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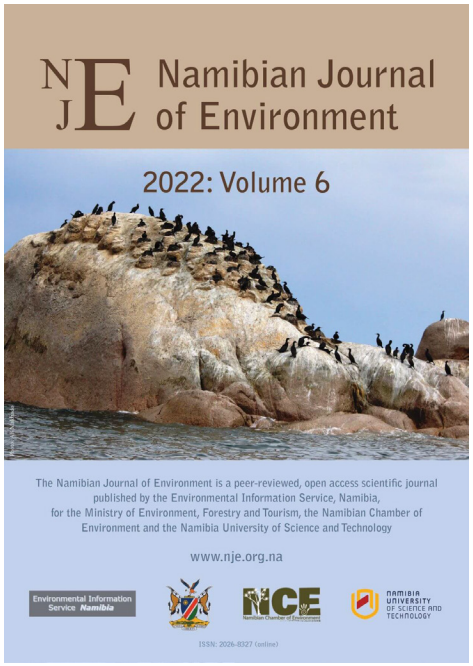

SECTION C: OPEN ARTICLES

Recommended citation format:

Theart F, Ping TJ, Engelking K & Becker FS (2022) Range extension of *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* (Laurenti, 1768) in Namibia. *Namibian Journal of Environment* 6 C: 7-9.

Cover photo: AB Makhado

Range extension of *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* (Laurenti, 1768) in Namibia

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Abstract

While Namibia has a high diversity of reptiles (Herrmann & Branch 2013), it is deficient in records for most reptile species, and several distributions are still poorly understood. We extend the known range for *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* by more than 700 km southwest from the nearest published Namibian record, and more than 150 km southeast from the nearest recorded museum record. This represents one of the most arid records for the species.

Keywords: *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*, Namibia, range extension

Background

Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia is a medium-sized, rear-fanged colubrid which feeds largely on amphibians. It is widely distributed throughout Southern Africa and inhabits most biomes with the exception of rainforests and hyper arid regions (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2020). This species is typically associated with areas with a high annual rainfall or permanent sources of water (Ping pers. obs.). *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* is known in Namibia from a few localities in the far northeast. Previous publications indicate its presence in the Otjozondjupa Region (Griffin 2003, Branch 1994), although the exact locations were not previously published. It may also occur in the Kavango, Omusati, and Oshikoto regions (Bauer pers. com. 2021).

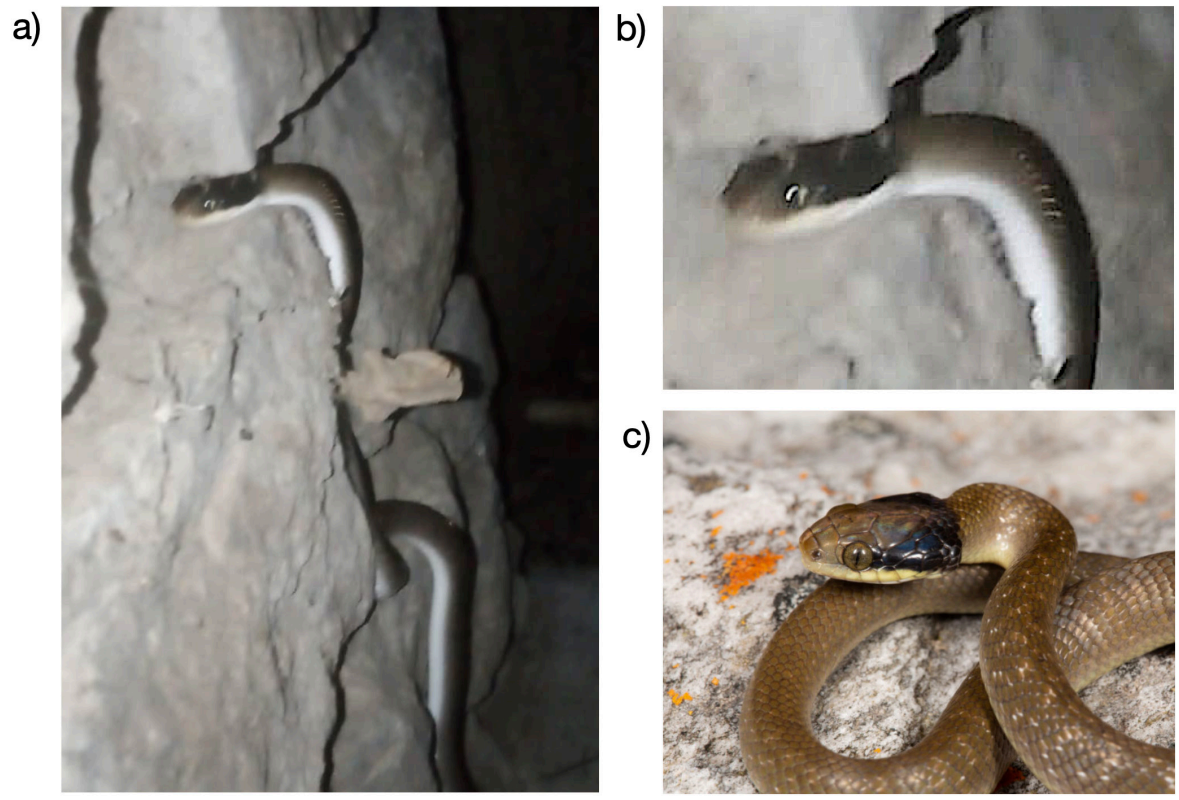

Figure 1: *The original image as supplied by the observer is shown in panel a. The head is shown enhanced in panel b, clearly showing the dark temples, which are unique to* Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*. Panel c presents an image of the same species, shown here for comparison (photo: T Ping).*

