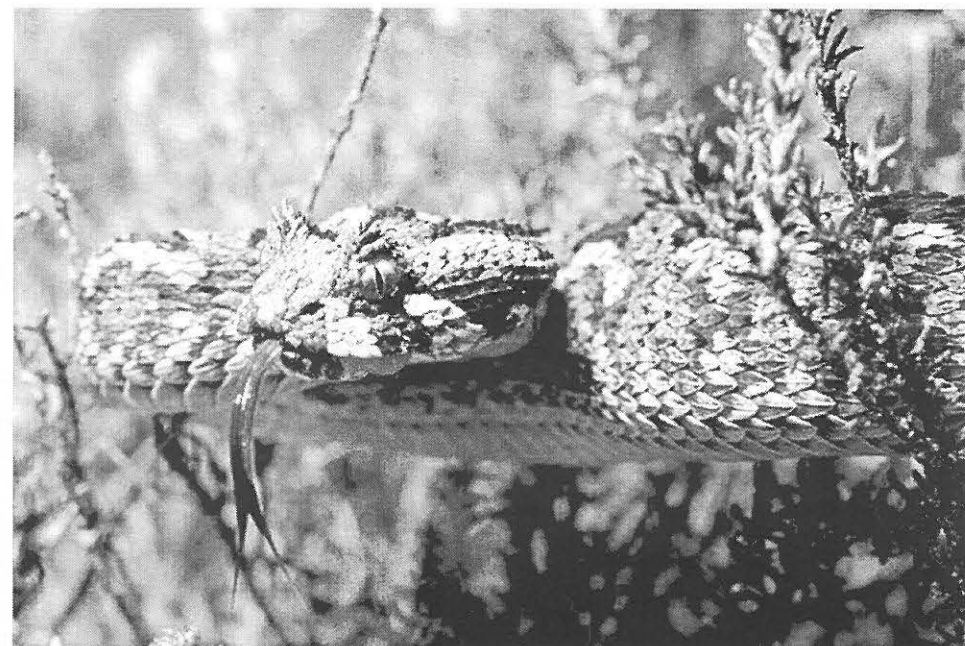


CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	1
ARTICLES	
KORSÓS, Z., & TRÓCSÁNYI, B. The enigmatic Round Island Burrowing Boa (<i>Bolyeria multocarinata</i>): Survival in the wild remains unconfirmed.	2
MENEGON, M., SALVIDIO, S., & MOYER, D. Reptiles and amphibians from a montane grassland: Gendawaki Valley, Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania.	8
LAMBIRIS, A.J.L. Preliminary note on major shell trauma in a Leopard Tortoise, <i>Geochelone pardalis babcocki</i>	14
NATURAL HISTORY NOTES	
BAUER, A.M. <i>Pachydactylus scutatus</i> Hewitt, 1927. Maximum size.	17
ELS, J. <i>Acontias meleagris</i> (Linnaeus, 1758). Xanthic specimen.	18
BAUER, A.M. <i>Pedioplanis inornata</i> (Roux, 1907). Maximum size.	19
BRANCH, W.R. <i>Varanus albigularis</i> . Diet	19
FARQUHARSON, F. <i>Lamprophis capensis</i> Duméril & Bibron, 1854 Feeding / Mortality.	21
WITBERG, M., & VAN ZYL, G. <i>Homoroselaps lacteus</i> (Linnaeus, 1754). Diet / Predation.	21
PHELPS, T. <i>Naja nivea</i> (Linnaeus, 1758). Scavenging.	24
PHELPS, T. <i>Bitis armata</i> (Smith, 1826). Predation.	24
PHELPS, T. <i>Bitis armata</i> (Smith, 1826). Prey.	26
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTIONS	
DE VILLIERS, A. <i>Bufo gutturalis</i> Power, 1927. Introduced population.	28
DE VILLIERS, A. <i>Lygodactylus capensis capensis</i> (A. Smith, 1849). Introduced population.	29
PHELPS, T., & ELS, J. <i>Bitis caudalis</i> (A. Smith, 1839).	30
HERPETOLOGICAL SURVEYS	
TOLLEY, K.A., KELLEY A. WHITAKER, K.A., & TURNER, R.A. A herpetological survey of Piketberg, Western Cape Province, South Africa.	32
INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS	39

African Herp News

Newsletter of the Herpetological Association of Africa



and a slow intramuscular infusion of 0.9% saline with 5% dextrose started; 60 ml were given.

