

AFRICAN HERP NEWS

No. 28 January 1999

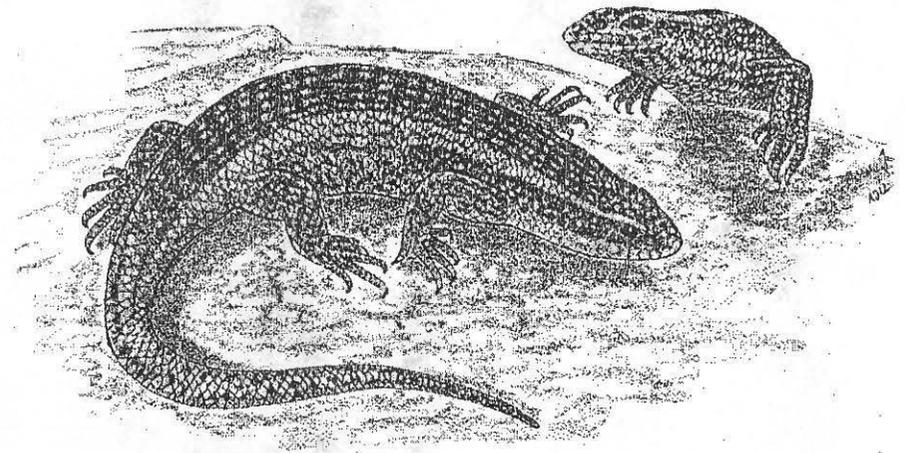
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PSAMMOBATES TENTORIUS TRIMENI

Tent Tortoise

HATCHLING SIZE

Of all southern African tortoise genera, the genus *Psammobates* is among the least known. Both the limited number of captive specimens and the generally low abundance in the wild are contributing factors to this. Information on breeding ecology is especially scarce.

On 21 September 1998, a hatchling *P. tentorius trimeni* (possibly intermediate with *P. t. verroxii*, as an adult intermediate was found in the same area) was shown to me in Aus (Namibia). The measurements of the hatchling were SLC 31.4 mm, SLP 27.5 mm, width 27.3 mm, and height 19.0 mm. The mass was 7 g.

The shell of the tortoise was still soft and the site where the yolk sac had been attached clearly visible (figure 1). Therefore, the age of the specimen was estimated at no more than a few weeks.

Aus had received several millimeters of rain about three weeks before. Considering the extremely low rainfall in the area, hatching had possibly been induced by this precipitation.

Acknowledgement: I thank the Swiegers family of Klein-Aus Vista for allowing me to measure and photograph the tortoise.

Submitted by: **V.J.T. LOEHR** (Studbook Breeding Programme *Homopus*, Nipkowplein 24, 3402 EC IJsselstein, The Netherlands, E-mail loehr@kabelfoon.nl, http://wwwserv.caiw.nl/abs/loehr/public_html/index.htm)

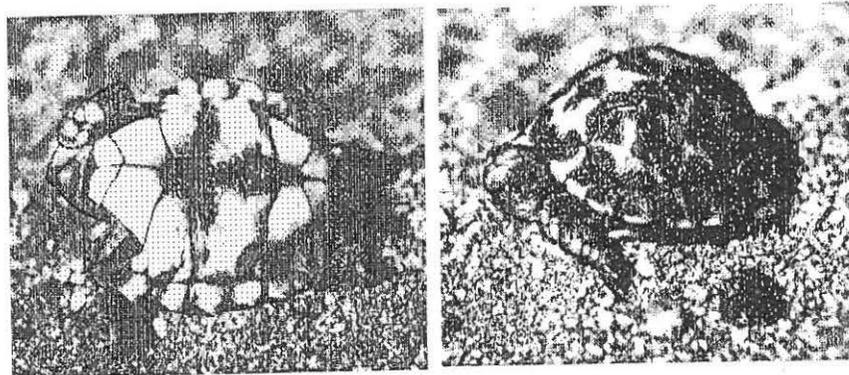


Figure 1: Plastron of hatchling *Psammobates tentorius trimeni* (x *verroxii* ?)

Figure 2: Hatchling *Psammobates tentorius trimeni* (x *verroxii* ?)

(Photos: V.J.T. Loehr)

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

African Herp News publishes brief notes of new geographical distributions (preferably at least 100 km from the nearest published record) of amphibians and reptiles on the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **SCIENTIFIC NAME**; **Common name** (for sources, see Life History Notes); **Locality** (country, province or state, quarter-degree unit, location, and latitude and longitude if available; elevation above sea level; use metric units); **Date** (day, month, year); **Collector(s)**; **Place of deposition and museum accession number** (required); **Comments** (including data on size, colour and taxonomic characters, e.g. scalation, webbing, especially for taxonomically problematic taxa; and nearest published locality record(s) in km; references to be quoted in the text). Submitted by: **NAME**, Address (in parentheses).

Records submitted should be based on specimens deposited in a recognised institutional collection.

New South African province names must be used.

SAURIA: VARANIDAE

VARANUS ALBIGULARIS ALBIGULARIS (Daudin, 1802); **Rock Monitor**
South Africa, Eastern Cape Province, Tsitsikama National Park.

During February 1995, rangers reported that a large monitor lizard had been sighted close to the mouth of the Geelhoutbos River on the Otter Trail (34°00'15"S, 23°47'00"E; 3423BB). The site was visited two days later by AR, who photographed the monitor foraging in the intertidal zone. These photographs were forwarded to WRB to confirm the identification of the species, and are deposited in the Port Elizabeth Museum herpetological archives. Spoor on paths in the area suggested that the monitor, which was about 1 metre in length, had been active in the area for sometime. It was not subsequently sighted in the area. On 10 April 1998, ranger Paul London sighted a large monitor in the dune area close to the mouth of the Groot River estuary, near Nature's Valley (33°58'48"S, 23°34'41"E; 3323DC). The species' identity was not confirmed. On the next day, 11 April 1998, ranger Johannes Mapondo also reported the sighting of a monitor swimming in the Groot River estuary. This was positively identified as a rock monitor, approximately 1 metre in length. It is assumed that this was the same individual spotted the previous day, and may also have been the monitor sighted in 1995.

Both species of *Varanus* in southern Africa were previously considered to absent from the southern Cape coastal region. The water monitor (*V. niloticus*) reaches its southern limit in the Gamtoos River system, including the Kouga and Groot Rivers