecology makes his 1999 book a necessary and very user friendly basis for comparisons of specimens and taxon assignment. Although unanimously well received, there were some criticisms voiced in the initial reviews of this book (Drewes, R.C., *Copeia* 2006: 626-6). Several of these quibbles have been blunted by recent taxonomic changes, in particular the separation of *Leptopelis* from the Hyperoliidae (Frost *et al.*, 2006). Dr. Schiøtz has continued to develop the biogeographic themes in this book since they appeared in several publications (Schiøtz, 2006, *Alytes* **40**: 40-60; 2007, *Alytes* **25**: 1-37) and through an unpublished but freely available update on taxonomic changes. The major theme in his work is the interaction between ecology and distribution on forest-restricted, ecotonal and savanna species.

In the course of his career Dr. Schiøtz has published 38 original descriptions of African frogs, of which 29 species names are in current use (he published eight trinomial names that were later relegated to synonymy). He is the sole author of all but four of these names. In addition he has raised 11 earlier subspecies names to full species status, 10 of which are currently recognised. In addition he has published 27 new trinomial combinations, all of which have since been raised to full species status or relegated to synonymy. On one side these figures reflect the development of a dominant evolutionary species concept over the past 50 years and our consequent rejection of subspecific taxa. On another, they reflect the difficulty of accommodating geographically constrained colour forms that none the less appear to have fuzzy boundaries, in the context of incomplete collections. In either case I believe that these figures are testament to Dr. Schiøtz's approach (pre-DNA), based on careful documentation of information from multiple ecologically relevant sources. This is his exceptional contribution to African herpetology.

9TH H.A.A. CONFERENCE: GENERAL MEETING

Friday 28th November 2008

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST GENERAL MEETING

Constitutional change:

At the Potchefstroom General Meeting it was noted that the HAA Constitution would need to be changed to include election voting rights for overseas committee members, but that the constitutionality of this and any consequences with regard to the South African Revenue Service needed to be considered. An amendment to the HAA Constitution has now been drafted and will be posted to members for approval. The results of the vote will be announced in the next newsletter and if the change is adopted, this will be in time for the next committee election which will also be initiated in the forthcoming issue of the newsletter by calling for nominations. Once voting has been finalized, it will be necessary to present the amendment to the South African Revenue Service for record purposes.

The amendment in question involves a change to paragraph 12 of the HAA Constitution which currently reads as follows:

"Only African Honorary Life Members, African Life Members, and African Ordinary Members over the age of 18 years and in good standing have voting rights."

This will be amended by simply dropping the word African which precedes the various membership categories mentioned.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The next HAA committee elections will take place early next year. The call for nominations has already been prepared and submitted for publication in the next issue of the newsletter, due out by February. Michael Cunningham has kindly agreed to stand as electoral officer. These elections are in fact a few months late, but they have been delayed somewhat due to the fact that four key positions on the committee will soon be vacant and I think that this is a good opportunity for us to discuss the way forward. I have now served two consecutive two-year terms as Chairman and although the Chairman may serve three consecutive terms, my time in office has extended over a period of six consecutive years, the maximum allowed by our Constitution. This has been the result of elections extending over a period slightly in excess of the required two years because, to save on postage costs, the call for nominations and the balloting process itself is made to coincide with the appearance of newsletters. In addition to my position becoming vacant in the first half of next year, Mandi Alblas wishes to stand down as Secretary and Treasurer,

and Alex Flemming wishes to stand down as Journal Editor. This means that four key positions need to be filled by early next year. Although it will obviously be necessary to nominate persons for these positions, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone here with an interest in serving in the capacity of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer or Journal Editor, to please make their intentions known to me, either now or after the General Meeting. The southern African herpetological community is not particularly large and I am quite worried about successfully filling these positions, although with the possible adoption of the amendment regarding voting rights for overseas members, I suspect that we may have a larger pool of members to draw from in future.

One of our members recently moved house and requested an HAA membership list so that he could contact others with similar interests in his new neighbourhood. It was decided that a message would be sent to all HAA members to ask them which of their contact details they were prepared to make known to other members. Eventually 69 members replied and agreed to allow at least some of their details to be made available. The list of members' details was e-mailed to all HAA members shortly before the conference. I wish to thank Mandi Alblas for taking on the job of contacting all members and preparing the final list of contact details.

On behalf of the Association I wish to extend a special word of thanks to Michael Cunningham and his wife Kate who carried the major burden of responsibility for organizing this conference. We are truly thankful for all the time and effort involved. It is worth mentioning that the attendance at this meeting more-or-less equals that at the Potchefstroom meeting, which was a record for the HAA.

