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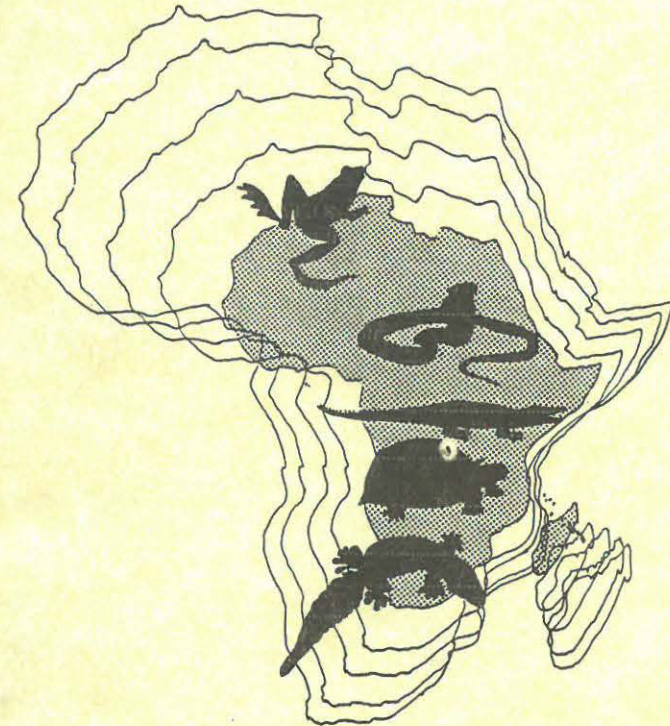
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HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA
NEWSLETTER



JUNE 1991

NO. 15

NOTES ON A HERPETOLOGICAL COLLECTING TRIP
TO NAMIBIA
(24 OCTOBER TO 3 NOVEMBER 1990)

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Objective: The collection of certain species of live reptiles for captive breeding programs to be conducted at the Manyeleti Reptile Centre and the Port Elizabeth Snake Park. Furthermore, the collection of museum material for both the Port Elizabeth Museum and the State Museum in Windhoek.

22 October - I flew down on the 05h45 flight to Port Elizabeth where I was collected by Chris McCartney of Port Elizabeth Snake Park. We finished the last of the packing and by 10h00 we were on our way, heading for Upington via Prieska, where an adult *Psammophis notostictus* was found dead on the road (DOR). Collected two adult *Pachydactylus bibronii* on the road before Upington. Arrived at Upington at 13h20 and spent the night at the camp site on the Orange River.

23 October - Up early and bought basic essentials as well as two old car inner tubes for use as collecting strips. Chris was very sceptical about my primitive methods (which later proved effective, especially on the faster lizards!). Off to the Augrabies National Park (2820CA) through Kakemas. Warm spring day and stopped at the Augrabies Falls for some scenic photo's. Collected one large adult male *Platysaurus capensis* basking - substrate temperature was 43°C. Saw several *Agama a. atra* basking on the rocks. Interesting was the preserved *Bitis xeropaga* and *Naja nigricollis woodi* at the information Centre at the Reception Office.

Moved on to Pofadder and stopped along the road 5 km east, near Gemsbokvlakte. Warm day with ambient temperature at 27°C. Collected one adult *Meroles suborbitalis* and observed several *Agama a. atra*, one *Mabuya sulcata*, and a *Pachydactylus bibronii* which was deep in a crevice.

From Pofadder we went north through the border post at Onseepkans and at 17h15 we were the first vehicle to pass through. The Namibian side was far more formal and we had our passports stamped. As we headed further north to Karasburg, we found a very flat and dried out *Naja nivea* on the road, apr. 76 km north of Onseepkans. Collected several adult *Pachydactylus mariquensis* and *Pachydactylus bibronii* on the road.

24 October - Spent the morning in Windhoek, after which we headed west and spent the night at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, just west of Windhoek, where I saw my first *Agama planiceps*.

