

**AFRICAN HERP NEWS**

No. 30 December 1999

**CONTENTS**

**EDITORIAL** ..... 1

**ARTICLES**

BAUER, A.M., LAMB, T., & BRANCH, W.R. Additional Records of Uncommon *Pachydactylus* ..... 2

BRANCH, W.R. Recent Herpetological Literature: 19 ..... 5

**NATURAL HISTORY NOTES**

BRANCH, W.R. *Homopus femoralis*: Egg and Clutch Size ..... 28

BOURQUIN, O. *Chamaeleo tigris*: Size and Breeding ..... 29

BAUER, A.M. *Cordylosaurus subtessellatus*: Maximum Size ..... 30

GRIFFIN, M. *Prosymna frontalis*: Reproduction ..... 30

PAUWELS, O.S.G., DAVID, P., & LENGLET, G. *Pseudohaje goldii*: Diet ..... 32

PAUWELS, O.S.G., & OHLER, A. *Pseudohaje nigra*: Diet ..... 33

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION**

HAACKE, W.D. *Ptychadena mapacha* ..... 35

BROADLEY, D.G. *Melanoseps longicauda* ..... 36

BROADLEY, D.G. *Prosymna lineata* ..... 36

BRANCH, W.R., & HAAGNER, G.V. *Psammophis brevirostris* and *Acontias* sp. .... 37

**HERPETOLOGICAL BOOKS** ..... 38

**NEW SOCIETY** ..... 39

**SSAR REPRINT: SHAW'S "HERPETOLOGY"** ..... 40

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# African Herp News

Newsletter of the  
Herpetological Association of Africa



No. 30

December 1999

## 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 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.

### TYPING AND PRODUCTION:

Dr. Angelo Lambiris.

## COMMITTEE OF THE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

### CHAIRMAN AND NEWSLETTER EDITOR

DR. A.J.L. LAMBRIS, Department of Zoology, University of Durban-Westville, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa. e-mail: lambiris@pixie.udw.ac.za

### SECRETARY/TREASURER

MR. F.L. FARQUHARSON, P.O. Box 20142, Durban North 4016, South Africa.

### JOURNAL EDITOR

DR. M.J. WHITING, Department of Herpetology, Transvaal Museum, P.O. Box 413, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.

### ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MR. M.F. BATES, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa.

DR. W.R. BRANCH, Department of Herpetology, Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa.

MR. R.M. DOUGLAS, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa.

MR. W.D. HAACKE, Department of Herpetology, Transvaal Museum, P.O. Box 413, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.

## EDITORIAL

Members of the Association must be wondering what has happened to the Journal—we apologise for the fact that there was no issue in 1999, but this was the result of matters beyond our control. The problems have been addressed and dealt with. We shall in future meet our commitment to producing two Journals per year.

You will notice with this issue of the Newsletter that we have found another printer—the previous one could not produce anything acceptable. We are currently getting enough contributions to produce two issues of the Newsletter per year, but can only give value to members by producing three or four issues if you send in more articles! Our hearty thanks to those who have contributed this year, and also to the referees who commented on some of the articles. Two wish to remain anonymous, but thanks are due to Prof. John Poynton and Ms. Kate Richardson.

The last two years have eaten heavily into the Association's financial reserves, and it is clear that subscriptions will have to be increased if we are to keep going. Because no Journal was issued this year, we shall not increase the subscription in the year 2000 as originally intended, but shall have to do so in 2001. Hopefully, with increased Journal and Newsletter production members will feel that they are still getting value for money—to the best of my knowledge, our Association has the lowest subscription anywhere for a society that produces a peer-reviewed professional journal as well as a newsletter.

We had hoped to hold another symposium in September next year, but again a series of unforeseen and largely uncontrollable events have effectively demolished Geraldine Pieterse's heroic attempts to get things under way. One of the less creditable obstacles was the unbelievable tariffs charged by an organisation which seems to have changed its mission statement from conservation to fleecing tourists.

Turning to other matters, it is time for a new Committee to be elected. All but one of the present committee members have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election though of course other full Association members may be nominated as well.

The exception is Frank Farquharson, who has carried out the Herculean task of Secretary/Treasurer since 1992, with great competence and distinction. He feels that a break would be welcome, as well as giving some of our younger blood a chance to take up the reins. Frank will be a hard act to follow, and we thank him for his efficiency and his dedication to the interests of the Association. Who would like to follow in his footsteps?

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish you all well over the festive season and in the new year.

Angelo Lambiris

Chairman and Newsletter Editor.