Mandi could not attend the conference, so in her absence I will read both the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports.

MICHAEL BATES

SECRETARY'S REPORT

As of the end of October 2008, the Association has a total membership of 293 members. A total of 48% of the individual membership is African and 35% overseas. The balance is made up of libraries, exchanges, and institutions. A breakdown of the Overseas vs African membership reveals the following:

OVERSEAS

Australia	6
Belgium	2
Brazil	1
Canada	3
Czech Republic	2
Denmark	3
Finland	1
France	5
Germany	16
India	1
Italy	4
Japan	1
New Zealand	1
Sweden	3
Switzerland	4
The Netherlands	7
United Kingdom	12
USA	60
TOTAL:	**132**

AFRICAN

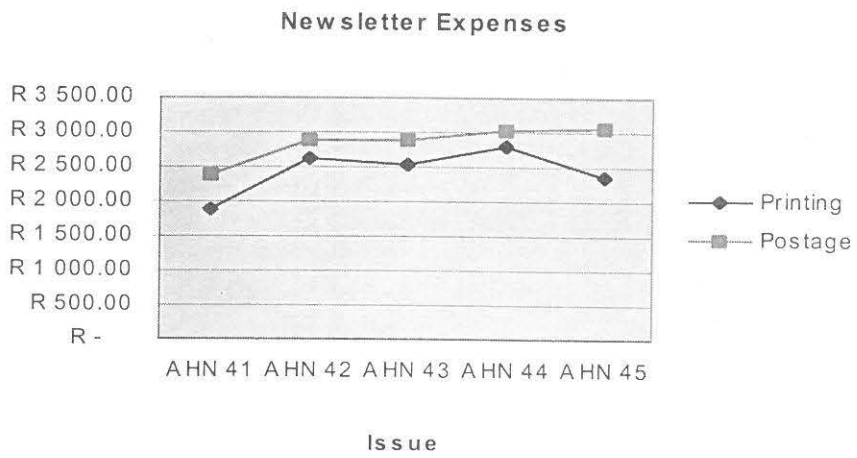
Botswana	1
Cameroon	1
Kenya	3
Lesotho	1
Namibia	3
Nigeria	4
South Africa	138
Swaziland	2
Tanzania	5
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	2
TOTAL:	**161**

The membership numbers dropped significantly since 2006 (333 at the last AGM) because 40 members were excluded from the database during the last couple of years for reasons such as: not paid up since 2005; resigned; deceased or never heard of again (no response).

The breakdown for type of members resigned/disappeared is as follows:

AF	15
OV	12
HLIF	1
LIF	2
LIB	5
EX	1
INS	4

			Printing	Postage	Quant print.	Cost per issue
Dec 2006	Hillcrest Print-ers	AHN 41	R 1 881.00	R 2 377.45	330	R 12.90
Jul 2007	Hillcrest Print-ers	AHN 42	R 2 610.60	R 2 878.91	330	R 16.63
Dec 2007	Hillcrest Print-ers	AHN 43	R 2 542.20	R 2 873.80	315	R 17.19
Apr 2008	Hillcrest Print-ers	AHN 44	R 2 793.00	R 3 019.90	315	R 18.45
Jul 2008	Hillcrest Print-ers	AHN 45	R 2 362.08	R 3 072.00	315	R 17.25
Jul 2006	US Printers	AJH 55(1)	R16 705.56	R 3 409.30	315	R 63.86
Dec 2006	Paarl Print	AJH 55(2)	R18 912.60	R 4 162.51	315	R 73.25
Jul 2007	African Sun Media	AJH 56(1)	R 9 792.60	R 2 151.66	315	*R 37.92
Dec 2007	African Sun Media	AJH 56(2)	R 9 849.60	R 3 554.95	315	R 42.55
Jul 2008	African Sun Media	AJH 57(1)	R13 220.58	R 3 944.95	315	R 54.49
			R80 669.82	**R31 445.43**	**3 180**	



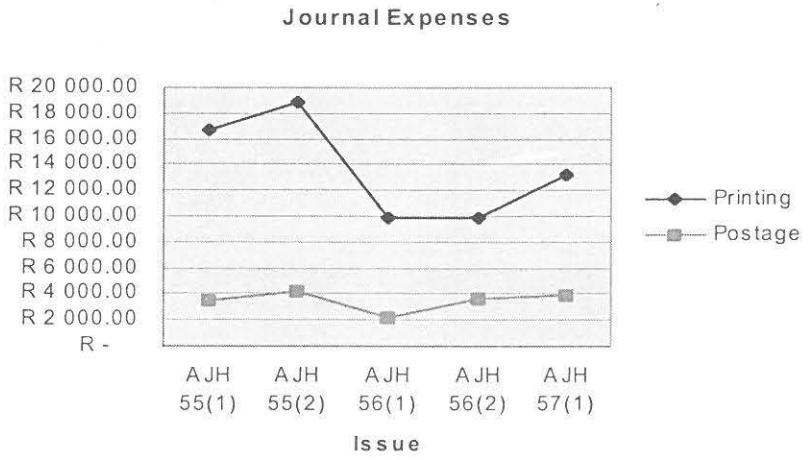


Figure 2: Printing and Postage costs of the African Journal of Herpetology 2006-2008.

