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About Our Cover: *Ichnotropis capensis*

The lacertid genus *Ichnotropis* comprises a number of small, rough-scaled, terrestrial species inhabiting mesic and xeric savannah in central and southern Africa. The genus was last revised by Boulenger (1922), who recognized six species. Since then, additional species and races have been described, although there remains confusion in the literature concerning the number and diagnostic characteristics of the various taxa. A generic revision, including the description of a new species from Angola, is in preparation (Arnold and Branch, in prep.).

The genus is of further interest in containing a number of sympatric species that display a unique 'annual' reproductive strategy, in which their lives cycle asynchronously, thus reducing competition between them. The phenomenon was first described in two species by Don Broadley in Zimbabwe (Broadley, D. G., 1979. S. Afr. J. Zool. 14:133-138). Both species (*I. capensis* and *I. squamulosa*) mature within 5-8 months of hatching, and die soon after laying a single clutch (exceptionally two) of eggs. When they occur together, the life cycles of the two species are staggered, so that the juveniles and adults of both species are found at different times. Presumably this reduces competition for resources, but the phenomenon has been poorly studied, especially where the two species range out of sympatry. Full ecological understanding and analysis of this interesting phenomenon is hampered by taxonomic confusion within the genus, and the lack of a robust phylogeny.

The cover depicts a male Cape rough-scaled lizard (*Ichnotropis capensis*) in full breeding color. It was collected in October 1995 in dry sand forest outside Tembe Elephant Reserve in northern Zululand, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. Hatchling *I. squamulosa* were present at the time, but not adults, neatly illustrating the unique 'annual' cycling.

The cover photo was taken by **Bill Branch**, who was born in London but now lives in South Africa. He has been the herpetologist at the Port Elizabeth Museum, Eastern Cape Province, since 1979, has a broad interest in herpetology, and has authored four books on African reptiles, including the first field guide to the reptiles of the subcontinent (1988) and *Dangerous Snakes of Africa* (co-authored with Steve Spawls). His field guide is currently being revised, with the inclusion of over 80 new species! Currently, he chairs the IUCN SSC African Reptile and Amphibian Group.

We asked Bill about his set-up for photography. "There's not much to say about equipment. I have relatively basic stuff (the SA exchange rate is crippling!) consisting of a Nikon AF N6006 body and 55mm Micro Nikkor lens (which I use for 90% of my photography), now enhanced with a Nikon 1.4 teleconverter TC-14A that Michael Fogden got for me. The main advantage of the teleconverter is that it increases my working distance, allowing me to photograph small lizards from 6-10 inches. The latter has two advantages: the first is that I'm not 'sticking it up their nose' so they tend to behave a bit more naturally; the second, and possibly more important, is that it allows more space to get flash light from the front without working in the 'shadow' of the camera and lens. When using flash I use only a single light source (a Nikon speedlight SB-20 with SC-17 extension cord), not on the camera but on a small tripod placed at about 10 o'clock (i.e., coming over my left shoulder). I try to soften the harsh shadows by reflecting back with silver foil or white card. The film is the weakest element, and due to cost I have to use a local commercial Agfa film (ASA 100). I would love to be able to use better film. I'd give my right arm to afford Fuji's Velvigo!"

Separation and imaging of Branch's photograph is the work of **Jim Bridges** of Herpeto, Inc., Hollywood, Florida, USA.