

AFRICAN HERP NEWS

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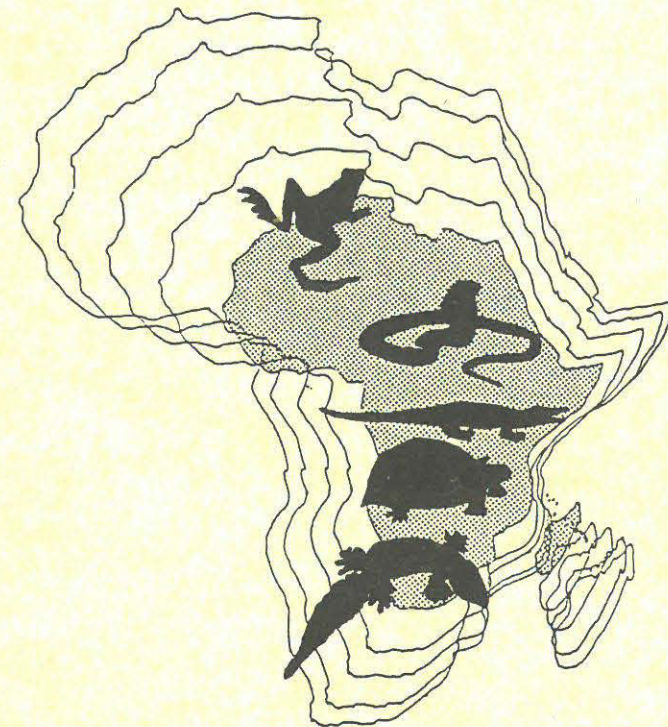
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AFRICAN HERP NEWS

HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA
NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 1991

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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 technical articles- subject to peer review, notes, book reviews and bibliographies) and *African Herp News* (HAA Newsletter) which includes news items, husbandry hints, announcements, etc).

Editor's note:

Articles submitted 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 source of information is given.

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EDITORIAL

In this issue of *African Herp News* I have included speeches presented at the recent *Second H.A.A. Symposium on African Herpetology*, as well as photographs of delegates taken during the Official Dinner. H.A.A. members who did not make it to the symposium may find the latter of particular interest.

Members will be pleased to know that the Directors of the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria have kindly agreed to allow the H.A.A. to host the *Third H.A.A. Symposium on African Herpetology* at the Transvaal Museum in 1993. This symposium will celebrate the 50th year since the publication of FitzSimons' famous *Lizards of South Africa*, as well as the centenary of Transvaal Museum. However, the 1993 symposium is still in the early stages of planning, and no final dates can be given at this time. More on this will be published in a later newsletter.

The proceedings of the recent H.A.A. symposium held in Bloemfontein will be published in journal no. 40, due out early in 1992.

The next issue of *African Herp News* will be a special one, namely Rod Douglas' *Bibliographic index to the Journal of the Herpetological Association of Africa 1-39*. I am sure members will find this publication particularly useful when doing research on African herps. The index has been completed and will be posted to members during the half of 1992.

This issue of *African Herp News* is the second and last for 1991. Due to my involvement with the H.A.A. symposium held during April of this year, it was not possible to produce three issues. However, this issue and the previous one are far more 'bulky' than usual!

Lastly, I would like to thank all contributors of articles and news items for this issue of *African Herp News*. I am pleased to say that members have been particularly supportive in submitting information.

All the best for 1992.

Mike Bates
Chairman/Newsletter Editor



EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN HERPETOLOGY

Presented by Rod Douglas, National Museum, Bloemfontein

JOHN C. POYNTON

Born 1931 in Pretoria, South Africa

It is with great honour and pleasure that I have been asked to present one of the first *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* awards. It is just as great an honour and pleasure to be presenting this award to one of Africa's great herpetologists, Prof. John Poynton.

When one is asked to perform this type of presentation, it is not only necessary to do justice to the recipient, but to the occasion as well. In order to assure a certain correctness, the recipient is usually asked for a resume in order to assist the presenter in his task. Now sometimes it is possible to draw some conclusions about a person's character by the resume he or she has submitted, not only from its length, but also from the manner in which it was written. In some instance, a resume may turn out to be an autobiography, detailing everything from the regularity of nappy changes as a baby to the person's favourite restaurant, while others leave one in no doubt that the writer felt that he or she had definitely been overlooked for the no lesser position than that of a monarch. On the other hand, there are also those resumes which are unpretentious and unassuming, and in which the writer would have you believe that he or she had done nothing to warrant receiving any award at all.

For those of you who know Prof. John Poynton, it will not be hard to imagine into which category his resume fell. Yes, his resume fell into the last category, and in his extreme modesty, he submitted 16 lines on his extremely productive life of diverse and great achievement. Therefore, if there are any obvious gaps with which I have not acquainted myself, and I am sure there are many, you are kindly asked to excuse me for these omissions.

Prof. John Poynton was born in Pretoria in 1931 and completed his schooling at Michael House in Natal. He then enrolled at the University of Natal, where he gained his MSc degree on amphibian behaviour, and more specifically the humidity reaction of frogs and toads. The thesis was completed between attending classes at the College of Music at the University of Cape Town. In 1958, Prof. Poynton accepted a lecturing post in zoology at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, gaining his PhD degree for a taxonomic revision and biogeography of the Amphibia of Southern Africa. In 1965, he accepted a senior lectureship in zoology at the University of the Witwatersrand, and later moved to the Parapsychology Foundation of New York as a researcher. It was then back to the University of Natal in 1971 with an appointment to teach medical biology and co-ordinate the first-year medical course. In the Biology Department at the University of Natal, Prof. Poynton has built up a school of biogeography, which centers mainly on urban open space surveying, design and management. The position

of Associate Professor was conferred on him in 1982, and during the same year he was made an Honorary Research Associate at the Natal Museum, where his herpetological work has been centered. Yet another great honour accorded him in 1982 was his election as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. Full professorship was bestowed on him by the University of Natal in 1988. Two other significant honours bestowed upon Prof. Poynton were the naming of a new genus of frog (*Poyntonina*) after him by Alan Channing and Richard Boycott, and the naming of a new species of *Cacosternum*, *Cacosternum poyntoni*, by Angelo Lambiris.

