

SOUTHERN ROCK LIZARD
Suidelike rotsakkedis

International status: NOT LISTED
South African status: RESTRICTED

Lacerta australis Hewitt 1926. Class: Reptilia, Suborder: Sauria, Family: Lacertidae.

Lacerta australis Hewitt 1926. Some new or little known Lizards and Batrachians from South Africa. *Ann. S. Afr. Mus.* 20(6): 473-490. Type locality: Matroosberg, Ceres district.

SUMMARY

Status: Restricted. A montane species with a restricted range in the south-western Cape, from the Hex River Mountains in the south to the Cedarberg Wilderness area in the north.

Research: Fair. More ecological studies are needed.

SPECIES DATA

Identification: A lacertid of medium size (maximum size 77 mm SVL). Body covered with very small granular scales. Body colour usually dark brown to blackish above with numerous pale green and orange spots which are arranged in more or less regular longitudinal series. Distinguished by:

1. Very small granular dorsal scales;
2. and four upper labials anterior to the subocular.

Distribution: This species ranges along the Cape fold mountains from the Hex River Mountains in the south to the Cedarberg Wilderness area in the north.

Habitat and Ecology: The species seems to be mainly rupicolous but is not confined to the rock faces at high altitudes as was previously suspected. At several places specimens were collected on the lower mountain slopes. These lizards have their retreats in cracks in rocks or under large boulders, sometimes in association with other species but never members of its own species.

Breeding: No information is available, but it is probable that the species is oviparous as viviparity is exceptionally rare in lacertids.

Remarks: The generic status of the South African *Lacerta* taxa is a point of dispute. Arnold (1978) has suggested that the South African forms are not congeneric with Palearctic *Lacerta* sensu stricta. In

all probability a new genus will have to be erected to accommodate them.

CONSERVATION

Status: Although this species has a restricted distribution it is fairly common within its range.

Threats: The species occurs in rugged, mountainous areas which are largely unsuitable for agricultural purposes. It therefore seems highly unlikely that it will ever be adversely influenced by man's activities, either directly or indirectly. Its elusive nature and the ruggedness of the terrain it inhabits will furthermore effectively prevent the pet trade from having an impact on this species. Veld fires and afforestation may have locally detrimental effects.

Existing Conservation Measures: The species is protected by Cape Provincial Ordinances.

Breeding Potential in Captivity: The species keeps well in captivity and will probably breed too.

Recommended Conservation Measures: None necessary at this stage.

Remarks: Listed as rare (restricted) in previous Red Data Book (McLachlan, 1978).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Taxonomy: Arnold, 1973; Haacke, 1982; Hewitt, 1926.

Distribution: De Villiers, Baard and Branch, 1983; Haacke, 1982; Mouton, Oelofsen and Mostert, 1987.

Habitat and Ecology: Branch, 1988.

Conservation: McLachlan, 1978; Mouton, Oelofsen and Mostert, 1987.

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