A NOTE ON TAIL REGENERATION IN A SAMPLE
OF Meroles cuneirostris FROM THE CENTRAL
NAMIB DESERT

C. T. STUART

The incidence of tail regeneration in lizards, particularly gekkonids, has
received fairly extensive attention worldwide (Bustard and Hughes 1966,
Cagle 1946, Werner 1964, 1968 and others). Brain (1958) has reported
on this phenomenon in some southern African geckos. However, the author
has been unable to trace any literature on the regeneration of tails in other
southern African lizard groups.

A sample of 181 Meroles cuneirostris was collected over a twelve month
period during 1974/1975, to the east of the Kamberge in the central Namib
Desert (23° 39' S, 15° 45' E) in low fairly stable sand dunes. Those lizards
with broken (not as a result of collecting) and regenerating tails – ranging
from virtually invisible regrowth to well regrown tails were recorded.
Regenerated tails were externally distinguishable from original tails by their
different scalation, colouration and their usually smaller size. Of the 181
lizards, a total of 46 had regenerating or regenerated tails (20.4% of the
males and 32.8% of the females had tails in various stages of regeneration).
The following table gives a breakdown of material collected and the number
of animals with regenerated of regenerating tails through the months of the
year.

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Table: Breakdown of tail regeneration by sex and month.

This work was undertaken whilst the author was in the employ of the Transvaal
Museum (DERU – CSIR), based in the Namib Desert Park, run by the Division
of Nature Conservation. Thanks are extended to the above.

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Private Bag 614
Robertson
6705

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