

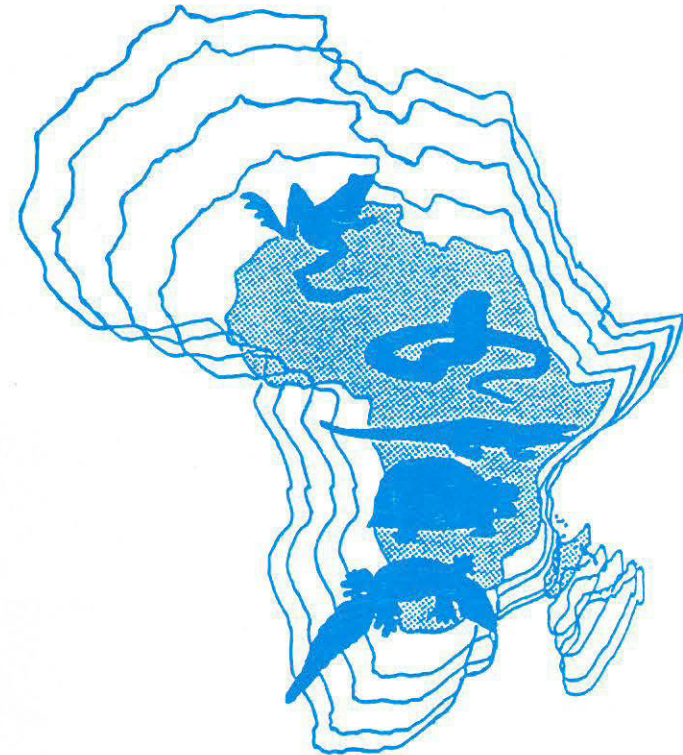
AFRICAN HERP NEWS

NO. 26: JULY 1997

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	1
ELECTION OF A NEW H.A.A. COMMITTEE.....	2
THIRD WORLD CONGRESS OF HERPETOLOGY.....	3
REPORT ON NINTH AFRICAN AMPHIBIAN SYMPOSIUM.....	4
SHORT COMMUNICATIONS	
The endangered Micro Frog threatened by mining	
A.L. de Villiers.....	6
Citations in ten thousand items and their bibliographies	
D.E. van Dijk.....	7
Outspan in Tanzania	
J.C. Poynton.....	11
Holidaying with herps in South Africa	
F. Girard.....	13
Report on a collection of lizards from Owambo district, northern Namibia	
M.F. Bates & N.J.L. Heideman.....	16
LIFE HISTORY NOTES	
<i>Xenopus muelleri</i> : Avian predation. G.V. Haagner & A.J.F. Haagner.....	22
<i>Homopus signatus signatus</i> : Captive breeding. V.J.T. Loehr.....	23
<i>Ptenopus garrulus maculatus</i> : Courtship and mating. F. Girard.....	24
<i>Hemidactylus mabouia</i> : Predation. G.V. Haagner.....	25
<i>Pachydactylus bibronii</i> : Translocation. G.V. Haagner.....	25
<i>Agama etoshae</i> : Summer diurnal activity. N.J.L. Heideman.....	26
<i>Chamaeleo dilepis dilepis</i> : Size. G.V. Haagner.....	27
<i>Mabuya striata striata</i> : Avian predation. G.V. Haagner.....	27
<i>Typhlops bibronii</i> : Size. W.R. Branch.....	28
<i>Mehelya capensis capensis</i> : Size. G.V. Haagner.....	29
<i>Duberria lutrix lutrix</i> : Reproduction. R.B. Yeadon.....	29
<i>Macrelaps microlepidotus</i> : Feeding behaviour. R.B. Yeadon.....	29
<i>Philothamnus natalensis occidentalis</i> : Size. G.V. Haagner.....	30
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION	
<i>Chiromantis xerampelina</i> . R.B. Yeadon.....	31
<i>Pelomedusa subrufa</i> . J.C.P. van Wyk.....	31
<i>Kinixys natalensis</i> . G.V. Haagner & O. Bourquin.....	32
<i>Pachydactylus austeni</i> . F. Girard.....	32
<i>Scelotes limpopoensis limpopoensis</i> . D.G. Broadley, G.V. Haagner & A.J.L. Lambiris.....	32
<i>Mabuya acutilabris</i> . W.D. Haacke.....	33
<i>Mabuya chimbana</i> . W.D. Haacke.....	34
<i>Nucras intertexta</i> . D.G. Broadley & G.S.A. Rasmussen.....	34
<i>Dalophia ellenbergeri</i> . D.G. Broadley.....	34
<i>Prosymna sundevallii lineata</i> . G.V. Haagner.....	35
RECENT HERPETOLOGICAL BOOKS: PART 3	
W.R. Branch.....	36
RECENT AFRICAN HERPETOLOGICAL LITERATURE: 17	
G.V. Haagner, M. Burger & W.R. Branch.....	46
FROM THE PRESS.....	58
HERPETOLOGICAL BOOKS.....	60
NEW HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS.....	66
REPORT OF THE AUDITORS TO MEMBERS OF THE H.A.A.....	74
SOUTHERN AFRICAN FROG ATLAS PROJECT.....	76

