

# *African Herp News*

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# 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 African herpetofauna. Members receive the Association's journal, African Journal of Herpetology (which publishes review papers, research articles, and short communications – subject to peer review) and African Herp News, the Newsletter, which includes short communications, natural history notes, book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

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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 manuscripts by e-mail in MS Word '.doc' or '.docx' format.

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P. Le F. N. Mouton, Department of Botany and Zoology, Stellenbosch University, Private Bag X01, Matieland 7602, South Africa. E-mail: [pnm@sun.ac.za](mailto:pnm@sun.ac.za)

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BuyiMakhubo, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P. O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa. E-mail: [buyi.makhubo@nasmus.co.za](mailto:buyi.makhubo@nasmus.co.za)

### TREASURER

Johan Marais, Suite 150, Postnet X4, Bedfordview 2007, South Africa.

E-mail: [johan@africansnakebiteinstitute.com](mailto:johan@africansnakebiteinstitute.com)

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E-mail: [africanherpnews@gmail.com](mailto:africanherpnews@gmail.com)

### ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

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Michael Bates, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, PO Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa. E-mail: [herp@nasmus.co.za](mailto:herp@nasmus.co.za)

Aaron Bauer, Department of Biology, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, Pennsylvania 19085, USA. E-mail: [aaron.bauer@villanova.edu](mailto:aaron.bauer@villanova.edu)

Andrew Turner, Scientific Services, Western Cape Nature Conservation Board, Private Bag 5014, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa. E-mail: [aaturner@capenature.co.za](mailto:aaturner@capenature.co.za)

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** *Lamprophis guttatus*, 12,5 km west of Mokhotlong, Lesotho. Photo: W. R. Branch.

## ARTICLES

### UPDATE ON REPTILE TAXONOMY POST-PUBLICATION OF THE ATLAS AND RED LIST OF THE REPTILES OF SOUTH AFRICA, LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND

WARREN SCHMIDT

*Postnet Suite 101, Private Bag X01, East Rand 1462, South Africa.  
Email: warren@biodiversitynature.com*

Reptile taxonomy and systematics is moving at a rapid pace. Since the official launch of the *Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* (Bates *et al*, 2014), there have been several significant taxonomic revisions and new species descriptions affecting South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. This note serves to update the taxonomy of the region since the publication of *Suricata* 1.

#### Family Pelomedusidae

Petzold *et al* (2014) reviewed the African helmeted terrapins, *Pelamedusa*, and described six new species. These include *P. barbata* from the southwestern Arabian Peninsula, *P. kobe* from the Arusha region in Tanzania, *P. neumanni* from Kenya and Tanzania, *P. schweinfurthi* from the Central African Republic and South Sudan, *P. somalica* from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and *P. variabilis* from Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

*Pelomedusa galeata* (Schoepff, 1792) has been resurrected for populations in Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa.

*Pelomedusa subrufa* (Bonnaterre, 1789), is now restricted to Limpopo Province in South Africa, and elsewhere occurs in Southern Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, southeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Namibia and the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania (Petzhold *et al*, 2014).

#### Family Gekkonidae

Heinicke *et al* (2014), reviewed the phylogeny, taxonomy and biogeography of leaf-toed geckos. The South African species affected is *Afrogecko swartbergensis* (Haacke, 1996), which has been placed in a new genus, *Ramigecko*, named in honour of Bill Branch, 'rami' meaning branch.

The Angolan species, *Afrogecko plumicaudus* Haacke, 2008, is transferred to the new genus *Kolekanos*. The remaining South African leaf-toed geckos, *Afrogecko porphyreus* (Daudin, 1802) and *Cryptactites peringueyi* (Boulenger, 1910), remain unchanged (Heinicke, 2014).

Jacobsen *et al* (2014) have described nine new species of *Afroedura* from Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. Although most of these species have been known for well over two decades, molecular studies have allowed for a clearer understanding of their

taxonomic affinities.

The new species are as follows: *A. rupestris*, *A. maripi*, *A. pongola*, *A. rondevelica*, *A. granitica*, *A. leoloenis*, *A. broadleyi*, *A. waterbergensis* and *A. pienaari*. All previously recognised subspecies have been elevated to specific status, i.e. *Afroedura africana namaquensis* (*A. namaquensis*), *A. multiporis multiporis* (*A. multiporis*) and *A. multiporis haackei* (*A. haackei*) and the Namibian *A. africana tirasensis* (*A. tirasensis*) (Jacobsen, 2014).

Travers, Jackman and Bauer (2014) published a molecular phylogeny of the Afromontane dwarf geckos (*Lygodactylus*). The phylogenetic analysis has given rise to a better understanding of the evolutionary history of these geckos, resulting in some taxonomic reshuffling, with some species being reassigned to clades that accurately reflect their evolutionary history. The previous Afromontane groupings were found to be non-monophyletic. Previously recognised subspecies have all been elevated to specific status. These fall within the *ocellatus* group and include the following South African species: *Lygodactylus ocellatus ocellatus* (*L. ocellatus*), *L. ocellatus soutpansbergensis* (*L. soutpansbergensis*), *L. nigropunctatus nigropunctatus* (*L. nigropunctatus*), *L. nigropunctatus incognitus* (*L. incognitus*) and *L. nigropunctatus montiscaeruli* (*L. montiscaeruli*) (Travers *et al.*, 2014).

Broadley, Jackman & Bauer, 2014, reviewed the genus *Homopholis* and resurrected *Homopholis arnoldi* Loveridge, 1944, from the synonymy of *Homopholis wahlbergii* (A. Smith, 1849). *Homopholis arnoldi* is distributed in the northwestern and northern parts of Limpopo Province, as well as eastern Botswana, Zimbabwe and central Mozambique (Broadley *et al.*, 2014).

### Family Scincidae

Under the current taxonomic arrangement, South African skinks are divided into three subfamilies: Acontinae (25 taxa), Lygosominae (17 taxa), Scincinae (19 taxa). Hedges (2014) has proposed that the diverse Scincidae be split into 9 separate families, and has described two new families, the Ateuchosauridae and the Ristellidae.

Under this proposal, South African skinks would fall under the following arrangement: Acontidae Gray, 1839 (containing the genera *Acontias* and *Typhlosaurus*), Eugongylidae Welch, 1982 (containing the genera *Afroablepharus* and *Cryptoblepharus*), Lygosomidae Mittleman, 1952 (containing the genus *Mochlus*), Mabuylidae Mittleman, 1952 (containing the genus *Trachylepis*), Scincidae Oppel, 1811 (containing the genus *Scelotes*).

### Family Typhlopidae

Hedges *et al.* (2014) proposed a taxonomic framework for the snake family Typhlopidae. Under this proposal, the Typhlopidae is split into four subfamilies: Afrotyphlopinae, Asiatyphlopinae, Madatyphlopinae and Typhlopinae. Mainland African species would fall under the Afrotyphlopinae, which contains the genera *Afrotyphlops*, *Letheobia* and *Rhinotyphlops*. *Megatyphlops* Broadley & Wallach, 2009, is absorbed into the genus *Afrotyphlops* under this arrangement (Hedges *et al.*, 2014).

The above proposed taxonomic changes should be taken into consideration when using the *Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. Additional taxa and changes are expected as taxonomists gain further insight to the region's remarkable reptile diversity (M.F. Bates pers. comm.).

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