A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE REPTILES OF THE KALAHARI GEMSBOK NATIONAL PARK

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As a result of collecting and observation done during May 1956 (Dr. FitzSimons) and on the 1957 expedition (Dr. Brain) it is now possible to draw up a list of the lizards and snakes which occur in the Park. Apart from forms that have actually been collected and identified, the list includes reptiles known to exist in the surrounding area, although they have not yet been taken within the boundaries of the reserve itself. Such species are marked with a query in the list now provided:

LIZARDS

Sixteen species are known to occur, four others have been recorded from the surrounding area.

Family: GEKKONIDAE The geckos — geitjies.

Chondrodactylus angulifer Peters.

Sand or ground gecko. Groot grondgeitjie.

Nocturnal geckos found in the vicinity of the river beds. When alarmed, the tail is raised and curved over the back, giving the animal very much the appearance of a scorpion. It is doubtful whether this is true mimicry however, since insufficient is at present known of predators that would hunt the geckos by sight, and yet be deceived by their similarity to scorpions. It is interesting to note that if one looks into one ear of this gecko, it is possible to see straight out the other!

Ptenopus garrulus garrulus (A. Smith).

Whistling gecko — Klein grondgeitjie.

These small sand-coloured geckos live in burrows at the foot of bushes or grass tufts and emerge at sundown, when they may sometimes be heard to make a loud whistling noise.

Pachydactylus rugosus A. Smith.

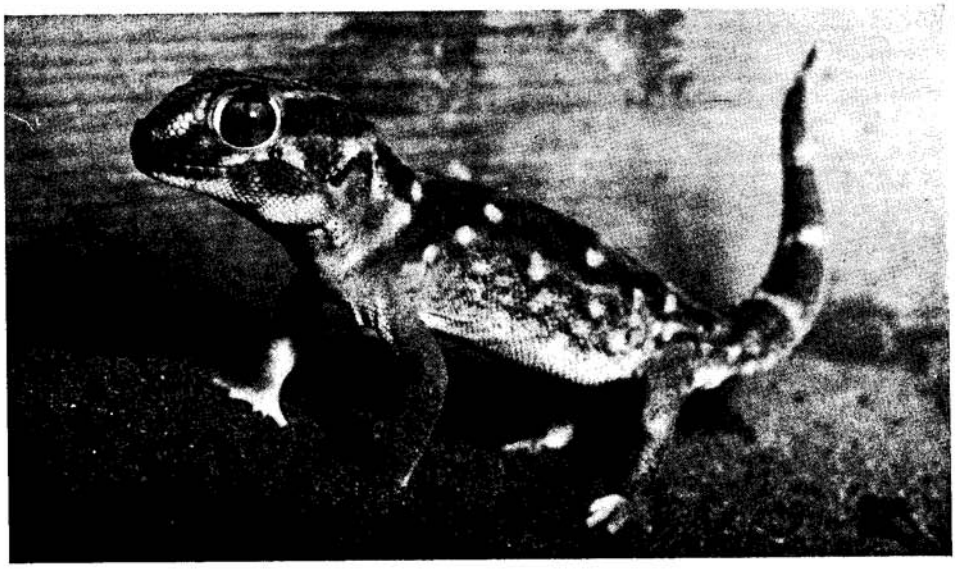
Rough-scaled gecko.

Commonly found below stones and fallen logs.

Pachydactylus capensis capensis A. Smith.

Common Cape gecko.

A very widespread form often found among rocks or behind the bark of trees.



A Sand gecko (*Chondrodactylus angulifer*) from Twee Rivieren.

Pachydactylus bibronii A. Smith.
Large house gecko — Blinkogie.

One of the commonest of the geckos, often found in fair numbers together. Large specimens may be seen in the evenings on the walls of the rest huts at Twee Rivieren, where they feed on insects attracted to the lights. In some districts these geckos are thought to be poisonous and to be responsible for the death of small stock. There is certainly no foundation for this belief.

Colopus wahlbergii Peters.
Kalahari gecko.

A rare sand gecko not previously known from the Southern Kalahari. Two specimens were found at Mata-Mata.

Family: AGAMIDAE Koggelmanders.

? Agama anchietae anchietae Bocage.
Anchieta's desert agama.

Known from the area surrounding the Park.

Agama hispida aculeata Merrem.
Kalahari spiny agama.

Particularly common along the river courses where they are seen both on the ground and sitting in bushes. In February most of the agamas were

found in pairs and the majority of females were gravid. One was found actually laying her eggs in a hole about six inches deep which she had dug in the road. Several others have laid in captivity, and between 10 and 18 seem to be the usual number of eggs produced.

The colour of these lizards is very much dependent on temperature and excitation. When active, they tend to be light buff in colour, the females with well-defined red blotches on their backs, the males with brilliantly blue throats.

Family: SCINCIDAE The Skinks.
Mabuya occidentalis (Peters).
Western three-striped skink.

A striking rufous-brown lizard with three yellowish longitudinal stripes down the back. Found to be very active on grass-covered dunes during the day. Two of these lizards have been caught in spring traps set for rodents, which suggests that they are not completely insectivorous in their diet.

Mabuya striata Peters.
Common striped skink.

These are perhaps the commonest lizards in the Park and can be found on practically every tree in the Nossob and Auob River courses. They produce their young alive, and in February many of the females were gravid. One was found to contain 9 fully-formed embryos.

. *Mabuya damarana* (Peters).
Damara skink. Known for the surrounding area.