AFRICAN HERP NEWS

HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA
NEWSLETTER

JULY 1997

NO. 26

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).

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 disk in ASCII 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.

Typist:

Ms A. Lombaard, National Museum, Bloemfontein.

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EDITORIAL

It is with some sadness that I write this, my last editorial. Having served three consecutive terms as Chairman/Newsletter Editor over a period of seven years, the H.A.A. has become very much a part of my life. I am thankful for the many opportunities I have had to correspond with and meet members, and have thoroughly enjoyed my work as editor of *African Herp News*.

From the start of my first term I initiated various changes to the style and format of the newsletter. Firstly, the Committee agreed to change the title of the newsletter. *African Herp News* #13 (August 1990) was the first newsletter to appear with a hard paper cover. In general, few changes were made until *African Herp News* #17 (June 1992), which featured a *Bibliographic Index to the Journal* by Rod Douglas, and was the first to be formatted with lines at the top and bottom of each page. In 1993, after a policy change to the Journal, it was decided that the Life History Notes, Geographical Distribution, and Venoms and Snakebite sections would be transferred to the newsletter. This resulted in a flood of extra newsletter contributions, the first of which appeared in *African Herp News* #21 (July 1994). Later, at the General Meeting during the St Lucia symposium (October 1995), it was decided that the Newsletter Editor should send articles requiring review to at least two referees for their opinions. This practice was initiated from *African Herp News* #24 (December 1995). Recently, in *African Herp News* #25 (October 1996), a double-column format was introduced, section headings and titles of articles were set in blocks, and glossy paper used. All of the above changes were made in an attempt to produce a neater and more attractive newsletter.

Producing the newsletter was always a pleasant challenge. I was never short of newsletter material (for which I thank you the member) and I could always be certain of posting an *African Herp News* which had at least something of interest for everyone. Editing and proof-reading a newsletter takes up a fair amount of time, but seeing the

finished product is always a rewarding experience. However, while I have thoroughly enjoyed the job, I must echo what Bill Branch said in 1993 when resigning as editor of the Journal after 11 years: "It will be a pleasure to open an envelope with a NEW journal (= newsletter) in it, and read something that I haven't spent the last six months bringing to fruition".

In the past several members were concerned about the relatively infrequent appearance of H.A.A. publications. I stated in my first Editorial (*African Herp News* #13) that it was my prime objective to ensure that the Association's Newsletter and Journal appeared more frequently. This situation has improved considerably and members now regularly receive two newsletters and two journals per year. During my seven years in office 14 issues of *African Herp News* (#13 to #26; 810 pages in all, average of 58 pages per newsletter) and 11 Journals (#38, edited by Johan Marais and myself; #39 to #42, edited by Bill Branch; and #43, #44 [parts 1 & 2], #45 [1 & 2] and #46 [1], edited by le Fras Mouton) were produced.

Accreditation status for the journal is another matter which has been questioned on several occasions this decade. Following various improvements to the journal it is now likely that an application for accreditation status will be made at the end of 1997.