Other Expenses: Nov 2006 to Nov 2008

Postage: Statements/ Reprints /Back Issues:	R 4 537.00
Stationery/photocopies:	R 2 107.00
Symposium 2008	R 38 800.00
Other Expenses (eg auditors/banking cost)	R 3 710.00
	R 49 154.00

Other

Sabinet Online sells subscriptions to the electronic version of African Journal of Herpetology via SA e-Publications services. Sabinet retain 20% of these fees as a commission and the HAA receives the remaining 80% of the subscription fees. We received R15 480 in July 2007 and R17 738 in July 2008.

The audit for the 2006-2007 tax years is completed and has been published in the Newsletter (AHN 44). I have not received the audit report for the 2007/2008 tax year yet.

Suggestions

Membership fees for 2009

I suggest that the membership fees stay unchanged for 2009 with an increase in 2010, taking into account that the bank balance is quite healthy at the moment.

Discount Membership fees for 2009

I suggest a discount in membership fees for pensioners as we have for scholars/ learners of R100 per member per year. We have at least 5 prominent members that could benefit from this advantage. We should also actively encourage scholars to join the HAA while they are still in school and could benefit with the lower subscription fees. We have only two active scholars at the moment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike Bates and the HAA members, for the confidence they have placed in me as Secretary/Treasurer and for the support that they have provided. I enjoyed being involved with the members and the Committee members and wouldn't have minded to continue to a second term in other circumstances. My situation has changed considerably during the last couple of years and my time is extremely limited. I cannot be involved with something that I cannot commit 100%.

MANDI ALBLAS

The Banquet was a resounding success ... (Photo: Shirley Lambiris)

JOURNAL EDITOR'S REPORT

This report covers most of my term as Editor of *African Journal of Herpetology*, which started during the second quarter of 2006 and ends in early 2009.

I cannot take credit for successes of *African Journal of Herpetology* during the past three years without acknowledging the legacy of my predecessor, Graham Alexander. Prof. Alexander managed to get our Journal included into the ISI (Thomson Scientific) database, facilitating accreditation by the South African Department of Education. South African authors consequently receive subsidy for papers published in the Journal. This has certainly encouraged a broader range of South African researchers to submit papers, but international contributions remain considerable.

I have tried to follow Prof. Alexander's formula of producing two issues per year, keeping to about 100 pages per issue, and involving Associate Editors in the reviewing process. With a lot of effort from their side, and the help of the Editorial Assistant, I believe the Journal is on good course. I've recently learned that our Journal has been listed with an Impact Factor of 0.618 (based on 2007 citations). Given our small circulation (about 320 copies per issue), this figure is impressive and reflects good exposure of the Journal to the international scientific community.

During my first year of term, Prof. Alexander advised me a lot on issues of editorial policy. Prof. William Branch, and other members of the Editorial Board, kept me afloat since, and I wish to thank them for their support. I believe that we face challenging times and that the Editorial Board will have to play a vital role in deciding on the future direction of the Journal. Two issues need serious contemplation. The one is escalating printing costs, the other is if our journal can continue to have a significant impact in an environment dominated by electronic media.

The reason I believe the Editorial Board must take a leading role in this regard, is that I have decided not to stand for re-election as Editor next year. The Board will have to think of direction before accepting nominations for a new Editor. The Editor will have to drive that direction, not invent it, there would be more than enough on that persons plate when taking over.

You would perhaps wonder about my reasons for not taking up a second term. I need to take a long overdue sabbatical and have extensive travel plans which will distract me from editorial duties. These would probably remain intense for at least the immediate future - including typesetting, non-printing aspects of production, and even posting of the Journal. Also, my limited knowledge about, and lack of enthusiasm for, electronic advances of our day would not make me a suitable candidate for much longer.

