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The HAA is dedicated to the study and conservation of African reptiles and amphibians. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the 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).

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles shall be considered for publication provided that they are original and have not been published elsewhere. Articles will be submitted for peer review at the Editor's discretion. Authors are requested to submit manuscripts by e-mail in MS Word '.doc' or '.docx' format.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: *Natalobatrachus bonebergi* Hewitt & Methuen, 1912, from the Crowned Eagle Estate, Gillits, KwaZulu-Natal. Photograph by: Nick Evans.

COLUBRIDAE

Psammophis namibensis (Broadley, 1975)

Namib Sand Snake

PREDATION

On 10 April 2013 at 11h00 (ambient temperature 22°C), I observed an adult *Psammophis namibensis* (about 100 cm total length) attack an adult desert lizard *Meroles knoxii*. This observation was made approximately 50 km north of Oranjemund (28°06'29.2"S, 16°10'45.6"E, [2816AA], 320 m) in the Sperrgebiet National Park, Namibia during a vertebrate fauna survey prior to proposed mining exploration activities. The substrate was a sand/gravel combination and the area was dominated by the following shrubs: *Brownanthus arenosus*, *Euphorbia gummifera*, *Lycium tetrandrum* and *Salsola nollothensis*.

The *P. namibensis* captured the lacertid from an ambush position in a hole under a *Euphorbia gummifera* shrub while I was pursuing (and probably distracting) the lizard. Upon capture the lizard immediately shed its tail. The snake surrounded it with two coils and commenced constricting it while apparently observing me (Fig. 1). During this process the lizard also bit into the ventral side of the snake, seemingly with little effect. Constriction lasted at least 5 mins, after which time the snake started chewing into the flank of the lizard, probably in an attempt to further envenomate it. After 10 mins the snake became agitated with my continued presence and attempted to move off with the lizard held firmly in its mouth. At this time the lizard managed to escape, seemingly without any ill effects.

According to various authors (e.g. Broadley, 1983; Marais 1992; Branch 1998; Alexander & Marais 2008. Cottone & Bauer 2010), *P. leightoni* prey on small vertebrates, mainly rodents and lizards, especially lacertids and skinks, but also other snakes while Sine et al. (2006) states that *P. namibensis* predominantly prey on lacertid lizards. Although not confirmed during a survey conducted by Branch (1994) in the Sperrgebiet, he states that *Meroles cuneirostris* probably forms part of the staple diet of *P. namibensis* in the general area. *Meroles* are known or expected in the diet of various snakes, although little has been published regarding actual prey species. *M. knoxii* is also prey to *Bitis schneideri*, a species that also occurs in the Sperrgebiet and in Namaqualand, South Africa (Maritz 2012).

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Figure 1: *Psammophis namibensis* constricting an adult *Merolees knoxii* in the Sperrgebiet National Park, Namibia. Photo: Peter Cunningham