

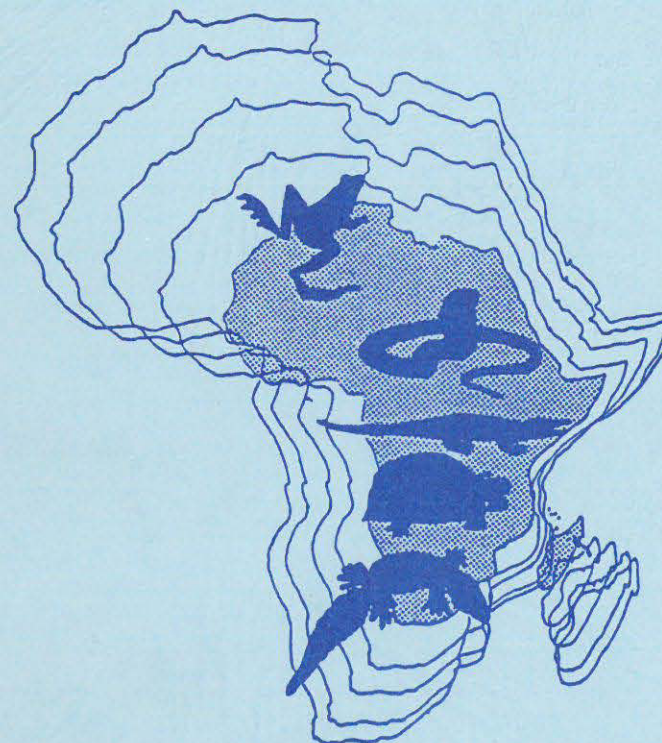
AFRICAN HERP NEWS

NO. 21: JULY 1994

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AFRICAN HERP NEWS

HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA
NEWSLETTER

JULY 1994

NO. 21

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 *Journal of the Herpetological Association of Africa* (which publishes review papers, research articles, short communications and book reviews - subject to peer review) and *African Herp News* (HAA Newsletter) which includes short communications, life history notes, geographical distribution notes, venoms and snakebite notes, short book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items.

Editor's note:

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

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.

Typist:

Mrs H. de Villiers, National Museum, Bloemfontein.

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EDITORIAL

A new era has dawned in the evolutionary history of the *Herpetological Association of Africa*. I am of course referring to the new-style journal, changes of which were spelled out in the "New editorial policy for the H.A.A. Journal" notice published in the previous issue of *African Herp News*. Of greatest concern to those members who felt uncertain about the changes are the following: What will happen to Life History, Geographical Distribution and Venoms and Snakebite short notes; and will the journal be lost as a local "outlet" for annotated checklists and short communications not suitable for publication in major journals?

I am pleased to say that all short notes, annotated checklists and other short communications are welcome in *African Herp News* and I would like to encourage members to continue submitting them for publication. There are few who would not agree that much invaluable information has appeared in the above-mentioned sections over the years. The transfer of these sections to *African Herp News* is necessary so that the journal can become of similar standard and format as other journals already accredited, and has no bearing on the importance of short notes. The term "short note" does not include "short communications", i.e. short research articles, as these are still published in the journal.

For those who have supported the journal, newsletter or both, keep up the good work, and for those who have not, get going and let's improve the quality of our Association's publications.

Good news! Following the suggestion at the last H.A.A. Symposium that the next symposium be held in Kwazulu Natal, Dr Orty Bourquin has put together an organizing committee and made provisional arrangements (see notice in this issue of *African Herp News*). The venue is St Lucia and provisional dates are 30 October to 2 November 1995. This promises to be yet another great H.A.A. symposium.

Lastly, I thank all contributors of articles and news items for this issue of *African Herp News* and look forward to receiving your next contributions.