As this is my last newsletter, I take this opportunity to thank all those who have served on committees with me or assisted in any other way. Your co-operation and suggestions were invaluable. A special word of thanks to: my colleague Rod Douglas who has on many occasions offered valuable advice and support; Frank Farquharson, who on occasion has given me a damn hard time, has been an excellent and diligent Secretary/Treasurer largely responsible for the Association's very healthy financial situation; Le Fras Mouton for his competence and co-operation while Journal Editor; Bill Branch for his advice and regular newsletter contributions (e.g. book reviews); Gerald Haagner who's endless supply of Life History Notes almost led me to create a special

TESTUDINES

TESTUDINIDAE

KINIXYS NATALENSIS Hewitt 1931: Natal Hinged Tortoise; South Africa, Northern Province, Orpen camp, Kruger National Park fence line bordering the Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Centre (24°28'S, 31°23'E; 2431AD); 21 November 1995; G.V. Haagner and A.J.J. de Kock; Port Elizabeth Museum, PEM R12482. A subadult found early morning while walking in rain in mixed *Terminalia sericea* - *Combretum apiculatum* bushveld (Bredenkamp, 1982, 'n *Plant-ekologiese studie van die Manyeleti Wilduin*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria). Data on specimen: plastron length 52,2 mm, plastron width 46,8 mm, carapace length 60,3 mm, carapace width 54,7 mm, carapacial shields comprise five vertebrals, first the narrowest, third the widest; four pairs of costals, 11 marginals on both sides; supracaudal not divided. The gulars are more than twice as wide as long (combined width 13,0 mm, length 5,1 mm). Pair of humerals in narrow contact with axillaries. Seam of gulars 5.1 mm, seam of femorals 5,2 mm, seam of gular 6,0 mm. Five claws on front, and four on hind, feet. No buttock tubercles; beak tricuspid, although poorly developed.

The species occurs predominantly in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, but Boycott & Jacobsen (1988, *Durban Museum Novitates* 14(5): 93-101) reported it from three localities in Mpumalanga Province (formerly "eastern Transvaal lowveld"). Haagner (1992, *Koedoe* 35(1): 129) reported the first known occurrence within the Kruger National Park. The above specimen does not greatly extend the known range of the species, but confirms its presence within the borders of the Kruger National Park, and is only the second specimen known from the Northern Province. Only five specimens of *K. natalensis* have been recorded from the Lowveld region.

Acknowledgements: Dr W.R. Branch commented on the text.

Submitted by: G.V. HAAGNER (P.O. Box 702, Hoedspruit 1380, South Africa) & O. BOURQUIN (Natal Parks Board, P.O. Box 662, Pietermaritzburg 3200, South Africa).

GEKKONIDAE

PACHYDACTYLUS AUSTENI Hewitt 1923: Austen's Gecko; South Africa, Western Cape province, Vredendal district, on tarred road (R27) near Vredendal (3118DA); 1 November 1995. Male measuring 48 mm SVL + 25 mm tail length (carrot-shaped regenerated tail) = 73 mm total length, found crossing the road at 21h00 on a flat, sandy plain. This species is known to occur on sparsely vegetated coastal dunes (Branch, 1988, *Field Guide to the Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, C. Struik, Cape Town). The new locality represents a 30 km easterly (inland) extension of the species' range (see Visser, 1984, *Landbouweekblad*, 30 March, pp. 48, 49, 51, 53). A colour photograph of the live specimen was examined by Dr W.R. Branch (Port Elizabeth Museum) and Mr M.F. Bates (National Museum, Bloemfontein) to confirm its identification.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank the reviewers Prof. A. Bauer (Villanova University, Villanova) and Mr W.D. Haacke (Transvaal Museum, Pretoria) for their helpful comments.

Submitted by: F. GIRARD (202, avenue du Château des Rentiers, 75013 Paris, France).

SCINCIDAE

SCELOTES LIMPOPOENSIS LIMPO-
POENSIS FitzSimons, 1930: Limpopo Dwarf Burrowing Skink; Zimbabwe, Beitbridge district, just south of Bubi River Bridge (21°43'S, 30°30'E; 2130DA); 29 June 1989; G.V. Haagner & A.W. Viljoen; A.J. Lambiris Herpetological Collection (AJL 3447). An adult, active in loose sandy soil under a stone in heavily overgrazed lowveld bushveld, ambient temperature 33°C, with no cloud cover and light breeze. SVL 48.5 mm, tail length 39.2 mm (regenerated), forelimb 2.6 mm, hindlimb 8.6 mm. Upper labials 7, lower labials 6, supraoculars 4, supraciliaries 5, subdigital lamellae of fourth toe 10, midbody scale rows 22. Dorsum and sides glossy brown with yellowish dorso-lateral stripes; ventrum yellowish, each scale dark-centred.

