

REPTILIA

CHELONII

PELOMEDUSIDAE

PELUSIOS NANUS

African Dwarf Hinged Terrapin

REPRODUCTION

An adult female *Pelusios nanus* was collected on 12 July 1991 at Sakeji School, North-western Province, Zambia (11°45'S, 24°19'E; 1124Ab). The specimen was kept in captivity at the Port Elizabeth Snake Park, where it settled down and accepted fish, lean meat and pink mice. On 7 April 1992, 10 months after capture, she laid 5 viable eggs. These were deposited on a ledge with fine gravel and no effort was made to bury them. Egg biometrics were: length, mean 29,3 mm, S.D. 0,72 mm, range 28,3-30,2 mm; width, mean 16,6 mm, S.D. 0,39 mm, range 14,9-16,9 mm; mass, mean 4,24 g, S.D. 0,43 g, range 3,6-4,8 g. Eggs were incubated in moist vermiculite but failed to hatch. On inspection, 67 days after oviposition, one egg contained a perfectly formed but dead embryo with a carapace length of 15,7 mm, carapace width of 11,9 mm and plastron length of 14,2 mm. The yolk was not fully absorbed and weighed 1,4 g, while the terrapin weighed only 1,1 g. All eggs were fertile but contained dead embryos in various stages of decomposition. No other details on reproduction in this species are known. Sperm retention for at least 10 months by the female is indicated in this instance, being the first documented case of sperm retention in an African terrapin. The female died the following month and was deposited in the herpetological collection of the Port Elizabeth Museum (PEM R7248). Her carapace length was 119 mm, plastron length 104,5 mm and mass 259,2 g at the time of death. The excised embryo and one egg were also deposited in the museum collection (PEM R7223). Broadley (1991, *Arnoldia Zimbabwe* 9(37): 519-538) gave a record size of 120 mm for a *P. nanus* specimen from the same locality; the PEM R7248 female is the second largest specimen known.

Acknowledgements: The Brubacher family for their hospitality during our stay in Zambia; Anna Haagner, Matthew and Anne Cowell for assisting with collecting; and W.R. Branch for commenting on the text.

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SAURIA

SCINCIDAE & LACERTIDAE

MABUYA VARIEGATA PUNCTULATA

Northern Variegated Skink

MABUYA STRIATA SPARSA

Kalahari Striped Skink

MEROLES SUBORBITALIS

Spotted Desert Lizard

AVIAN PREDATION

On 10 December 1991 an adult female Pigmy Falcon (*Polihierax semitorquatus*) was collected at Nossob Restcamp in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (25°29'S, 20°31'E; 2520Bc), Northern Cape, South Africa by J.J. Herholdt. Examination of the stomach contents of the bird revealed fragmentary evidence of at least four lizards. Using identification keys and figures in FitzSimons (1943, *Transvaal Mus. Mem.* 1: 1-528), a checklist of the herpetofauna of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (Haacke,

1984, Supplement to *Koedoe*: 171-186) and comparative material in the herpetological collection of the National Museum, it was determined that three species were involved. The head of one lizard was identified as that of a *Meroles suborbitalis* (frontonasal in broad contact with rostral); two forelimbs, part of a tail and a few patches of skin similar to that of *M. suborbitalis* were also present. The head of another lizard (tympanic region damaged) together with two sets of hindquarters, both with quinquecarinate dorsal scales and mainly tricarinate subdigital lamellae, indicated the presence of *Mabuya variegata punctulata*. The hindquarters of another lizard were dark brown with small, pale spots, there were tricarinate dorsal scales and mainly unicarinate subdigital lamellae (22 under 4th toe of each foot) and the specimen is referable to *Mabuya striata sparsa* (see Broadley, 1977, *Occ. Pap. natn. Mus. Rhod.* B6(2): 45-79); a third rather damaged head could not be identified with confidence but was similar to that of *M. s. sparsa*. Several unattached *Mabuya* forelimbs were also present. The bird and its stomach contents are preserved in the ornithological collection of the National Museum, Bloemfontein (NMBV 04160). The Pigmy Falcon is known to prey on large insects, small lizards and occasionally small rodents and birds (Maclean, 1993, *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town). Pellet analysis has shown that in terms of mass, more than 50% of this bird's diet consists of lizards (Brown *et al.*, 1982, *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 1. Academic Press, London).

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CORDYLIDAE

PLATYSAURUS INTERMEDIUS

Common Flat Lizard

REPRODUCTION

Six male, six female and four juvenile *Platysaurus intermedius* were collected in March 1993 at Pullen Farm in the eastern Transvaal (24°35'S, 31°11'E; 2431Ca). Specimens were housed in groups of three or four in standard 90 cm long aquarium tanks in the Milner Park Animal Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand on a reversed day/night cycle (12L/12D). Room temperature was maintained at 25-28°C. Each tank was fitted with a SUN-GLO lamp to simulate sunlight, while a 40 W light bulb provided a hot-spot at one end of the tank. Oviposition occurred from 6 October to 1 December 1993. All females laid elongate eggs in damp soil under the water dish. Two tanks contained two males and one female. One of these females laid three clutches of two eggs, 24 and 14 days apart respectively, while the other female laid two clutches of two eggs, 43 days apart. A female in a third tank with a single male laid one clutch of two eggs and another single egg, 46 days apart. A fourth tank contained three females and one male. Three clutches of two eggs and two single eggs were laid in total, but it was not possible to determine how many eggs were laid by any particular female. Egg morphometrics: length, mean 16,1 mm, S.D. 0,87 mm, range 14,7-17,2 mm; width, mean 9,1 mm, S.D. 0,49 mm, range 8,4-9,9 mm; mass, mean 0,66 g, S.D. 0,12 g, range 0,4-0,8 g.

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