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This raises some fascinating questions about myoglobin and other muscle constituents. The assumed thinness of the skin is not just a matter of reduction or absence of pigment cells, but some kind of true translucency or transparency of skin, muscle and coelomic membrane - a condition that I am quite certain does not occur in any other African amphibians.

In conclusion, the intraspecific variation in the presence of a window in *Breviceps* spp. and for the properties and function of window in the other 15 species requires further elucidation.

#### **Acknowledgments**

I am most grateful to Dr. Angelo Lambiris who did much more than respond to my enquiries, both kindly and promptly, by thoroughly improving this note's content in many ways. He and Robert Hopkins of Bulawayo complimented my own first-hand experience in examining living *B.a. adspersus* at localities other than between Usakos - Omaruru. Dr P.C. Withers and Dr. G. Thompson responded to my request for reprints of their and co-authors' classic papers on water balance in desert-adapted amphibians which greatly enhanced my own understanding of the subject.

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### **REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: SERPENTES**

#### **ELAPIDAE**

#### ***Naja nigricincta nigricincta* Bogert, 1940 Western Barred Spitting Cobra**

#### **DIET**

The Western Barred Spitting Cobra, or commonly known as the Zebra Snake (*Naja nigricincta nigricincta*), has a varied diet which includes reptiles, amphibians, fish, eggs, small mammals and even insects (Marais 1992, Branch 1998, Cunningham & Shilongo 2002, Alexander & Marais 2007). Although snakes form part of their diet (Hebbard 1990, Spawls & Branch 1995, Marais 2004, Alexander & Marais 2007) it is not well documented (Johan Marais *pers. comm.*).

On 1 May 2010, between 18h00 and 18h30 an adult *N. n. nigricincta* (800 - 900 mm total length) was observed preying on an adult Horned Adder (*Bitis caudalis*) (280 - 350

mm) just south of the Brandberg massif southwest of Uis (21°18'25" S; 14°34'51" E) in north central Namibia. The substrate was fine gravel and coarse sand with sparse herbaceous cover and the closest woody plant was approximately 10 - 15 m away, as were rocks and boulders. The cobra was agitated by our attention and regurgitated the adder whilst being photographed (Fig. 1). It then moved off to a rocky outcrop approximately 20 m away, but came back to the regurgitated adder after half an hour, after which it moved off again for cover after it sensed us. The next morning the Horned Adder was gone, but it could not be confirmed if it was eventually consumed by the cobra.

An unconfirmed sighting of *N. n. nigricincta* preying on a Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*) by a SRT (Save the Rhino Trust) staff member during 2004 from the Brandberg West area was previously reported to the authors. As far as we could determine this is the first record of *N. n. nigricincta* observed preying on *Bitis caudalis* from Namibia.



**Fig. 1:** Zebra Snake (*Naja nigricincta nigricincta*) eating a Horned Adder (*Bitis caudalis*), Brandberg, Namibia.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Our appreciation goes to Johan Marais for his views on the diet of Zebra snakes and encouraging us to publish this sighting.

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**VIPERIDAE**

***Bitis gabonica* Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854**

**Gaboon Adder**

**WINTER BREEDING**

The mating behavior and reproduction of Gaboon Adders (*Bitis gabonica*) is known primarily from John Akester's observations of captive individuals in Zimbabwe (Akester 1979a; 1979b; 1984). Gaboon Adder courtship in captivity is sometimes preceded by male combat, copulation is purportedly brief (5 minutes; Akester 1979b) and parturition occurs approximately one year later, suggesting bi- or even triennial breeding cycles (Akester 1979a; Luiselli et al. 1998). In Nigeria, Luiselli et al. (1998) found wild gravid females between May and July (early phase of the wet season) and observed male combat and copulation during January – March (peak of the dry season). Luiselli et al. (1998) and Angelici et al. (2000) therefore assumed clear seasonality of mating and pregnancy in equatorial Africa.

In subtropical South Africa, Bodbijn (1994) documented a March – May mating season, based on the presence of spermatozoa in male road casualties. Linn et al. (2006) suggested a promiscuous polygynous mating strategy for *B. gabonica*, with males undertaking long mate-searching movements for sedentary females. Subsequently, Warner (2009) found activity peaks for both sexes in autumn during a radiotelemetry study of the species, and concluded that female movement during this time is associated with pheromone trail deposition. A neonate captured in early June with fresh yolk scar on the dorsum implies parturition also occurs in South Africa during autumn (Warner 2009).

In this note, we report an extension of the previously recorded South African Gaboon Adder breeding season. A male and female kept for multiple years in large, separate, open-air enclosures at Kosi Bay in Zululand, northern KwaZulu-Natal were put together in the male enclosure on 1 July 2010. No interaction was observed between the sexes until 8 July 2010. The day of 7 July 2010 was cool and rainy, and the female was suc-