Mike Bates

Chairman/Newsletter Editor

ELAPIDAE

HEMACHATUS HAEMACHATUS

Rinkhals

DICEPHALISM

On 5 January 1950 an adult female *Hemachatus haemachatus* was killed near Bethlehem in the Orange Free State (28°14'S, 28°18'E; 2828Ac). The carcass was collected and dissected by Dr J.N.W. Loubser who found the female to be gravid. The oviducts and embryos were deposited in the herpetological collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (TM 22161). There were 19 embryos in the left oviduct and 18 in the right. One embryo was dicephalic. The head was divided at the 4th ventral with the fusion at the 5th upper labial on the right head and the 6th upper labial on the left head; a communal lower jaw was present. The head measured: length - left 10,5 mm, right 8,8 mm; width - left 7,1 mm, right 7,2 mm; embryo mass 2,8 g. It also had a communal anterior body which formed a double U-shape to both sides to split into two separate tails, the left measuring 67 mm and the right 72 mm. The "snakes" could be described as "Siamese twins". Both tails had everted hemipenes. Colour an overall grey-brown with distinct white bands. Dicephalism has been reported for various oviparous South African snake species. Haagner & Van Rhyn (1991, *The Naturalist* 35(3): 3-5) reported dicephalism in *Lamprophis fuliginosus* and *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*, while Haagner & Boycott (1993, *J. Herpetol. Assoc. Afr.* 42: 39) recorded a dicephalic hatchling *Lycophidion c. capense* from Swaziland. This appears to be the first report on dicephalism in a viviparous African snake.

Acknowledgements: Mr W.D. Haacke for permission to work on the herpetological collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria; and Ms S. Ritter for assistance.

Submitted by: G.V. HAAGNER (Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa).

NAJA HAJE ANNULIFERA

Egyptian Cobra

DIET

A non-banded *Naja haje annulifera* was killed at a small river near a dam in wooded miombo grassland in the intensely farmed Karoyi area of Zimbabwe (29°35'E, 16°35'S; 2916Da) on 3 April 1994. Cobras and mambas, together with birds, rodents and other mammals, are common in the area. The cobra was 2,1 m long and in good physical condition. Its stomach contained two Leopard Tortoises (*Geochelone pardalis*), one in an advanced state of decomposition and the other still intact (95 mm long, 70 mm wide). There were no other food items in the stomach. Only one other case of predation by a snake on a chelonian is known to the author - that of a Puff Adder (*Bitis a. arietans*) eating a Leopard Tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis*) (Wilson, 1965, *Puku* 3: 149-170).

Submitted by: C. MACKIE (P.O. Box CY 1409, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe).

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

African Herp News published brief notices of new geographical distributions (preferably at least 100 km from the nearest published record) of reptiles and amphibians on the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other Indian Ocean islands.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **SCIENTIFIC NAME**; **Common name** (see Life History Notes); **Locality** (country, province or state, location, quarter-degree grid unit and latitude and longitude if available; use metric distances); **Date** (day, month, year); **Collector(s)**; **Place of deposition and accession number** (required); **Comments** (including data on size, colour and scalation, especially for taxonomically problematic taxa; and nearest published record/s in km; references to be quoted in text); **Submitted by:** NAME, address (in brackets). Observation records are acceptable only in exceptional circumstances (as in the case of large or easily identifiable reptiles, e.g. pythons, tortoises). Records submitted should be based on specimens deposited in a recognised institutional collection (private collection records are discouraged).

AMPHIBIA

ANURA

BUFONIDAE

BUFO LEMARII Boulenger, 1901: Lemar's Toad; Namibia, Caprivi Strip, Shankara (17°58'36"S, 20°30'52"E; 1720Dc); 20 January 1994; W.R. Branch & A. Channing; Port Elizabeth Museum, PEM A2585. Collected on road at night in mopane savanna. Snout-urostyle length 54,3 mm, tibia length 24,7 mm, mass 16,6 g; light brown overall colour with distinct, elongated (13,1 mm) parotid glands; snout pointed with *Rana*-like appearance; dark inter-orbital bars present, not meeting mid-dorsally; pale median stripe from snout to vent. This species remains a rarity in museum collections. It has been recorded from the Zambezi River and Okavango Swamps (Haacke, 1982, *J. Herpetol. Assoc. Afr.* 27: 11-12), and Poynton & Broadley (1988, *Ann. Natal Mus.* 29(2):447-490) listed three localities in Botswana; the species is more widespread in Zambia, Angola and Zaire. Channing & Griffin (1993, *Madoqua* 18(2): 101-116) listed *B. lemarii* as being of likely occurrence in Namibia. The Shankara record confirms its presence within the political boundaries of the country.

Acknowledgements: The Namibian Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism for permission to collect in Namibia; Dr M. Griffin for his assistance.

Submitted by: W.R. BRANCH, G.V. HAAGNER (Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa) and A. CHANNING (Department of Biochemistry, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa).

HYPEROLIIDAE

HYPEROLIUS MARMORATUS MARGINATUS Peters, 1854: Margined Reed Frog; Zimbabwe, Hwange National Park, three localities: (1) Manzimbovu Pan (1826Cc); 17-18 December 1993; D.G. Broadley and G.S.A. Rasmussen; Natural History Museum