ALEX FLEMMING

... and so was the Auction! Auctioneer Bill Branch and assistant Marius Burger tempt buyers with a book. (Photo: Shirley Lambiris)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT

Four issues of *African Herp News* have appeared since the last General Meeting – Nos. 42 to 45 inclusive. These four issues comprise 144 pages, containing four long articles, 23 Natural History Notes, nine Geographical Distributions, one Herpetological Survey, and two Book Reviews. These figures reflect a rather disappointing drop compared with those presented in the last report, and too few contributions have been received to produce a third issue in 2008. [This gloomy prognostication proved unfounded by the receipt of further contributions after the Conference – Ed.] I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who submitted contributions, and hope that 2009 will be a more productive year.

ANGELO LAMBIRIS

OBITUARY: RICHARD EDGAR NEWBERY

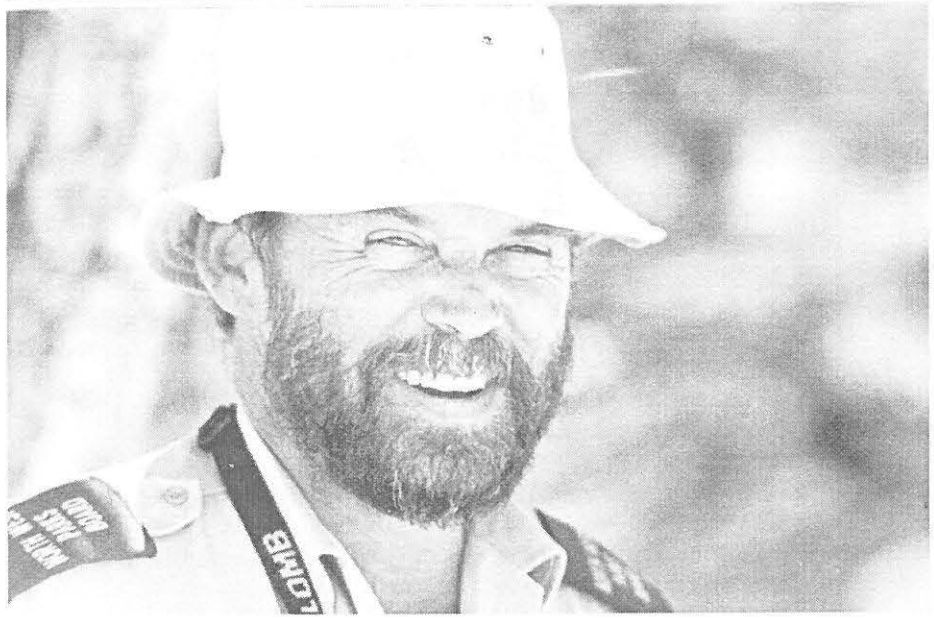


Photo courtesy of Stefan Hering-Hagenbeck

One of four children, Richard Edgar Newbery was born in Butterworth on the 16th February 1954 after which the family moved to Kingwilliams Town where his father was the local doctor. He grew up in the Eastern Cape and attended St Andrews College in Grahamstown where he matriculated. He went to Rhodes University for a year following which he worked as a Farm Manager and Barman in Katberg as well as assisting John Spence at the Tygerberg Zoo. In 1977, following a nine month stint in the Army, Richard enrolled in the recently established Nature Conservation Diploma course at the Pretoria Technikon (now the Tshwane University of Technology), doing the mandatory practical year with the then Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation. At the time I was involved in a survey of the reptiles and amphibians of the then Transvaal, a large task and one for which I required assistance. This came in the form of Richard Newbery and he took to it like a duck to water. Much of the success of the survey was due to the efforts of Richard and many undescribed reptiles were found. In recognition of his contribution he is commemorated in the name *Typhlosaurus lineatus richardi*, a legless lizard endemic to the eastern Soutpansberg.

In 1983, apart from other duties, he was tasked to undertake the excavation and rehabilitation of Giant Girdled Lizards occurring within the footprint of the proposed Majuba Power Station. This he did with great success and as a result in 1993 Eskom sponsored part of the

Third HAA Symposium commemorating the 50th anniversary of the publication of FitzSimons' "Lizards of South Africa".

Although Richard did not publish much, he was on occasion co-author, and a list of publications is incorporated below. He was also Editor of Nyoka News, a publication of the Transvaal Herpetological Association during 1983 and 1984.

In 1991 he married Christia Rauch and in 1994, following on the fragmentation of the former Transvaal into four provinces, they elected to move to the newly established North West Conservation and Tourism Board where he was employed as a Field Ecologist in the Ecological Support Section of the Protected Areas Management Division. Much of the time he gathered baseline information on the poorly researched Molopo Nature Reserve including surveys of the vegetation, herpetofauna and small mammals, but was also involved in surveys on other reserves as well as contributing to the compilation of management plans for various parks. In 2003 he was appointed Regional Ecologist: Bophima District and was responsible for the compilation of management plans for Molopo, SA Lombard, Bloemhof Dam and Wolwespruit Nature reserves among others. During the last two years he also contributed towards the revision of vegetation maps of some reserves and played a substantial role in the surveys. This was ongoing until his untimely death on the 17th February 2009.

