

# *African Herp News*

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# HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA

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## 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 African herpetofauna. Members receive the Association's journal, African Journal of Herpetology (which publishes review papers, research articles, and short communications – subject to peer review) and African Herp News, the Newsletter, which includes short communications, natural history notes, book reviews, bibliographies, husbandry hints, announcements and news items).

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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** *Lamprophis guttatus*, 12,5 km west of Mokhotlong, Lesotho. Photo: W. R. Branch.

**TESTUDINIDAE*****Psammobates oculifer* (Kuhl, 1820)****Serrated Tent Tortoise****DORMANCY**

A male *P. oculifer* individual (SCL 10.5cm) found in urban Windhoek, central Namibia, and given to the author for safekeeping in early 2013, was kept in an indigenous garden setting in Windhoek. This individual settled in well and foraged without additional food being supplied. On 1 May 2013 the tortoise settled into dormancy at the base of an *Aloe arborescens* (Cunningham & Simang 2006 noted their preference for “thorny” plants as lying-up places) only becoming active again on 18 September 2013 – i.e. after four months and 17 days. It was observed that the tortoise was not totally dormant as it regularly shifted body positions, especially during early September just prior to it becoming active again. Average winter temperatures for Windhoek is 14°C (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2002) although the 2013 winter was unusually mild with no frost experienced (pers. obs.) and the first rains for the 2013/14 season were measured on 24 (3 mm), 25 (3 mm) and 26 (11 mm) September 2013.

Kalahari Tent Tortoises are known to become dormant or semi-dormant for extensive periods (e.g. at least 4-5 months – Boycott & Bourquin 2000) during the dry winter months and known to retreat to secluded areas where they partially bury themselves into loose soil at the base of scrub, bush-clumps or fallen trees, or even retreat into animal burrows (Alexander & Marais 2007; Boycott & Bourquin 2000; Branch 1998).

This observation on dormancy for a *P. oculifer* individual from central Namibia confirms the long period of inactivity as indicated by Boycott & Bourquin (2000).

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