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18°29'17"E), with both specimens collected by M. Burger on 13 September 1999.

These records extend the distribution range northwards by approximately 220 km. The nearest published record is 2 km along the road to Vlakte (Rietbokfontein), 14 km north of Kannaland (3320 DC, 33°48'S, 20°37'E) (Branch, W. R. and Bauer, A.M. 1995. *Herpetol. Nat. Hist.* **3(1)**: 47-90). This specimen is in the PE Museum (PEM R7064).

Submitted by

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VARANIDAE

Varanus albigularis

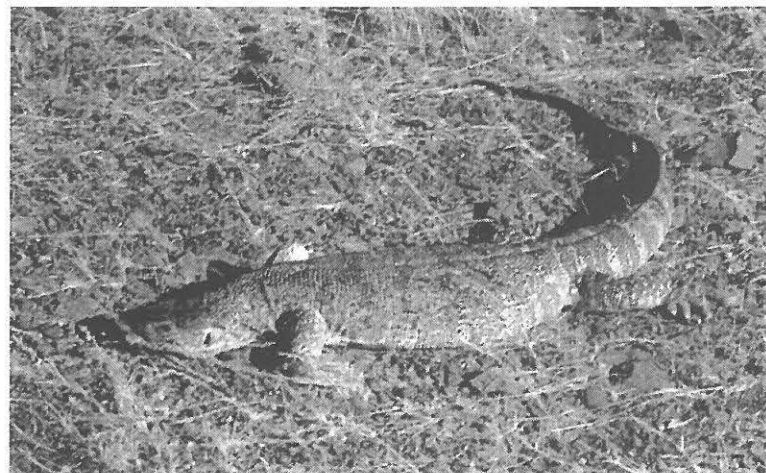
Rock or White-throated Monitor

The Rock Monitor's natural distribution is described as "throughout the savanna and semi-desert regions of the subcontinent" (Branch, 1998:209). In Namibia the distribution is stated as "particularly in the country's northern, central and eastern regions" Jauch, (2002). The distribution map in Branch (*op. cit.*) includes much of the Namibian interior although it excludes the northwestern, southwestern and southeastern corners. In this note we are trying to establish the NW range limit within Namibia of *V. albigularis* based on current acceptably supported evidence.

FitzSimons (1938:193) first documented the occurrence at Kamanjab (TM 17256, TM 12785), while Mertens (1955:84) refers to the Kaokoveld without a substantiated locality. TM 48455 from Farm Arendsnes (1929S, 1434E) extended the known range further westwards. Bayless (2002:1645, Fig.2.) shows several records in the NW corner of Namibia but does not supply the supporting references for them. Griffin (Bayless 2002:1665; pers. com.) reports a sighting from Ohopoho (Opuwo) and states that Rock Monitors are especially common in sandy areas towards the east of Namibia. Bayless (*op. cit.*) also provides records of *V. albigularis* on the *V. niloticus* distribution map (2002:1645: Fig.3) and lists erroneous sight and photographic records from Aus Waterhole and Halali Camp - Okerfontein pond in the Etosha National Park, Khorixas-Vingerklip and Farm Quickborn (TM 4548) as Nile monitors.

The identification of FMNH 134127 and MCZUB 134127 from Brown Farm, 7,5 Km south of Omaruru listed as *V. niloticus* (Bayless, 2002:1683) is unacceptable, as there is no permanent river in that area and it must therefore be assumed that they are also *V. albigularis* specimens.

On 28 July 2000 at 10h30 an adult Rock Monitor with an approximate length of 90cm (total length) was observed and video taped in the northwestern Kunene Region of Namibia at Wêreldsend (20°13'S, 13°54'E, 793m asl.). This individual was slightly injured behind the left front limb, which seemed to be a recent injury, and was moving at a leisurely pace in a southeasterly direction, occasionally being mobbed by Pied Crows. Wêreldsend lies about 35 Km. from the border of the Skeleton Coast Park and approximately 75 Km from the Atlantic Ocean. According to staff who have lived and worked in the area since 1981, no Rock Monitor had ever been seen so far west before. However, Professor F.C.Eloff photographed an adult at Wêreldsend in 1976 (Colour slide in Transvaal Museum slide collection).



Varanus albigularis at Wêreldsend (FC Eloff: Transvaal Museum photo)

According to Loutit (pers. com.) Rock Monitors are occasionally sighted in the dry western areas especially after good rains and he even recalls seeing one in the Skeleton Coast Park during the early 1980's. Brain (pers. com.) states that they are scarce in the Kunene Region although occasionally sighted in the Palmwag / Sesfontein area. This is substantiated by a colour slide taken by Professor F.C.Eloff of an individual at Sesfontein in 1977 (Colour slide in the

Transvaal Museum slide collection). In the Etosha National Park, further east, they are quite common (Phillips 1995), especially in the Okaukuejo and Halali areas (Berry, pers. com.), although less common towards the west in the Otjivasandu area (Adank, pers. com., Du Preez, pers.com). Two Rock Monitors were sighted in the Otjivasandu area on 14 October 2002 (pers. obs.). Phillips (1995) mentions that monitors travel over great distances and that the home range of males averages about 10 square miles (25.6 Ha.).

It is possible that Rock Monitors follow ephemeral rivers such as the Springbok (tributary of the Uniab River – Wêreldsend locality), Uniab, Khoichab, Ugab, Huab and Hoanib Rivers westward, thus occasionally making their appearance further west than generally accepted. TM 56907 from about 22km due west of Sesfontein in the Ganamub River, 6 Km from the confluence with the Hoanib River (19°10'S, 13°42'E, coll. 2nd August 1983 by E. Erb.) may be an example of this situation (Bauer *et al.*, 1993). They may even occur permanently in these rivers although at low densities and are rarely encountered (Britz, pers. com., Griffin, pers. com.). Above average rainfall during the previous 3 years in parts of the Kunene Region may also have contributed to the range extension of this species westwards into areas not usually deemed prime habitat.

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Varanus albigularis at Sesfontein (FC Eloff: Transvaal Museum photo)