Richard was a kind, generous and outspoken man, a rare breed who was always dedicated to the task at hand. A sociable man and humanitarian, he was well liked and respected by all who new him. Richard had a good rapport with, and was an inspiration to, many of his colleagues, especially the junior staff many of whom viewed him as their mentor. He was an ardent golfer but unfortunately his health deteriorated substantially during the past 14 years, affecting his active lifestyle.

In the words of a colleague, his death is a great loss to the North West Parks Board, especially at this time when a proper assessment of the sustainability of so many aspects which are permitted to take place in the parks is sorely needed. But it actually goes further than that. He was a man of great integrity, a true conservationist, a friend and colleague, and we are the poorer for his passing.

Publications

NEWBERY, R., 1993. Power to *Cordylus giganteus*. Proceedings of the FitzSimons Commemorative Symposium. South African Lizards: 50 years of Progress and Third H.A.A. Symposium on African Herpetology. Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.

PETERSEN, W., NEWBERY, R.E. & N.H.G. JACOBSEN, N.H.G., 1985. *Cordylus giganteus* is Alive and Well and Living at Rietpoort. *Fauna & Flora* **42**: 26-29.

JACOBSEN, N.H.G., NEWBERY, R.E., & PETERSEN, W., 1986. *A Checklist of the Herpetofauna of the Transvaal Provincial Nature Reserves*. Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation, Pretoria.

JACOBSEN, N.H.G., NEWBERY, R.E., & PETERSEN, W., 1990. On the ecology and conservation status of *Cordylus giganteus* A. Smith in the Transvaal. *S. Afr. J. Zool.* 1990. **25**(1): 61-66.

JACOBSEN, N.H.G., NEWBERY, R.E., DE WET, M.J., VILJOEN, P.C., & PIETERSEN, E., 1991. A contribution to the ecology of the Steppe pangolin *Manis temminckii* in the Transvaal. *Z. Saugetierkunde* **56**: 94-100.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

REPTILIA: SAURIA; SQUAMATA

GEKKONIDAE

***Rhoptropus bradfieldi* Hewitt, 1935**
Bradfield's Namib Day Gecko

REPRODUCTION

During October 2008 we visited the coast of Namibia. South of Wlotzkas Baken (22°25'46"S, 14°27'38"E, alt. 1m.) we encountered an isolated rocky site on hard sand. It is a 200m wide strip of grey-black dolerite boulders of varying sizes, extending inland from near the beach (See Google Earth). *Rhoptropus bradfieldi* occurs here in association with *R .afer* and *Agama anchietae*, as well as the nocturnal geckos *Pachydactylus bicolor* and *Chondrodactylus turneri* ssp. Bradfield's Namib Day Gecko matches the dark colour of the rocks, being black with lighter mottling. Adults of this species were only found on the larger boulders (< 1m) and in pairs. In suitable cracks, eggs were found glued to the rock, as well as shell remains from previous seasons.

On 22 October 2008, a fresh clutch of eggs was found lying on sand under a flat stone, measuring about 7 x 7 cm, and 3 cm thick. These eggs were stuck together longitudinally and measured 12.1 x 10.1 mm and 12.5 x 10.2 mm. Initially these eggs were pure white but two days later were pink, which indicated that they had been fertilized. They were placed in an incubator with a day temperature of 28°C, which was decreased to 24°C at night. On 19 January 2009, after 89 days, these eggs hatched. The first hatchling emerged at 10h00, shedding its skin within the following 30 minutes, while the second hatched an hour later, shedding its skin 20 minutes later. Their snout vent lengths were 22.1 mm and 22.9 mm and the tail lengths 23.2 mm and 21.8 mm. Their colouring was grey with black and lighter speckles.

Acknowledgment

We thank Mr. Wulf Haacke (Pretoria) for all the information he gave us and for reading this manuscript.