Results

On the evening of 21st of March 2021 shortly after sunset, the owner of Exito Safaris observed a small snake near their home. Unable to identify the species the farmer sent an image of the snake to FT (see Figure 1). Despite the poor quality of the image, FT was able to confidently identify the snake as *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* due to the presence of dark temples on the head, a pale colour on the upper and lower lip, a creamy white belly and a slate grey body. Considering the area, size of the snake and the head colouration, there are no other likely candidate species for this photograph. The closest other species in terms of appearance would be the black-headed centipede eater (*Aparallactus capensis*), which does not have a brown tip to the snout, pale upper lip, or a similar head shape; the body of *A. capensis* is also of notably more slender build. Scale counts and Snout-Vent Length measurements were not taken as the snake was relocated by the observer shortly after the photos were taken. This observation (S21.664188 E18.778358) serves as the first confirmed

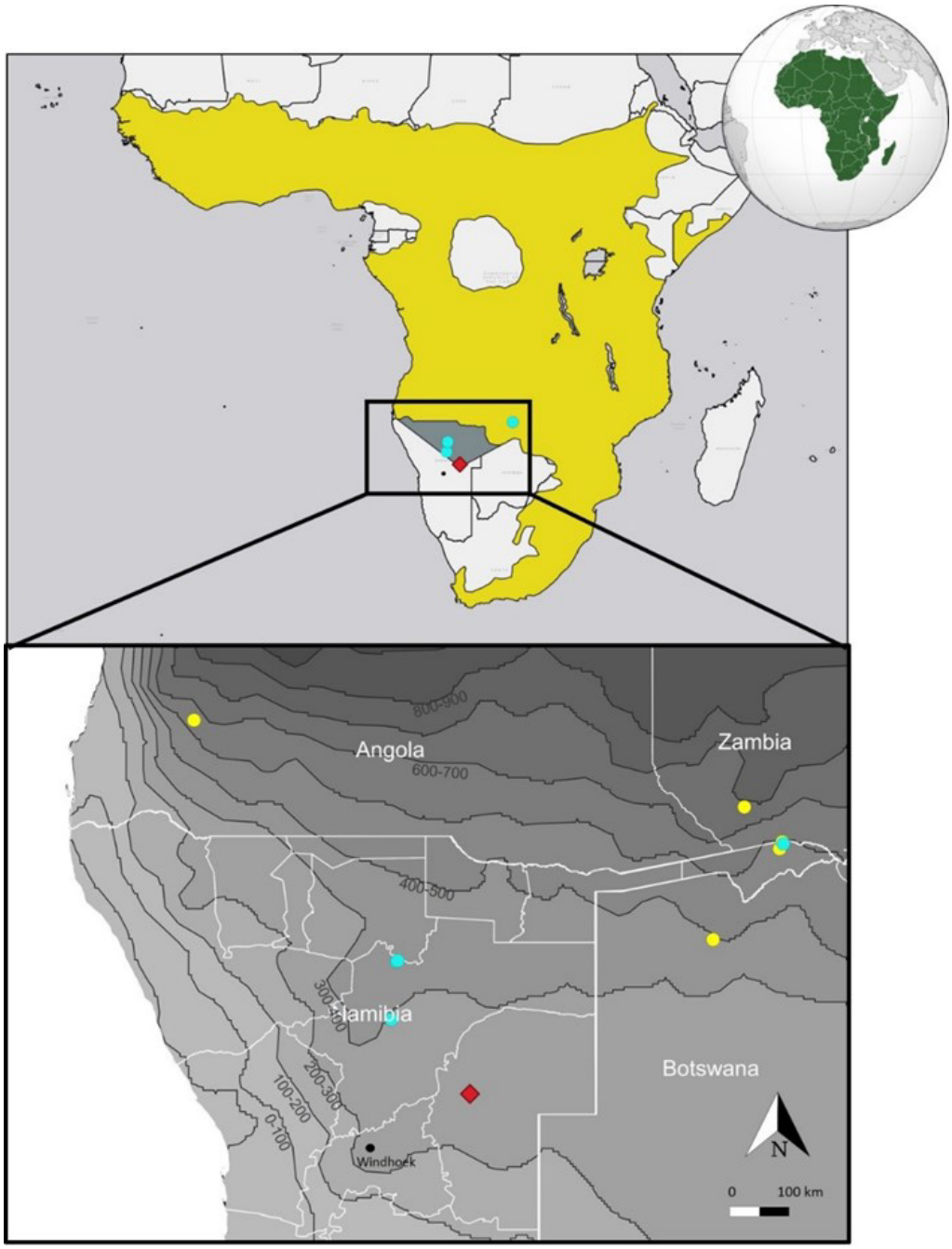

Figure 2: *The current range of* Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia *in yellow, and the suggested range update in dark grey (upper panel); the new record is indicated by a red diamond; previously unpublished records from the National Museum of Namibia as blue circles; the nearest Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF, 2022) records as yellow circles; mean annual rainfall is indicated in grey, with isohyets labelled in dark grey text (bottom panel).*

record from the Omaheke Region, which is at the lower end of the annual rainfall range in which this species is known to occur (Wagner *et al*. 2021; see Figure 2). This record lies approximately 158 km southeast of the nearest record in the National Museum of Namibia (NMNW) Herpetology Collection, which was collected from the adjacent Waterberg (Figure 2; NMNW R1990). This record, and other records from the NMNW, have not been published before but were presumably those referred to in Griffin (2003).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the owner of Exito Safaris for providing us with the photographs and the co-ordinates for this record. We would like to thank Professor Aaron Bauer of Villanova University for providing the known localities for *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* and for confirming the identification and range extension of the snake.

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