

Herpetological Association of Africa (HAA)
Code of Ethics and Conduct

Purpose of the Code

The purpose of this code is to:

- Set forth guidelines for the ethical conduct of all Herpetological Association of Africa (HAA) members. Membership of the HAA implies adherence to this Code, as well as to the Constitution of the HAA. Overall, members should not engage in conduct that will bring the profession and the HAA into disrepute.
- Provide guidance for HAA members who feel that they have been subjected to unethical conduct by another HAA member, or at any HAA-hosted events including online platforms.

General Statement of Conduct

The goal of the HAA is to promote and encourage the study of all aspects of herpetology, both in nature and captivity. Members of the HAA are expected to behave ethically in terms of their herpetological activities, and to display ethical and courteous conduct to others.

Responsibility and accountability

Members are encouraged to advance public knowledge and understanding of herpetology and to counter false or misleading statements which are detrimental to the wider community.

Members shall encourage and support fellow members in their professional development and, where possible, engage and mentor new entrants to our community.

Members should be aware of the ethical, legal and professional responsibilities incumbent to the specific institution in which they work or which they represent. All individuals should avoid personal and professional misconduct that might bring the HAA or the reputation of the profession into disrepute. Members shall not speak in the name of the association without the authorisation of the executive committee.

Research ethics

Members conducting research on herpetofauna will comply with all applicable standards, rules, and laws enacted to protect researchers and study organisms. This includes acquisition of ethical clearance certification, collection permits, export and import permits, and any additional required permission. In addition, members must be sensitive to local customs and needs, whether working locally or abroad.

When collecting reptiles and amphibians, members are expected to replace disturbed habitat as much as possible to its natural condition, and to take no more specimens than necessary for legitimate herpetological purposes. Every effort should be taken to protect reptiles and amphibians from over-collecting.

When maintaining reptiles and amphibians in captivity, members are expected to provide adequate care and humane treatment for all specimens, including prey animals and adhere to all ethical standards and requirements.

The reputation and integrity of the HAA are tightly linked with its publications. Researchers will only claim authorship of papers for which they have made substantial and diligent contributions, including conceiving or designing the study, securing funding, executing the experiments or field work, analysing and interpreting the data, and/or writing the manuscript. Authors may not be added or removed without their agreement, nor be named on a manuscript unless they have approved the final version of the manuscript. Moreover, members will not commit scientific fraud (e.g., through fabricating or falsifying data, suppressing results, deliberately misrepresenting findings, or committing plagiarism). In cases where funding could place authors in potential conflict of interest, they will clearly disclose this in their submission letter and in the text of the manuscript.

Courtesy and respect

HAA is committed to maintaining and promoting a professional environment within which its members treat each other with dignity and respect, without prejudice on any grounds. All members will not discriminate against, bully or harass others on the basis of: cultural and/or role difference, including (but not exclusively) those involving age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status and/or socio-economic status.

The HAA characterises unwelcome behaviours as those which are offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient, or sexual advances and other actions that cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or distress.

Given the degree of current reliance upon electronic means of communication it should be specifically noted that harassment, bullying and victimisation by members by electronic means is also unacceptable.

Disciplinary Action

Any member may be required to answer enquiries from the Association concerning their conduct within the context of HAA activities. Failure to respond to such enquiries within the requested time frame may lead to suspension and withdrawal of membership. Actions found to be in contravention of the HAA's Code of Conduct may result in either temporary or permanent withdrawal of membership.

Mistreatment

An HAA member that believes they have been treated unethically as per the above guidelines has several options for taking the matter forward. The member may:

- Directly contact any standing HAA committee member officially through the HAA email addresses posted on the HAA website. A detailed account of the inappropriate behaviour must be included
- Anonymously contact the HAA committee through the HAA website commenting portal. Here, a member can anonymously provide a detailed account of the inappropriate behaviour

In the case of alleged inappropriate behaviour, the HAA Executive Committee will investigate the allegation through consultation with participants. The committee will aim to settle minor infractions of the Code of Conduct through mediating for an apology from the transgressor and commitment by that person to refrain from inappropriate behaviour in the future. Serious infractions of the Code of Conduct may result in revoking of HAA membership on either a temporary or a permanent basis.