Submitted by

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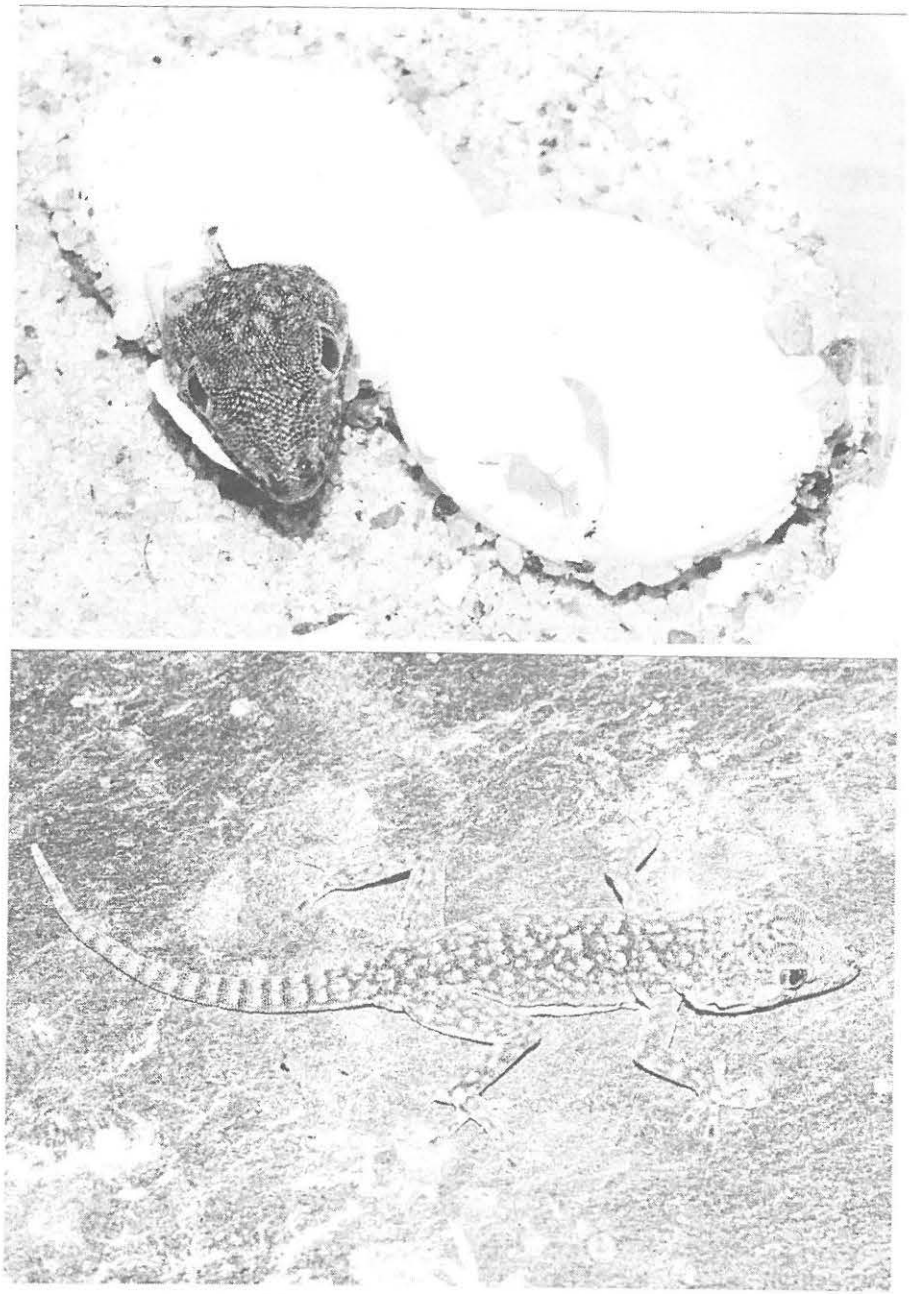

Rhoptropus bradfieldi. Hatchling and juvenile. Photo: Mirko Barts

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: SERPENTES

ATRACTASPIDIDAE

***Amblyodipsas polylepis polylepis* (Bocage, 1873)**
Common Purple-glossed Snake

DIET

At 15h45 on 12 December 2007 an adult *Amblyodipsas p. polylepis* was captured by WMA in the grounds of the Sedia Riverside Hotel in Maun, Botswana (19°57'09.26"S, 23°28'40.26"E; 1923CD; 942 m). The collector (WMA) was informed that "two snakes were fighting" and upon arrival at the scene, one of these had been swallowed. Shortly after capture the snake regurgitated an adult Anchieta's Spade-snouted Worm Lizard, *Monopeltis anchietae*, which it had swallowed head-first (Fig. 1). This incident occurred on manicured grass beside a row of shrubs (<1 m in height) in an area where the soil was very sandy. The snake was measured (SVL 668 mm, tail length 42 mm), photographed and released the following day. The amphisbaenian was in near-perfect condition. It was preserved in vodka, later transferred to ethanol and eventually deposited at the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (TM 85580) by SB.