25 October - Heading north to Okahandja and further to Otjiwarongo: 27 km north-west of Otjiwarongo on the Outjo road (C38), we collected 2 adult *Agama a. aculeata*, one female *Psammobates oculifer* and two young *Mabuya spilogaster*. Saw a very flat *Psammophis s. subtaeniatus* DOR 45 km east of Khorixas which was not worth collecting. We stopped in the capital town of Damaraland, Khorixas, just as the Prime Minister entered. Saw several *Mabuya spilogaster* on trees as well as *Agama anchietae* on rockery, but were unable to collect due to the presence of tourists. Left Khorixas at 18h30 for a night drive on the Kamanjab road. Collected several *Agama anchietae* before dusk and two male *Aspidelaps lubricus infuscatus* and a *Pachydactylus bibronii* before 22h00.

26 October - Stopped 8 km west of Khorixas and inspected an interesting rocky outcrop. This proved to be the first of many encounters with *Rhoptropus* and we bagged several *Rhoptropus barnardi*, *Pedioplanis namaquensis*, *Agama anchietae* and *Pachydactylus fasciatus*.

Twyfelfontein - old German house build during the late 1800's with several bushman paintings in the surrounding mountains. Very warm at 42°C in the shade at 12h56 (Chris complaining about heat again - this time it was allowed). Collected one adult *Mabuya hoeschi*. Stopped for lunch and siesta under large *Acacia erioloba* trees along dry river course. Saw a large *Psammophis sibilans leopardinus* which escaped our sweaty hands. Left Twyfelfontein at 17h00 for night drive down to the Brandberg, where we collected *Pachydactylus bibronii*, adult female *Bitis caudalis* and a "mentalis phase" *Lamprophis fuliginosus*.

27 October - Brandberg - Got up early to collect specimens in the crevices before they warmed up. Saw several *Agama planiceps*, but they were too fast to collect. We managed to collect several *Rhoptropus barnardi* and *Mabuya hoeschi*, however. Continued through Uis mine to Henties Bay and Swakopmund, where we spent the night. This time it was bitterly cold and it was the first night that we did not do any road cruising.

28 October - Stopped at a small rocky ridge on the gravel plains in the Namib Naukluft Park and collected *Rhoptropus afer*, *Pedioplanis namaquensis* and *Pachydactylus punctatus*. Collected an *Agama anchietae* basking on a rock 30 km north of Solitare - substrate temperature 46°C and ambient temperature 32°C. Stopped at Sesriem camp site where we reported our presence to the local nature conservator. He had several interesting preserved reptiles in the reception office, including *Bitis caudalis*, *Naja nivea*, *Bitis peringueyi*, *Chondrodactylus angulifer*, *Ptenopus kochi*, *Psammophis leightoni namibensis* and some unidentified tadpoles. Continued further south to the farm Wolwedans, 100 km south of Sesriem, where we met Mr and Mrs Marc Paxton. After following some confusing directions, we were able to sit down and enjoy some refreshments. Short night drive on the farm produced some *Chondrodactylus a. angulifer*, *Pachydactylus bibronii* and *Ptenopus kochi*.

29 October - Spent the morning walking in the dunes looking for small adders, after reports of regular small snake tracks on the dunes. Followed several typical "side-winding" type tracks over the dunes, but lost all of these at some stage, mostly because of the vegetated state of the dunes, but also because of the strong prevailing wind. According to the nature of the tracks on the dunes they appeared to be those of *Bitis peringueyi*, but Mr Paxton has been unable to trace the adders which cause the tracks.

Collected several other reptiles on the farm, including *Ptenopus kochi*, *Psammophis leightoni namibensis*, *Mabuya spilogaster*, *Mabuya occidentalis*, *Palmatogecko rangei*, *Agama anchietae*, *Meroles cuneirostris*, *Meroles suborbitalis*, *Pachydactylus bibronii* and a *Typhlosaurus*. The discovery of the *Typhlosaurus* specimen was of particular interest as the only member of the genus which has been recorded from western Namibia is *T. meyeri*, which normally occurs in vegetated coastal dunes. Proper identification of the specimen by Dr W.R. Branch is awaited, and the specimen probably represents a noticeable range extension for any of the species.

After lunch we left the hospitality of the Paxton family and headed south to Aus. After filling the vehicle up with fuel we decided to do a night cruise to Luderitz. Saw 3 large *Mabuya spilogaster* in large *Acacia erioloba*, but were unable to collect any. The road was literally crawling with *Ptenopus garrulus maculatus* and several were being run over by vehicles. Collected several *Chondrodactylus a. angulifer* and *Palmatogecko rangei* as well.