### COVER ILLUSTRATION:

Nile Crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*. Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe. Sketch by A.J.L. Lambiris

**GERRHOSAURIDAE*****CORDYLOSAURUS SUBTESSELLATUS*****Dwarf Plated Lizard  
MAXIMUM SIZE**

Branch (1998, *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, 2nd ed., Struik Publishers, Cape Town, 399 pp.) listed average sizes of 35-45 mm SVL for this species, with a maximum of 55 mm SVL. The largest particular specimen for which a size has been published, however, is TM 19162 from Rehoboth measuring 53 mm snout vent length + 104 mm tail length (FitzSimons, V., 1943, *Mem. Transvaal Mus.* 1: xv + 528 pp, 24 pls., 1 map). On 25 July 1998, three specimens of *Cordylusaurus subtessellatus* were collected in an area of broken calcrete substratum 0.4 km northeast of the junction of the Palmwag-Sesfontein Road (3706) on the Sesfontein-Opuwo Road (3704) at 19°08'S, 13°44'E (1931BA), Opuwo District, Kunene Region, Republic of Namibia. The largest of these was CAS 206966, an adult male, measuring 57.1 mm SVL = 79.4 mm TL (of which the last 24.5 mm were regenerated). This represents an 8% increase in maximum SVL for the species. Specimens exceeding 45 mm SVL are rarely encountered, especially in the Western and Northern Cape Provinces of South Africa. Experience with this species throughout its range suggests that there may be a south to north cline in increasing body size.

**Submitted by**

A..M. BAUER (Department of Biology, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, U.S.A.), T. LAMB (Department of Biology, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858, U.S.A.), and W.R. BRANCH (Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13174, Humewood 6013, South Africa).

**SERPENTES****COLUBRIDAE*****PROSYMNA FRONTALIS*****South-western Shovel-Snout  
REPRODUCTION**

On 19 January 1999 a gravid female was found moving on the ground at around 10h00 in central Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia (22° 35'S, 17° 05' E, elevation 1740 m a.s. l.). Total length of the specimen is 310 mm. Three eggs appeared in the holding container on 26 January, measuring 39 x 12, 37 x 10, and 39 x 11 mm. After three days the eggs were placed in an incubator, on a damp vermiculite bed where the temperature was maintained at between 28 and 32°C.

Hatching occurred between 15 and 20 March, giving an incubation period of between 48 and 53 days. Total lengths of the hatchlings were 140, 140 and 145 mm, and weights were 1.27, 1.28, and 1.32 g respectively.

Broadley (1980, *Occ. Pap. Natl. Mus. Rhod. B*, 6(7): 481-556, summarised reproduc-

tion parameters for all species in the genus, but no data were available for *P. frontalis*. Subsequent literature, popular as well as scientific, has not rectified this omission. The number of eggs laid in this instance is within the reported range for the genus, but the size of the eggs is the largest reported. The specimens are deposited in the National Museum of Namibia (NMWN:R 6688-6891).

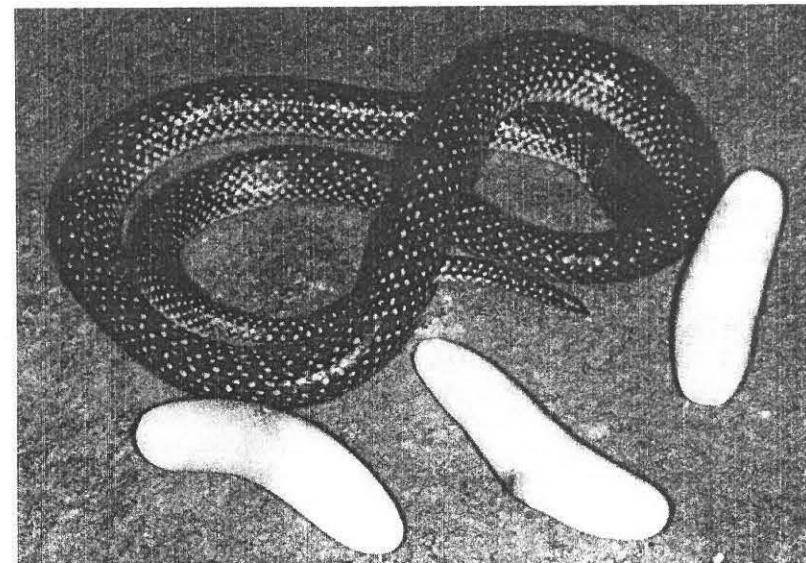


Fig. 1: *Prosymna frontalis* with eggs. Windhoek, Namibia. (Photo: M. Griffin)

**Submitted by**

M. GRIFFIN (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, P.B. 13306, Windhoek, Namibia) and J. HAUCH (P.O. Box 96179, Windhoek, Namibia).