The amphisbaenian had a SVL of about 307 mm (anterior part of body from snout to pectoral region could not be straightened) and tail length of 18 mm. Colour: Dark brown dorsal pigmentation uniformly from nuchal region to tail tip and extending to lateral sulci; belly for the most part immaculate cream; underside of tail cream with brown blotches. Lepidosis (according to Broadley, Gans & Visser, 1976, *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 157[5]: 313-485): Two azygous head shields; 3rd supralabial separates ocular from 2nd supralabial; one precloacal pore on either side of the vent; eight caudal annuli; four longitudinally parallel pectoral segments; 190 mid-dorsal body annuli; 173 mid-ventral body annuli (body annuli counted from 1st row posterior to enlarged 3rd supralabial to row anterior to enlarged precloacal plate; in pectoral region the ventral count was taken as four, corresponding to the number of dorsal annuli in this region).

Like many other atractaspidid snakes such as *Xenocalamus* and *Atractaspis*, snakes of the genus *Amblyodipsas* prey mainly on snakes and lizards, especially legless, burrowing and fossorial species (Broadley *et al.* op cit.; Shine, Branch, Harlow, Webb & Shine 2006, *Copeia* 2006[1]: 103-115). Amphisbaenians have been recorded in the diet of three species of *Amblyodipsas*: both *A. polylepis hildebrandtii* and *A. katangensis ionidesi* prey on *Loveridgei ionedesii*, while *A. ventrimaculata* includes *Zygaspis quadrifrons* in its diet (Broadley 1971, *Occ. Pap. Nat. Mus.*,

Rhod. [B4] 33: 629-697) and Shine *et al.* (op. cit.) recorded *Zygaspis* (one of which was identifiable as *Z. violacea*) in the guts of three *A. polylepis* (subspecies not specified). However, this note provides the first record of *Monopeltis* in the diet of *A. polylepis*. The only other snakes known to prey on *Monopeltis anchietae* are *Xenocalamus bicolor* and *Atractaspis bibronii* (Shine *et al.*, op cit; Broadley *et al.*, op cit.).

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Lauretta Mahlangu (Transvaal Museum) for facilitating communication between the authors and for the loan of the amphisbaenian to MFB.

Submitted by

MICHAEL F. BATES (Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa), **WESLEY M. ANDERSON** (Department of Biology, Davidson College, North Carolina 28035-7118, USA) and **SVEN BOURQUIN** (Maun, Botswana).

Amblyodipsas p. polylepis from Maun, Botswana, regurgitating a *Monopeltis anchietae* (TM 85580). Photo: Wesley Anderson

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTIONS

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: SAURIA+-

AMPHISBAENIDAE

***Zygaspis vandami arenicola* Broadley & Broadley 1997**
Van Dam's Round-headed Worm Lizard

Mozambique, Porto Henrique (between Boane and Belevista, SSW of Maputo) (26°16'59.10"S, 32°20'42.84"E; 2632AD; 21 m); 25 November 2007; D. Maguire; National Museum, Bloemfontein, NMB R8703-4. Two specimens were collected in humic soil in the Lowveld Bioregion.

Size: NMB R8703 (Fig. 1) measured 155 mm SVL, 29 mm tail length; NMB R8704 was smaller but poorly fixed (could not be straightened out) and had a truncated tail. Colour: Both specimens were grey above, paler below, with the anterior part of the ventral plates darker grey; ventrally the tail was mostly dark grey. Lepidosis (according to Broadley & Broadley 1997, *Syntarsus* **4**: 1-24): Body annuli 202 (NMB R8703), 198 (NMB R8704); caudal annuli 42 in NMB R8703. Both specimens had 28 dorsal and ventral segments in a midbody annulus, four precloacal pores; one postocular scale, one temporal shield, and no post-supralabials.

Broadley & Broadley (*op cit.*) recorded this subspecies from northern KwaZulu-Natal, southern Mozambique and south-eastern Zimbabwe, while Litschka, Koen & Monadjem (2008, *African Herp News* **46**: 24-25) recently added north-eastern Swaziland to its range. The new record bridges the gap between localities in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and around Maputo in southern Mozambique.

