

NUMBER 66 | DECEMBER 2017

AHN

AFRICAN HERP NEWS



HAA

HERPETOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA
www.africanherpetology.org

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, and short communications – subject to peer review) and African Herp News, the Newsletter (which includes short communications, natural history notes, book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles shall be considered for publication provided that they are original and have not been published elsewhere. Articles will be submitted for peer review at the Editor's discretion. Authors are requested to submit manuscripts by e-mail in MS Word '.doc' or '.docx' format.

COPYRIGHT: Articles published in the Newsletter are copyright of the Herpetological Association of Africa and may not be reproduced without permission of the Editor.

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

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: *Dipsadoboa aulica*
Photograph by: Nicholas Telford

COMMITTEE OF THE HAA CHAIRMAN

Graham Alexander, School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 2050, South Africa.

E-mail: graham.alexander@wits.ac.za

SECRETARY

Buyi Makhubo, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P. O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa.

E-mail: buyi.makhubo@nasmus.co.za

TREASURER

Johan Marais, Suite 150, Postnet X4, Bedfordview 2007, South Africa.

E-mail: johan@africansnakebiteinstitute.com

JOURNAL EDITOR

John Measey, Department of Zoology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, South Africa.

E-mail: john@measey.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jessica da Silva, South African National Biodiversity Institute. Kirstenbosch Research Centre, Cape Town, South Africa.

E-mail: africanherpnews@gmail.com

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

Michael Bates, Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa. *E-mail: herp@nasmus.co.za*

Aaron Bauer, Department of Biology, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, Pennsylvania 19085, USA.
Email: aaron.bauer@villanova.edu.

Shelley Edwards, Department of Zoology and Entomology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. *E-mail: s.edwards@ru.ac.za*

Bryan Maritz, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation at the University of the Western Cape. *E-mail: bmaritz@uwc.ac.za*

AHN

CONTENTS

- 4 EDITORIAL
- ABSTRACTS
- 5 SPECIAL MEMORIAL LECTURE
- 6 KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS
- 7 ORAL PRESENTATIONS
- 64 POSTERS
- 78 HAA MEMBERSHIP FEES
- 80 INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

years. The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), in partnership with the Rainforest Trust, has recently developed a project investigating the feasibility of various conservation measures to protect the Albany adder. The primary, long-term aim of the project is the acquisition of appropriate land (habitat) for the Albany adder (and other associated Threatened species) which will be secured as a Protected Area under South African law through the Biodiversity Stewardship process. Due to the rarity of this species, the very real threat of illegal poaching (for the international pet trade) and the uncertainty of its distribution, it was prudent to conduct a feasibility assessment and undertake appropriate, focused surveying for this species. The first round of surveying took place in November 2016 near the town of Addo in the Eastern Cape during a period of six days. The team was successful in discovering two individual specimens of Albany adder (potentially the first official records since 2007).

A REVISION OF THE EGG-EATING SNAKES (DASYPELTIS) OF NORTH-EASTERN AFRICA AND SOUTH-WESTERN ARABIA

MICHAEL F. BATES^{1*} & DONALD G. BROADLEY^{2†}

¹Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa; ^{2†}Department of Herpetology, Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 240, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

We conducted a morphology-based review of the genus *Dasyzeltis* in north-eastern Africa and south-western Arabia. Ten species were recognised in this region: *D. fasciata* inhabits lowland forest in western and southern Uganda; *D. medici* occurs in coastal forest/savanna mosaic in southern Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania; *D. atra* – in a variety of colour phases/patterns – is widespread in the region but absent from Somalia, occurring in montane forest, moorland, and forest/savanna mosaic, extending eastwards into savanna along the border between Kenya and Tanzania. *Dasyzeltis scabra* is widely distributed in East African savannas, but is replaced by *D. confusa* in parts of South Sudan, Uganda, western Kenya, and Rwanda. We designate a lectotype and paralectotype for *D. abyssina* – previously known only from the type description – and demonstrate that it is a distinct and valid species restricted to open savanna in the highlands of north-western Ethiopia and central Eritrea; the paralectotype is referable to *D. scabra*. In addition, four morphologically discrete and allopatric populations are described as new species. The Horn of Africa, with at least six species, appears to be a centre of diversity for the genus *Dasyzeltis*.

HISTORICAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE NAMIB DAY GECKOS (SQUAMATA: GEKKONIDAE: RHOPTROPUS)

AARON M. BAUER^{1*} & ARIANNA L. KUHN^{1,2}

¹Department of Biology, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania 19085, USA; ²American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York 10024, USA.

The Namib day geckos (genus *Rhoptropus*) are a specialised group of mostly rupicolous gekkonids endemic to the arid regions of western Namibia and southwestern Angola. Previously nine species and subspecies have been recognized on the basis of morphological, mitochondrial, and/or allozymic data. Until recently, political strife in Angola, where the majority of species have all or part of their distributions, has prevented a comprehensive phylogenetic analysis of the genus. We present a phylogenetic analysis incorporating all representative lineages using multilocus data and extensive intraspecific sampling. All nine described lineages as well as two new putative lineages, one from the Kunene Region of Namibia and one from the Angolan Escarpment, are recovered with good support in concatenated and mitochondrial analyses. Support is also found for the elevation of two taxa, *R. benguellensis* and *R. montanus*, to full species status. Macroecological results suggest that *Rhoptropus* may be diverging ecologically although the niches of these

taxa as a whole are largely conserved. Whereas most desert species are extreme outliers of mostly non-arid groups, *Rhoptropus* is one of the few vertebrate clades autochthonous to the Namib Desert Biome. Divergence estimates suggest a minimum age of 36 Ma for *Rhoptropus* and younger than 28 Ma for all included lineages with the majority of diversification taking place from 6-17 Ma. These results suggest *Rhoptropus* may have originated in the early Oligocene, subsequent to the progression of sub-humid conditions in southwestern Africa. Subsequently, the group radiated in the Miocene as the onset of hyper-aridity and a winter rainfall regime provided novel habitat for xeric-adapted lineages. The diversification of this group provides insight into the impact historical climate change has had in shaping regional biodiversity in the Namib Desert.

ESTIMATING THE GLOBAL POPULATION SIZE OF A SPECIES THAT IS HARD TO FIND: THE CASE OF ROSE'S MOUNTAIN TOADLET

FRANCOIS BECKER^{1,2*}, RES ALTWEGG², JOHN MEASEY³, JASPER SLINGSBY⁴ & KRISTAL A. TOLLEY¹

¹South African National Biodiversity Institute, Cape Town, South Africa; ²Centre for Statistics in Ecology, Environment and Conservation, Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa; ³Centre for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa; ⁴South African Environmental Observation Network, Centre for Biodiversity Conservation, Cape Town, South Africa.