Saw *Psammophis leightoni namibensis* (DOR) 12 km west of Luderitz as well as a *Chamaeleo namaquensis* 87 km west of Aus, but they were not worth preserving. Arrived in an extremely cold and windy Luderitz at 22h54.

30 October - Reported to the Nature Conservation office in Luderitz and asked for advice on possible collecting in the area. They reported the presence of *Bitis peringueyi* in the dunes north of Luderitz, but apparently no *Bitis schneideri* in the immediate vicinity. They furthermore mentioned the presence of a *Bradypodion* population on the peninsula. We investigated the peninsula, but due to the cold conditions, no reptiles were seen. It appears to be a local population of *Bradypodion ventrale occidentale*, which was reported on by Branch in 1988. Continued back to Aus and collected an adult *Agama a. aculeata*, *Psammophis leightoni namibensis*, *Agama atra knobeli*, *Pedioplanis namaquensis*, *Chamaeleo namaquensis*, *Dipsina multimaculata*, *Bitis caudalis* and saw a *Mabuya spilogaster* which we were unable to collect.

Stopped for supper and road-cruised down to Rhosh Pinah. Road very disappointing with large graded gravel heaps along culverts and wide cleared areas on both sides of the road. Collected one adult *Chondrodactylus a. angulifer* and slept the night along the road near Rhosh Pinah mine.

31 October - Left very early for Port Nolloth. South of Rhosh Pinah we went into beautiful *Bitis xeropaga* country and we were sorry we did not do that stretch of road the previous night instead. Stopped to have a rather cool bath in the Orange River. Arrived at Port Nolloth late afternoon, and after a warm meal, we set off for another road cruise. This produced *Bradypodion ventrale occidentale* (DOR), *Pachydactylus austeni* and *Ptenopus g. maculatus*. I collected several live *Bradypodion* on shrubs on the beachfront.

1 November - Decided to go for a walk in the dunes in an attempt to find some *Bitis schneideri*. On the way there Chris spotted an old Coloured man throwing a rock at something. Immediately pressure was applied to the brakes and it turned out to be an adult male *B. schneideri*! It appeared to be slightly injured and we collected it. We started walking the dunes in the nearby vicinity, and within 5 minutes, Chris came across another male basking in the sand. Great were our hopes for more specimens, but hours of uneventful searching in the dunes produced only one more male. We were by then desperate for some females.

We then decided to take a drive down south of McDougals Bay, and stopped to have a walk in the dunes, turning up a *Psammophis crucifer*, *Typhlosaurus vermis*, *Agama h. hispida* and *Bradypodion ventrale occidentale*. Spent the night at Port Nolloth, but due to bad weather, the road cruising produced nothing more than two *Pachydactylus austeni*.

2 November - Spent another morning walking in the dunes around the original site, but this produced only another male *B. schneideri*. We packed up, and while heading for Van Rhynsdorp, we found a large female *Lamprophis fuliginosus* (DOR). Stopped 17 km west of Steinkopft and collected *Cordylus polyzonus*, *Agama a. atra* and a gravid *Mabuya variegata*. Saw a large *Naja nigricollis woodi* (DOR) and a *Pseudaspis cana* which was too flat to collect.

3 November - Arrived back at Port Elizabeth at 12h21, when we unpacked and cleaned everything.

Although the trip was very short and compact (7000 km in 14 days), a total of 159 specimens were collected, and other than the live animals kept for future use, we deposited all the other specimens in the Port Elizabeth and State Museum collections.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people and Institutes who made this trip an enjoyable one: The Namibian Department of Nature Conservation for permission and permits to collect in the area, and in particular, to Mr M. Griffin for arranging everything on that side; Mr and Mrs M. Paxton for their hospitality and informative advice; the Director and Board of Trustees of the Port Elizabeth Museum for providing the financial assistance for this excursion; Mr C.J. McCartney for his assistance in the field; the Department of the Chief Minister and Economic Affairs for their support and permission to undertake this field trip.