Typhlosaurus lineatus Boulenger.
Striped Kalahari blindworm or legless skink.

A burrowing lizard confined to the sandveld. One specimen was dug up below a bush at Twee Rivieren; gives birth to a single young in late summer.

Family: LACERTIDAE Sand Lizards.

Very active long-tailed sand lizards usually seen moving with great rapidity on open ground during the hot hours of the day.

Nucras tessellata (A. Smith).
Striped or banded sand lizard.

? *Nucras intertexta intertexta* (A. Smith).
Spotted sandveld lizard.

Eremias lugubris A. Smith.
Black and yellow sand lizard.

Eremias namaquensis Dumeril and Bibron.
Namaqua sand lizard.

Eremias lineo-ocellata lineo-ocellata Dumeril and Bibron.
Ocellated sand lizard.

Scaptira suborbitalis (Peters).
Ocellated or spotted sand lizard.

Family: AMPHISBAENIDAE.

? *Monopeltis ocularis* FitzSimons.

This may occur, as the type is known from Rietfontein, Gordonia, just South of the reserve.

Monopeltis leonhardi Werner.
Kalahari worm-lizard.

A burrowing form that has been recorded from the Nossob River.

SNAKES

Nine species are known to occur; eight others marked with queries, probably do so, as they are known from the surrounding area.

Family: TYPHLOPIDAE.

? *Typhlops schinzi* Boettger.
Blind or two-headed snake.

A harmless form burrowing in sand and feeding on insects; egg-laying.

Family: LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE.

? *Leptotyphlops scutifrons* (Peters).
Blind worm or worm snake.

A small, harmless, insect-eating burrower, with closely-fitting, shiny scales and worm-like in appearance.

Family: COLUBRIDAE.

Subfamily Colubrinae: Harmless, solid-toothed snakes.

Boaedon l. lineatus Dumeril and Bibron.
Common or brown house snake — Huisslang.

Lives exclusively on small rodents; attains a maximum length of about 4 feet; egg-laying.

Pseudaspis cana (Linnaeus).
Mole snake — molslang.

Common in the Park; lives mainly on small mammals, especially burrowing forms; characterised by small head, pointed snout and firm cylindrical body;

attains a maximum length of over 6 feet; produces live young, up to 50 or more at a time; young specimens are spotted, adults uniformly brown to black.

Subfamily Boiginae: Back-fanged and slightly poisonous snakes.

? *Tarbophis semiannulatus semiannulatus* (A. Smith).

Tiger snake — tierslang.

Conspicuously marked with black cross-bars on a yellowish base; reaches $2\frac{1}{2}$-3 feet in length; egg-laying; diet consists of lizards, birds and small mammals.

Rhamphiophis multimaculatus Peters.

Damara many-spotted snake.

A small slender dark-spotted snake, seldom exceeding 18 inches in length; characterised by its hooked snout; egg-laying.

? *Psammophis crucifer* (Daudin)

Cross-marked sand snake.

Characterised by a cross-shaped marking on the head; seldom exceeds 2 feet in length; egg-laying; diet mainly of small lizards; apparently preyed upon by other snakes and birds of prey.

Psammophis notostictus Peters.

Dapple-marked sand snake.

An active slender form, attaining a maximum of three feet in length; feeds mainly on lizards; egg-laying.

Psammophis sibilans trinasalis Werner.

Fork-marked sand snake.

Similar to *notistictus*, but characterised by a two-pronged forked marking on the head.

? *Dispholidus typus* (A. Smith).

Common tree snake — Boomslang.

Grows up to 6 feet in length; very active and largely arboreal; feeds mainly on chameleons and other tree lizards, nestling birds and eggs; the only dangerous back-fanged snake, but fortunately reluctant to bite; egg-laying.

Subfamiliy Elapinae: Front-fanged and highly venomous.

Naja nivea (Linnaeus)

Cape or yellow cobra — koperkapel of Kaapse geelslang.

Very common in the Park and the only cobra occurring there; found in three colour forms: (a) uniform honey yellow, (b) reddish-brown mottled,

or (c) uniform yellow to reddish-brown; feeds mainly on small rodents, but will also take frogs and toads and small birds; egg-laying.

? *Aspidelaps lubricus* (Laurenti)
Red and black coral snake.

Conspicuously marked with red and black bands; length 2-2½ feet; egg-laying.

? *Aspidelaps scutatus* A. Smith.
Shield-nosed snake.

Thick-bodied with conspicuous vertical shield on snout; head and neck ivory black, average length 18 ins.; egg-laying.

Elapsoidea sundevallii fitzsimonsi Loveridge.
Kalahari garter snake.

A burrowing form, uniformly blue-black in colour, with small head and short pointed tail. Grows to 2½-3 feet in length; egg-laying. A specimen caught in the Nossob was 15 ins. long and contained a freshly swallowed sand snake nearly 14 ins. long.

Family: VIPERIDAE.

Bitis arietans Merrem.
African puff-adder — pofadder.

Very common in the Park; produces live young, usually from 30 to 40 in number. Attains average length of 3-3½ feet.

Bitis caudalis (A. Smith).
Horned adder — horingsman.

A small adder seldom exceeding 15 ins. in length, puts up a bold fierce front when disturbed by writhing and hissing loudly; produces live young.

? *Atractaspis bibronii* (A. Smith).
Bibron's oviparous adder.

Similar in appearance to *Elapsoidea* but a little stouter and usually pale below; an egg-laying and burrowing snake.