Submitted by

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Fig. 1. (Overleaf)

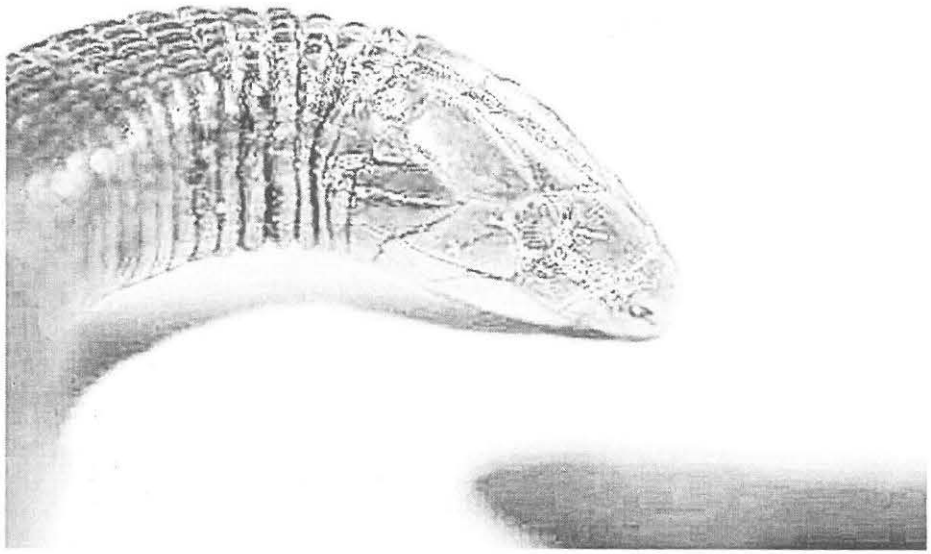

Fig. 1 (Bates & Maguire). Close-up of the head of *Zygaspis vandami arenicola* (NMB R8703) from Porto Henrique, Mozambique. Photo: David Maguire

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: SERPENTES

NATRICIDAE

***Afronatrix anscopus* (Cope, 1861)**
Brown Water Snake

BENIN: Atakora Province, Niangou (ca. 20 km north-east of Tanguieta, 10° 39'24"N, 1°03'02"E, 500m a.s.l). Small freshwater stream with surrounding gallery forest, in mid-elevated sudanian savanna. 1 May 2008. Collected by Chirio Laurent. Verified by Patrick David. 10 specimens, field numbers 7085-94 X (all will be deposited in MNHN collection, Paris). First confirmed record in Benin for this species, which is known to occur "from South-East Senegal to Cameroon". A. Villiers (1951, Mission A. Villiers au Togo et au Dahomey (1950). *Etudes Dahoméennes* n°

5, centre IFAN, p. 20) recorded it from Togo, and suspected its occurrence in former Dahomey (= Benin), but did not report any specimen from that country. The species was also not reported from Benin by B. Roman (Roman B., 1984. *Serpents des Pays de l'Entente*. CNRST Ouagadougou, Impr. de la Savane, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 45 pp.). Found in sudanian savanna, mainly distributed in guinean zones (Trape & Mané 2006. *Guide des serpents d'Afrique occidentale - savane et désert*. Paris, IRD Editions, 226 pp.). It is already known from S. Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, SW Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon (Uetz, TIGR Database, accession 7 January 2009).

Submitted by
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Contributions (preferably in Word 6.0, 7.0 or Windows XP) submitted in an incorrect style (see guide-lines below) will be returned to the authors.

ARTICLES

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 edition, 1998, for reptiles; and Passmore & Carruthers' *South African Frogs*, 1995, for amphibians as far as possible): **KEYWORD** (this should be one or two words best describing the topic of the note, e.g. Reproduction, Avian predation, etc.); the **Text** (in concise English with only essential references quoted and in abbreviated form); **Locality** (Country; Province; quarter-degree locus; location; latitude and longitude if available; elevation above sea level); **Date** (day, month, year); **Collector(s); Place of deposition and museum accession number** (required if specimens are preserved). **References**, if only one or two, should be incorporated into the text; three or more references should be placed after the main text, as for Articles. **Submitted by**: **NAME**, Address.

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Brief notes of new geographical distributions (preferably at least 100 km from the nearest published the nearest published record) of amphibians and reptiles on the Afri-

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Records submitted should be based on specimens deposited in a recognised collection.

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African Herp News publishes sparsely annotated species lists resulting from local surveys of amphibians and reptiles on the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other islands in the Indian Ocean. The area surveyed may be of any size but should be a defined geographic unit of especial relevance to the herpetological community. For example, surveys could address declared or proposed conservation reserves, poorly explored areas, biogeographically important localities or administrative zones. The relevance of survey results should be judged by the extent that these records fill distributional gaps or synthesise current knowledge.

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As far as possible survey records should be based on accessible and verifiable evidence (specimens deposited in public collections, photos submitted illustrating diagnostic features, call recordings and sonograms, or DNA sequences accessioned into international databases).

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

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