

African Herp News

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GEKKONIDAE***Pachydactylus fasciatus* Boulenger, 1888**
Banded Thick-toed Gecko**REPRODUCTION**

Pachydactylus fasciatus is endemic to northern Namibia and occurs in northern Damaraland and Kaokoveld (Branch 1998). Reproduction of this gecko has been documented by Barts (2002) over several years using captive animals as well as by Bauer & Branch (1991) under natural conditions. Both state clutch sizes of up to two eggs.

I kept a pair of captive born *P. fasciatus* together in a terrarium. After a cooling period temperatures were slowly increased to daytime temperatures of 26 - 31°C. Both animals were moved to a new terrarium at the beginning of January 2010 for cleaning of the former terrarium. The interior of the new terrarium, including the sand layer used as substrate, was new and had been placed in the terrarium shortly before the geckos were introduced. This fact excludes all possibilities of any eggs being present in the terrarium before the introduction of the animals.

On 9 February 2010, three hard-shelled eggs were found buried under a pile of sand and moved to an incubator. The eggs measured 9.3 x 11.1 mm, 9.4 x 11.8 mm and 9.4 x 11.8 mm. Sizes are in range with formerly published egg data, but above average size of 8.9 x 10.9 mm (Barts 2002). Incubation took place at temperatures of 30 - 31°C during daytime and 24 - 26°C at night. Juveniles hatched after 68, 70 and 71 days respectively.

The short period of four days between eclosion of the first and the last gecko indicates either a clutch size of three eggs or an extremely short oviposition interval. The eggs are believed to originate from one clutch, as the terrarium was checked for eggs on a daily basis by the author. Unusual clutch sizes of more than two eggs have already been observed in the family Gekkonidae, for example in *Uroplatus henkeli* (Svatek & van Duin 2002).

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References

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VARANIDAE

Varanus albigularis Daudin, 1802

Rock Monitor

DIET

On 1 April 2010 at 14h00 we observed what appeared to be a hatchling *Varanus albigularis* Daudin, 1802 (approximately 250 mm total length) feeding on a garden slug of approximately 60 mm total length in a Windhoek garden (Fig. 1). According to Jauch (2002) *V. albigularis* hatchlings have a total length of between 240 - 260 mm. The *V. albigularis* hatchling was struggling with the relatively large slug by bashing it against a mica rock, managing to swallow about 50% of the slug after 20 minutes of observation after which the lizard disappeared into the grass.



Fig. 1: *Varanus albigularis* hatchling eating a slug, Windhoek, Namibia.

As a generalist feeder (Claus & Claus 2002) *V. albigularis* diet consists mainly of invertebrates (including land snails) or anything small enough to swallow ranging from small tortoises to snakes and even carrion (Branch 1998, Branch 2006, Alexander & Marais 2007).

Although this observation is not entirely unexpected it includes slugs to the long list of prey items for *V. albigularis*. What was interesting to note was the size of the slug