

# AFRICAN HERP NEWS

No. 35

OCTOBER 2002

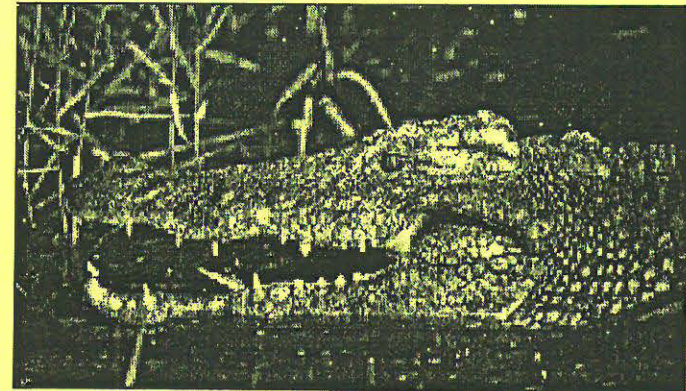
ISSN 1017-6187

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# AFRICAN HERP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA



No. 35

October 2002

## HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

### FOUNDED 1965

The HAA is dedicated to the study and conservation of African reptiles and amphibians. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the African herpetofauna. Members receive the Association's journal, *African Journal of Herpetology* (which publishes review papers, research articles, short communications and book reviews – subject to peer review) and newsletter, *African Herp News* (which includes short communications, life history notes, geographical distribution notes, venom and snakebite notes, short book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles will be considered for publication provided they are original and have not been published elsewhere.

Articles may be submitted for peer review (at least two reviewers) at the Editor's discretion. Lists of reviewers will be published in the newsletter from time to time.

Authors are requested to submit long manuscripts on disc or by e-mail in Word 6.0/7.0 format.

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

Articles and news items appearing in *African Herp News* may be reprinted, provided the author's name and newsletter reference are given.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: Nile Crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*, with hatchling Photo: Alison Leslie

## EDITORIAL

As the summer draws closer in the southern hemisphere it is time once again to elect a new H.A.A. Committee. African members have already submitted nomination forms. Within this issue, African members will also receive a voting slip/ ballot paper. Members have unfortunately shown little interest in the H.A.A. elections in the past. I urge you all to play an active role in this year's elections. Please take the time to fill in the ballot paper and to submit it to the relevant party. Remember that as members you are all very welcome to submit comments and any suggestions you may have concerning the running of the Association, including comments about the journal or newsletter. Many thanks in advance for your participation.

Please also take note of the short communication section on page 2. If you are a South African or working in South Africa, Che Weldon requires your assistance in identifying a possible new threat to the country's anuran biodiversity. A leaflet entitled "Frog submission form" is provided within this issue. If you can assist Che in any way, please do so.

This issue contains a number of exciting Natural History notes, new Geographical distributions and #23 of the "Recent African Herpetological Literature" series. Thanks to all those who submitted articles and news items for this issue of *African Herp News*. Keep them coming!

Alison Leslie

*Chair and Newsletter Editor.*

**REPTILIA**  
**SERPENTES**

**BOIDAE*****Python anchietae*****Angola or Anchieta's Dwarf Python****REPRODUCTION**

Anchieta's Dwarf Python is poorly known with few specimens kept in captivity (Branch 1998). Marais (1992) states that this is one of the rarest snakes in Southern Africa with less than 50 individuals known to exist. They are seldom encountered and nocturnal in captivity (Marais 1992), factors which possibly account for their scarceness.

The distribution includes northern Namibia and southern Angola (Branch 1998, Broadley 1983, Marais 1992) with a preferred habitat stated as rugged, dry, rocky sandveld and riverine vegetation (Branch 1998).

Three adult *P. anchietae* specimens (2 ♀ & 1 ♂) are kept in a common enclosure (with a simulated photoperiod), which is open to public viewing throughout the year, at the Living Desert Snake Park in Swakopmund, Namibia. Although the enclosure does not receive direct sunlight, the room is well lit and supported by an under-floor heater. Total lengths of the adult snakes are as follows: ♂ - 1370 mm, ♀ - 1450 mm, ♀ - 1350 mm (egg laying female).

Mating was frequently observed during the months prior to the eggs being discovered, although mating was not as insistent as had previously been observed for the South African Pythons (*Python natalensis*) at the Living Desert Snake Park. A few weeks before the eggs were laid, it was noticed that the smaller female was very swollen, but no eggs could be felt.

On 20 November 2001, four large eggs were found in the enclosure and were immediately removed to an incubator where they were kept at approximately 28° C, partly submerged in dampened vermiculite. The egg sizes were as follows: 95 x 42 mm; 90 x 40 mm; 90 x 40 mm & 73 x 34 mm (87 ± 8 mm & 39 ± 3 mm). According to Patterson & Erasmus (1978) five eggs were laid by a captive female. Egg size is markedly different to that of 62 x 37mm as mentioned by Branch (1998) and Marais (1992). After 81 days (9<sup>th</sup> February) one egg was snipped to determine the status of the eggs (the smallest egg was infertile). The baby python was fully formed and alive although there was still much egg yolk evident. After a week, the yolk had all been ingested, but the

baby died, still in the egg (this could have been due to an infection as a result of the fact that a blood vessel had been cut when the shell was snipped). The other eggs had also been snipped, as the shells were extremely tough (possibly under natural conditions, they would have been much less robust after this time, due to the actions of various outside agents). The first hatchling appeared on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2002, the other emerging two days later (i.e. 92-94 days). Branch (1998) indicated incubation to be between 60-70 days while Marais (1992) states between 72 and 75 days. Total lengths of the hatchlings were 490 mm and 510 mm, respectively. This is similar to total length of young measured by Branch (1998) and Marais (1992). The hatchlings were force-fed 'fuzzy' mice for the first time in June 2002 as they still had not shown any interest in eating small mice offered to them. They do not need much more than the head of the mouse inserted into their mouths, to get them eating. Currently, both juveniles are healthy, albeit very delicate and timid creatures. Both sloughed for the first time during June 2002.

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