

2006

REPTILIA: CHIELONIA

TESTUDINIDAE

Psammobates oculiferus (Kuhl, 1820) Serrated or Kalahari Tent Tortoise

LYING-UP PLACES

Psammobates oculiferus is poorly known despite its wide distribution in southern Africa (Branch, W.R., 1998: *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town). Its range includes the northern three quarters of Namibia as far south as Mariental, but excludes the and western Namib Desert region (Griffin, M., 2003: *Annotated Checklist and Provisional National Conservation Status of Namibian Reptiles*. Namibia Scientific Society, Windhoek, Namibia.). Research conducted on three individuals (1y & 2d) from the Windhoek area, central Namibia has resulted in the following information regarding lying-up placed selected.

Lying-up places included 8 species of trees or shrubs, 6 grasses, 1 herb, as well as overhanging rocks (5 occasions) and open space (2 occasions). Shrubs and trees (44.4%) were more frequently selected as lying-up places compared to grasses (38.9%), rocks or open space (11.1%) and herbs (5.6%). Thorny shrubs/trees (42.3%) were selected above grasses (36.5%), rocks (9.6%), non-thorny shrubs or herbs (7.7%) and open space (3.9%). Species most often selected as lying-up places were *Acacia erioloba* (15.4%), *Acacia mellifera* (11.5%) and the grass *Antheophora pubescens* (9.6%). Grasses most frequently selected as lying-up place are the perennial, dense tuft forming, *Antheophora pubescens* (26.3%), *Eragrostis nindensis* (21%) and *Cenchrus ciliaris* (15.8%). No annuals were used as lying-up places. The use of thorny species and dense tuft forming grasses could possibly add to the defense of the tortoises or provide more shade, thus also used for thermoregulation.

Positioning of the carapace (i.e. orientation of the posterior) when moving into a lying-up place is mainly towards the east (easterly direction - E/NE/SE) (38.2%) followed by a southerly orientation (S/SE/SW) (30.9%). Orientation of the carapace towards the east assists basking, by raising the temperature to the optimum required for foraging whilst in a secure lying-up place. It is thus suggested that selecting a lying-up place and positioning the carapace does not occur randomly.

Submitted by

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