Benzyl penicillin 500 mg i/m was given daily until 18 March, and dressings changed under sedation (Medetomidine 2 mg i/m). After three days the modified colostomy bag was replaced by a sheet of sterile clear plastic fixed with adhesive tape, as there was no significant oozing from the healing tissues. This caused excessive condensation within the wound cavity, and was replaced by a very close-woven adhesive strapping applied transversely across the defect, with 50% overlap. This proved ideal, and healing by granulation proceeded apace. The dressing could be easily removed without distress, and the wound inspected and irrigated with Betadine every second or third day. On two occasions small spots of superficial fungal growth were noted, but these were quickly eliminated by irrigation with F10.

CURRENT PROGRESS

The tortoise is has recovered completely. She is currently in the care of Teresa Loades, who has established a sanctuary for ill and injured tortoises in Hillcrest. The vertebral column is now stable, the lungs and pleura have healed, and there is a good covering of fibrous tissue over the entire surface of the soft tissues (Fig. 1). She is feeding avidly and there is no evidence of any neurological damage. After an initial mistrust of humans, she has now adjusted to life in the sanctuary.

DISCUSSION

Geochelone differs from many other chelonian genera in that the vertebrae are suspended from the spine by considerably elongated neural spines, which often protects the centra and spinal cord from damage in deeply depressed fractures of the carapace that would be fatal in other species. When defects are not too large, a temporary hard plastic patch glued in place will permit the regeneration of new bone within 12 – 18 months. Such an approach is preferable to the usual technique of covering the defect with an epoxy resin patch which will, after several years, cause damage or even necrosis to the underlying shell with which it is in contact. We are still considering possible ways of permanently closing this large defect, which poses some interesting technical problems. This case also illustrates the remarkable resilience which injured reptiles may display, and the effectiveness of ventilation by means of the pharyngeal pump mechanism and intra-pulmonary muscles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Prof. Fredric Frye for discussions in dealing with this case; to Dr. Robin Gatley, who took over post-operative monitoring while I was temporarily incapacitated, and for his continuing support of our work on reptiles; and to Teresa Loades, who has devoted so much time and effort in caring for tortoises. I also thank two anonymous referees for their constructive comments.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

REPTILIA: SAURIA

GEKKONIDAE

Pachydactylus scutatus Hewitt, 1927

Large-scaled Thick-toed Gecko

MAXIMUM SIZE

On 3 June 2005 a large specimen of *Pachydactylus scutatus* was collected from the vertical surface of a 1.5 m diameter boulder adjacent to a northwest facing sandstone bluff near Gai-as, Khorixas District, Kunene Region, Namibia (20° 43'52.9"S, 14°07'38.5" E; 2014CA) in a semi-desert area between the Ugab and Huab Rivers. The female specimen (Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University MCZ R-184253) measures 50.7 mm SVL and has a broken tail.

Branch (1998. *Field Guide to Snakes and Other Reptiles*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town) gave the typical size range of this species as 30-40 mm SVL, with a maximum of 40 mm for females and 42 mm for males. A maximum of 42 mm was also reported by Barts (2003. *Pachydactylus scutatus* Hewitt. *Sauria* 25(4): 2), although Mertens (1955. *Die Amphibien und Reptilien Südwestafrikas, aus den Ergebnissen einer im Jahre 1952 ausgeführten Reise. Abhandlungen der Senckenbergische naturforschender Gesellschaft* 490: 1-172) reported a specimen from the Brandberg measuring 44 mm SVL and Bauer et al. (2002. A revision of *Pachydactylus scutatus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) with the description of a new species from northern Namibia. *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences* 53: 23-36) signaled specimens as large as 47 mm SVL. The new specimen represents an 8% increase in maximum length. In addition, the specimen was very-heavy bodied (although not gravid). This locality is at the southwestern periphery of the range of the species.

Submitted by

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