



Figure 1. *Homopholis mulleri* from the Limpopo Valley, just north of the Soutpansberg, South Africa. Side view of an adult male (Ryan van Huyssteen).

listed as Vulnerable and was previously considered to be restricted to Mopane habitat which is vulnerable to several threats (Bates *et al.* 2014). The present findings show that *Homopholis mulleri* is not restricted to Mopane Veld, and may occupy more generalized habitats, suggesting that it may have a wider distribution. Further surveys are required to identify the true range and habitat type for the species, and to affirm its Vulnerable conservation status.

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LACERTIDAE

Tropidosaura montana natalensis

Fitzsimons 1947

Natal Mountain Lizard

NATAL MOUNTAIN LIZARD IN SOUTH AFRICA

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On 16 October 2014, in the Collywobbles area in the Eastern Cape, an adult gravid female *Tropidosaura* specimen was collected under a rock in degraded grassland (32° 1' 12" S; 28° 34' 11" E, 3228BA, 696 m a.s.l.) by B. Du Preez. The specimen (Fig. 1) was accessioned into the Port Elizabeth Museum collection (PEM R21111), and has the following meristic and scalation details: snout-vent length 56 mm, tail length 95 mm: 4/4 (right/left) upper labials anterior of the subocular; 6/6 lower labials; 44 transverse dorsal scale rows between occiput and root of tail; 23 dorsal scales across the middle of the body; ventral

plates in 25 transverse rows between axilla and groin; and 5 femoral pores on each side. The following meristic characters categorises it with *T. montana natalensis* FitzSimons (1947): the nostril is pierced between the nasal and two small postnasals; the anterior loreal is very narrow and less than half the length of the posterior loreal; the lower edge of the subocular is much longer than adjacent labials; the temporal scale(s) are mostly smooth except for the uppermost row; there is a single enlarged pre-anal, bordered by 8 smaller scales; and the posterior surface of hind limbs is finely granular. Thus we assign this new record to *T. montana natalensis* and not either of the other two subspecies. This subspecies is well separated from other subspecies of *T. montana* by scalation and by genetics (Engleder *et al.*, 2013), but still awaits formal re-assessment.

Tropidosaura montana natalensis is only known to occur in coastal and montane grasslands of southern KwaZulu-Natal (Turner, 2014). During a ECPTA biodiversity



Figure 1: Gravid female *Tropidosaura montana natalensis* (PEM R21111) from Collywobbles, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Photo: Brian Du Preez.

survey of Mkamabati Nature Reserve the remains of a *Tropidosaura* regurgitated by a *Lycophidion capense* where found in a funnel trap (Venter & Conradie in press). The regurgitated specimen was the first record of *T. montana natalensis* from the Eastern Cape. The new Collywobbles record represents the second record of this subspecies for the Eastern Cape and extends the distribution 160 km south of the Mkamabati record. Further studies are required in the Transkei region, especially from the grasslands of the lower slopes of the Drakensberg and in the coastal region, to fully understand the distribution of this subspecies in the Eastern Cape. The lack of records of vertebrate taxa from the Transkei could possibly be attributed to the remoteness of the area and unsuitable road conditions, which make the logistics of field sampling efforts challenging. Skead (2007) described the phenomenon “Transkei faunal distribution gap” as a real gap in species distributions caused by environmental features. The presence of *T. m. natalensis* as far south as Collywobbles helps towards filling this “Transkei faunal distribution gap”, indication that it is rather contribute to a sampling gap than a real gap.

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ELAPIDAE

Aspidelaps scutatus scutatus

A. Smith 1849

Common Shield Cobra

COMMON SHIELD COBRA IN SOUTH AFRICA

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During a recent visit to Kimberley the first author undertook a night cruise between Kimberly and Barkley West via the R31 on 15 January 2016. At 11:37 pm a large dead on the road snake (DOR) was found at 28° 39' 3.9" S, 24° 36' 57.8"E; 1137 m a.s.l. The snake was identified as a Common Shield Cobra (*Aspidelaps scutatus scutatus*). The specimen (Figs. 1 & 2) was collected and has been accessioned into Port Elizabeth Museum herpetology collection (PEM R22084). A total of ten additional snakes were also found on the road. Comprising of seven species, i.e. *Bitis arietans* (DOR), *Atractaspis bibronii* (DOR), *Xenocalamus bicolor bicolor* (DOR), *Boaedon capensis* (one DOR and one alive), *Elapsoidea sundevalli media* (DOR), *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* (alive), and *Lycophidion capense capense* (three DORs).

The adult female specimen measured 373 mm snout-vent length and 50 mm tail length. Dorsal scales in 21 rows at midbody, with 120 ventral scales, 22 paired subcaudal scales, and anal shield entire. Six upper labial scales with the 4th upper labial very small and excluded from the eye by a large single subocular, 8 lower labial scales with first four touching mental, 1 preocular, 3

postocular scales, no loreal, and temporal scales arranged in a 2 + 4 pattern on both sides. Scales within 160 mm of the tail were strongly keeled. Colouration: the dorsal body is reddish brown, with a series of well-defined black blotched (22 in total) over body and tail; ventrally white; dorsal head and anterior part of body black; ventral head and anterior body black, separated by a white chin band.

The common shield cobra (*Aspidelaps scutatus scutatus*) is endemic to southern Africa. In South Africa, it is restricted to the northern parts of Gauteng, North-West, northwestern parts of Mpumalanga, the western half of Limpopo (Bates et al. 2014). Only three records from the north-eastern part of the Northern Cape currently exists and is based on photographic observation in the near vicinity of the Tswalu Kalahari Private Game Reserve (see Bates et al. 2014; <http://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=ReptileMAP-5950>, <http://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=ReptileMAP-623>, <http://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=ReptileMAP-155731>).



Figure 1: Lateral photo of *Aspidelaps scutatus scutatus* (PEM R22084)