

# AFRICAN HERP NEWS

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# AFRICAN HERP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA



No. 34

February 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.

## COMMITTEE OF THE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

### CHAIR

DR. A. J. LESLIE, Department of Conservation Ecology, University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, Matieland, 7602, South Africa. E-mail: aleslie@land.sun.ac.za

### SECRETARY/TREASURER

MR. F.L. FARQUHARSON, PO Box 20142, Durban North, 4016, South Africa.  
E-mail: haasec@freemail.absa.co.za

### JOURNAL EDITOR

DR. G. ALEXANDER, Department of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Gauteng, South Africa. E-mail: graham@gecko.biol.wits.ac.za

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR (CO-OPTED)

MS. L. VISAGIE, Terrestrial Ecology Research Unit, Department of Zoology, University of Port Elizabeth, PO Box 1600, Port Elizabeth, 6000, South Africa. E-mail: zlrluv@zoo.upe.ac.za

### ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DR. M. J. WHITING, Department of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, Gauteng, South Africa.

MR. M. F. BATES, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, PO 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, 26, 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Menlo Park, Pretoria, 0081.

COVER ILLUSTRATION: White-throated monitor (*Varanus albigularis*). Photograph by Herbert Jauch.

HERP CARTOONS: C.A. Seaby

## EDITORIAL

Last year ended on a high note, as can be attested by all delegates who attended the 6<sup>th</sup> HAA Symposium held at the University of Stellenbosch in September 2001. The conference was hugely successful as a wide variety of relevant herpetological topics were presented, stimulating debate until the late evening hours when delegates had the opportunity to learn the enjoyable art of wine tasting at select wine farms in the district. Eddie van Dijk was the recipient of the Association's award for *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology*, handed over during an afternoon function during which Alan Channing provided a brief synopsis of Eddie van Dijk's research achievements. The only shadow cast on the proceedings were the unfortunate events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, necessitating our international delegates to contact family members and reschedule flights back home. On the whole, though, the 6<sup>th</sup> HAA Symposium was a memorable one, thanks to the hard work and efficient organization of Alison Leslie and Aliko Strydom.

Alison is currently in Botswana overseeing the launch of her Okavango Crocodile Project, thus I am temporarily standing in as newsletter editor. She will be back in the country by March, and contributions for future newsletter editions can still be e-mailed to aleslie@land.sun.ac.za. If any of your contact details have changed and need to be updated, details should also be sent to this e-mail address. In the meantime we would like to wish Alison the best of luck with her project.

Louise Visagie

*Newsletter Editor (Co-opted)*

originally described from the Ravine Station on the Mau Escarpment and he personally observed a specimen in the outskirts of Kakamega Forest.

**Submitted by**

Armand G.H. Poblete (University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Department of Biological Sciences, P. O. Box 2500, Eldoret, Kenya).

E-mail: agpoblete@africaonline.co.ke.

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**GEKKONIDAE**

*Ptenopus garrulus maculatus*

Common Barking Gecko

**BEHAVIOUR**

Lizards of the genus *Ptenopus* are ground-burrowing geckos. They live in the dry areas of Southern Africa (Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe). Three species are currently recognized (Branch, 1998). These geckos are commonly known as barking geckos. Males call (bark) at the entrances of their burrows to signal to females their ability to mate, and may call from sunset to early morning (Branch, 1998; Haacke, 1976).

Calls have previously been recorded and analyzed (Haacke, 1976). Result showed a difference in call characteristics between local populations, regarding both the number of "clicks" per call and the call rhythm. Could those differences have an effect on the female mating answer behaviour? I kept two groups (group A and group B) of *Ptenopus garrulus maculatus* from two different localities at home, in the same room. The following behaviour was observed.

When male A began to call, females in group A (including a sexually receptive female), walked nervously along the glass wall of the terrarium, pausing at intervals to listen to the calls, and sometimes responded with a vocal answer (Girard, 1997). When male B began to call, there was no reaction from the females in group A (not even from the sexually receptive one).

When male A began to call, female B remained hidden in its burrow or had no reaction. When male B called, female B showed her head at the burrow entrance and moved its head from right to left at intervals. I believe, however, that female B was too young and probably not sexually receptive. These observations have been noticed on several occasions, but it is necessary to obtain more information to verify the "answer behaviour".

**References**

- Branch W. R. 1998. *Field guide to snakes and other reptiles of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town.
- Girard F. 1997. *African Herp News* 26:32
- Haacke, W. D. 1976. The burrowing geckos of Southern Africa. *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* 30:14-28.

**Submitted by**

F. Girard (167, bd Vincent Auriol, 75013, Paris, France)

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**CORDYLIDAE**

*Cordylus tropidosternum jonesi* Boulenger, 1891

Tropical girdled lizard.

**LONGEVITY**

I bought two specimens (adult males) of *Cordylus tropidosternum jonesi* in 1975 at a pet shop (at that stage South Africa still exported large quantities of girdled lizards). The first specimen died in 1986 and the second one died recently in November 2001, after 26 years of captivity. I do not know of a similar longevity record for this species.

**Submitted by**

F. Girard (167, bd Vincent Auriol, 75013, Paris, France)

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**CORDYLIDAE**

*Cordylus tropidosternum tropidosternum* Cope 1869.

Tropical girdled lizard.

**REPRODUCTION**

A studbook breeding programme for *Cordylus tropidosternum tropidosternum* and *Cordylus tropidosternum jonesi* was started in the Netherlands in 1994. The aim of this studbook is to create genetically healthy and reproductively active captive populations. The studbook currently contains 57 animals in total, of which the majority are *C. t. tropidosternum* individuals. Since 1998, an increasing number of studbook participants have had breeding successes with *C. t. tropidosternum*. One trigger that appears to stimulate captive breeding is seasonal variation in climatic conditions. A cool and dry resting period is desirable for several weeks, followed by a warm and humid spring. However, this trigger is not essential as some breeding