The major distribution of this subspecies appears to be the extreme northern part of the Northern Province, South Africa, extending into southern Zimbabwe (Jacobsen, 1987, *Ann. Transvaal Mus.* 34: 371-376). The Bubi specimen is the most north-easterly record, extending the known range by 75 km. Early Zimbabwean records were all from the vicinity of Beitbridge (2229 BA/B). Recently collected material in the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe extends the range 30 km to the west (Sentinel Ranch, 2229AB, NMZB 11699-700, 11838, 12052) and 25 km to the north (Mtetengwe River Bridge, 2129DD, NMZB 6076). All these specimens were under stones lying on sand.

Scelotes limpopoensis is the eastern-most representative of the western *S. bipes* species group which has a brille in the lower eyelid.

Submitted by: D.G. BROADLEY (Biodiversity Foundation for Africa, P.O. Box FM730, Famona, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), G.V. HAAGNER (P.O. Box 702, Hoedspruit 1380, South Africa) & A.J.L. LAMBIRIS (Department of Zoology, University of Durban-Westville, Private Bag XS4001, Durban 4000, South Africa).

MABUYA ACUTILABRIS (Peters, 1862): Wedge-snouted Skink; Namibia, Otjinene district, Otjovazandjou omaramba (20°27'42"S, 20°43'44"E; 2020BA); 17 April 1997; W.D. Haacke; Transvaal Museum, TM 80370. Juvenile, SVL = 27,9 mm, tail = 51 mm. In general terms, accepting its youthful condition, this specimen fits the general description of the species (FitzSimons, 1943, *Mem. Transvaal Mus.* 1: 1-528) but has 34 scales round middle of body and dorsal keeling not yet well developed. Unfortunately only a single juvenile individual was found on light grey sand near the bank of a shallow, dry river bed. This record extends the range of this skink by more than four degrees (about 500 km) in an easterly direction if plotted on the latest published map (Castanzo & Bauer, 1993, *Herpetol. J.* 3: 130-135); however, other unpublished records (National Museum of Namibia, Windhoek; no catalogue numbers available) for Mpungu (17°39'S, 18°14'E; 1718CA),

Namutoni (18°49'S, 16°56'E; 1816DD) and Ghaub (19°28'S, 17°45'E; 1917BC) exist from east of Etosha Pan and in Owamboland, which reduces the range extension to about three degrees longitude, or about 330 km (Fig. 1). The entire Otjinene district is very poorly sampled, which is reflected by large bare patches covering this area on distribution maps (e.g. Broadley, 1990, *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*, Jonathan Ball & Donker Publishers, Johannesburg). The range of this skink falls largely within the < 300 mm average annual rainfall area. Average annual rainfall is about 400 mm at Otjovazandjou omaramba (locality needs confirmation), while it is in excess of 500 mm at the three additional localities mentioned above.

Submitted by: W.D. HAACKE (Department of Herpetology, Transvaal Museum, P.O. Box 413, Pretoria 0001, South Africa).

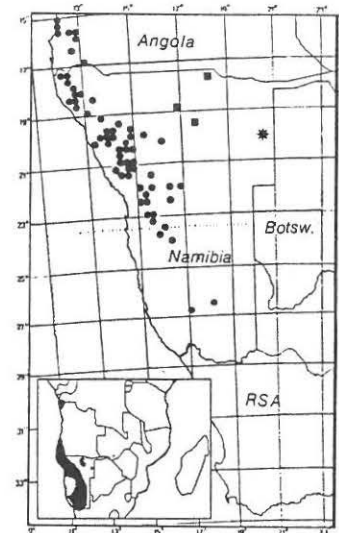


Figure 1: Distribution of *Mabuya acutilabris* according to specimens examined (solid circles; Castanzo & Bauer, 1993, *Herp. J.* 3: 130), the new Otjovazandjou omaramba locality (star) and specimens in the collection of the National Museum of Namibia (solid squares).