FISK’S HOUSE SNAKE (LAMPROPHIS FISKII BOULENGER) FROM THE PRINCE ALBERT AREA: A CORRECTION

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In a recent paper on the fauna and flora of the Tierberg study site, near Prince Albert, in the southern Karoo (Milton, Dean & Kerley 1992), we listed Fisk’s House Snake Lamprophis fiskii as occurring on the site. Fisk’s House Snake is extremely rare and is only known from approximately 12 specimens collected from scattered localities in the western Karoo, including a recent record from Beaufort West (Branch & Haagner 1992). It is thus likely that Fisk’s House Snake could occur in the Prince Albert area. However, Dr W. R. Branch of the Port Elizabeth Museum has informed us that the snake we observed and listed (and photographed, but did not collect) was incorrectly identified, and was in fact a Dwarf Beaked Snake Dipsina multimaculata (W. R. Branch, in litt. August 1993).

It is opportune, in view of the growing interest in snake biogeography and biology, to point out that our record of Fisk’s House Snake from Tierberg is based on a misidentification, and that there is still no positive record of its occurrence in the Prince Albert area.

REFERENCES


UNUSUAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF THE COMMON ROUGH-SCALED LIZARD (ICHNOTROPIS SQUAMULOSA) IN CAPTIVITY

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The Rough-scaled Lizard, Ichnotropis squamulosa, is a small-headed, medium-sized lizard that is an active hunter of the sandy areas in the arid and mesic savannah (Branch 1994). The diet consists mainly of termites, but grasshoppers, beetles and other insects are also taken. These lizards grow rapidly and are known as “annuals”; it is unusual for an individual to live longer than 13 to 14 months. The females die soon after laying 8-12 eggs during April and May.

The habitat of I. squamulosa is shared with a few other lacertids of more or less similar size, resulting in competition for food (Jacobsen 1987).

Six adult specimens of the Common Rough-scaled Lizard were caught in traps in the Molopo Nature Reserve (25º40’S, 22º49’E) in the North-West Province, South Africa. They were brought to the laboratory in Pretoria and kept in a 140 x 34 x 33 cm terrarium together with six subadult Bushveld Lizards, Heliobolus lugubris, and four adult Kalahari Tree Skinks, Mabuya spilogaster, which were captured at the same locality. The bottom of the terrarium was partly covered with sand and partly with gravel, and a few stones and twigs were placed inside. Heat and light were supplied by a 100 W bulb which was installed on top of the tank. The animals were fed once a day with...
insects, mostly grasshoppers, caught on the university campus.

Two instances of cannibalism were observed in a period of three days. In the first case an I. squamulosa was seen feeding on a H. lugubris which was swallowed within 90 seconds. Two days later the same Ichnotropis was found dead with the posterior part of the H. lugubris protruding from the mouth, indicating an unsuccessful attempt at regurgitating the prey.

Three days later a female I. squamulosa was seen chasing after a H. lugubris. The Bushveld Lizard was caught several times by one of its legs, held for a while and then released again. After about five minutes the Heliolepis was caught at midbody and was vigorously shaken, which caused its head to repeatedly strike a stone. This lasted for about two minutes. The now subdued H. lugubris was then turned and swallowed head-first, which took about five minutes. It is worth mentioning that shortly before this event happened, the I. squamulosa was offered a few grasshoppers which were not taken.

Two days later the regurgitated carcass of the H. lugubris was found in the terrarium.

Jacobsen (1987) stated that there was some competition for food between the two South African species of Ichnotropis as the size difference between them is rather small. The adults of H. lugubris and I. squamulosa are also quite similar in size, the former reaching a maximum length of 22 cm and the latter 23 cm (Branch 1994). Both these lizards favour the same kind of habitat which (although not reported in the literature) could lead to competition for food that might result in aggressive display or action between similarly sized individuals.

In this particular case, the H. lugubris specimens (that were seen to be eaten) were smaller than the I. squamulosa and may therefore have appeared like attractive prey. It is also possible that because of the close confinement in the terrarium, this might have provoked the I. squamulosa to attack the H. lugubris which had no place to escape.

Nevertheless the observed behaviour could be an indication of the competition between I. squamulosa and other lacertids in their natural environment (Jacobsen 1987; Broadley 1979).

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REFERENCES


ANURA

PIPIDAE

KASSINA SENEGALENSIS

Bubbling Kassina

REPRODUCTION, CLUTCH SIZE

During the 1991 rainy season (October to December) 12 Kassina senegalensis pairs were caught in amplexus at Bloemfontein, Free State (29°05' 30"S, 26°11' 10"E, 2926AA) and brought to the laboratory to complete the egg laying process. All the pairs were collected before egg laying started. The average size of the clutches was 316.92 (n = 12; SA = 87.26). The smallest clutch contained 128 eggs, while the two biggest clutches contained 426 and 464 eggs respectively. During the 1992/1993 breeding season two clutches of 484 and 504 eggs respectively were collected at the Vernon Crookes Nature Reserve, southern KwaZulu Natal (30°15' S, 30°37'E; 3050BC). According to Wager (1986, Frogs of South Africa: their fascinating life stories, Delta Books, Goodwood) and Duellman and Trueb (1994, Biology of Amphibians, Johns Hopkins University Press, London), who refer to Wager, the largest recorded clutch size for K. senegalensis is 400 eggs. The Vernon Crookes record extends the known clutch size record for K. senegalensis by 104 eggs.

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