As you may have gathered, Prof. Poynton has been involved in a variety of scientific interests, and needless to say, this diversity is reflected in his 68 published works. Starting his publishing career in 1959 with *Zoogeography - a study in science history*, Prof. Poynton's interest was more orientated towards biogeography, zoogeography and distribution patterns of amphibians, rather than specific studies. However, from 1963, Prof. Poynton became more involved with the taxonomy and ecology of the amphibia, with *Description of Southern African amphibians* appearing in 1963 and *The amphibia of Southern Africa: a faunal Study*, in 1964. His research was not only limited to South African amphibians, but included east Africa and countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Being a true scientist, his ever-enquiring mind also led him into the field of neurological, behavioural and breeding aspects of amphibia. During this period, Prof. Poynton also described a new species of *Probreviceps* and a new subspecies of *Rana* from Zimbabwe. From 1973 to 1975, Prof. Poynton concentrated on one of his other interests - Parapsychology, with papers such as *Parapsychology and the biological science* and *Results of an out-of-the-body survey* being published. It is obviously impossible to list all of Prof. Poynton's publications, but suffice to say that from 1976 to date, examples of the diversity of his subject matter includes **herpetology** - The Amphibia of Maputaland; **biogeography** - Amphibian biogeography: facts in search of Quaternary theory; **classification** - Classification of the Arthroleptinae; **evolution** - Evolutionary activity in the southern part of Africa: evidence from the amphibia; **urban open space ecology** - Central and peripheral urban open spaces: need for biological evaluation; **Parapsychology** - Conscious states and physical death; and **philosophy of science** - Holistic thinking in medicine: pitfalls and possibilities.

One of Prof. Poynton's most comprehensive and definitive studies is the four-part series *Amphibia Zambeziaca*, on which he worked in collaboration with Dr. Don Broadley. This study covers the amphibian species occurring in Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the eastern Caprivi trip. The first and second parts were published in 1985, with the third part in 1987 and the fourth in 1988. A final part on zoogeography has already been completed and is due for publication in October this year.

We are most fortunate to have here with us this evening an excellent example of what I know to be one of Prof. Poynton's proudest achievements, and about which he may be rightfully proud. This part of his work appears neither in his resume nor his *curriculum vitae*, but is a part of his work in which he saw a great and vibrant potential, and which I am led to believe, sometimes painstakingly nurtured through to full fruition - Dr. Don Broadley, his former student.

The *Herpetological Association of Africa* is proud to be able to honour here tonight one of Africa's great herpetologists, a man who has contributed not only significantly to African herpetology, but also to our knowledge and understanding of African amphibians. This has been no mean task, and has been achieved over many, many years of hard work and productive research. It is therefore my pleasure to ask Prof. Poynton to come up and receive his *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* award.



Prof. John Poynton (left) receiving his *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* award from Mr Rod Douglas (right) during the Official Dinner at Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

(photo: L.H. du Preez)

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN HERPETOLOGY

Presented by Bill Branch, Port Elizabeth Museum

DONALD GEORGE BROADLEY

Born 29 May 1932, Stamford, Lincolnshire, England

Mr Chairman, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen:

If I may start this talk on a personal note, Don Broadley has been a continual source of inspiration and ever-willing advice for the last 20 years. I therefore feel very privileged tonight to be given the opportunity to present this award on behalf of the HAA. For those members unaware of Don's herpetological beginnings, I shall start by giving some detail of his early history (for which he has kindly given me permission).

Don's education was affected by World War II and its immediate aftermath. On being discharged after serving two years (1950-1952) of conscripted service in the Royal Air Force, Don moved to the British Ordnance Survey Unit at Southampton in Hampshire. There he started to collect the reptiles that were to transform his life. Within two years he had caught all six British reptiles, including the rare smooth snake and sand lizard. His sights were soon set on larger things; richer herpetofaunas. Africa beckoned.

Initially he applied for the post of Curator at the Corydon Museum in Kenya. This post had once been held by Arthur Loveridge, whose mantle as Africa's foremost herpetologist Don was soon to take over. The Kenyan post was unavailable, so instead he took a job as a draughtsman with the Town Planning Department in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Taking up this post in October 1954, he soon felt constrained by city life and within a few years he became a 'mud doctor' with the Roads Department and moved to a field station near Bulawayo. At weekends he began, voluntarily, to curate the small herpetological collection at the local museum. His own field trips, and the encouragement to collect of colleagues working on road construction, soon resulted in numerous new discoveries. To solve some of these problems of identification, correspondence with Arthur Loveridge at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard ensued, and soon resulted in one of Don's earliest papers. It reveals much about Don's attitudes that in subsequent years we were to see him make such an outstanding contribution to African herpetology. It is entitled 'The Herpetology of Southern Rhodesia. Part 1. Snakes'. The enthusiasm for reptiles that had brought him to Africa was not to be satisfied with simple papers. A continental herpetofauna needed to be studied. It was a wide-open field, and Don threw himself into it with a vengeance.

In 1957 his enthusiasm led to the founding of the Herpetological Association of Rhodesia - our forerunner. A stream of new descriptions and regional surveys soon led to recognition of his abilities by Ray Smithers, then Director of Museum Services in the