THE JOURNAL OF THE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF RHODESIA

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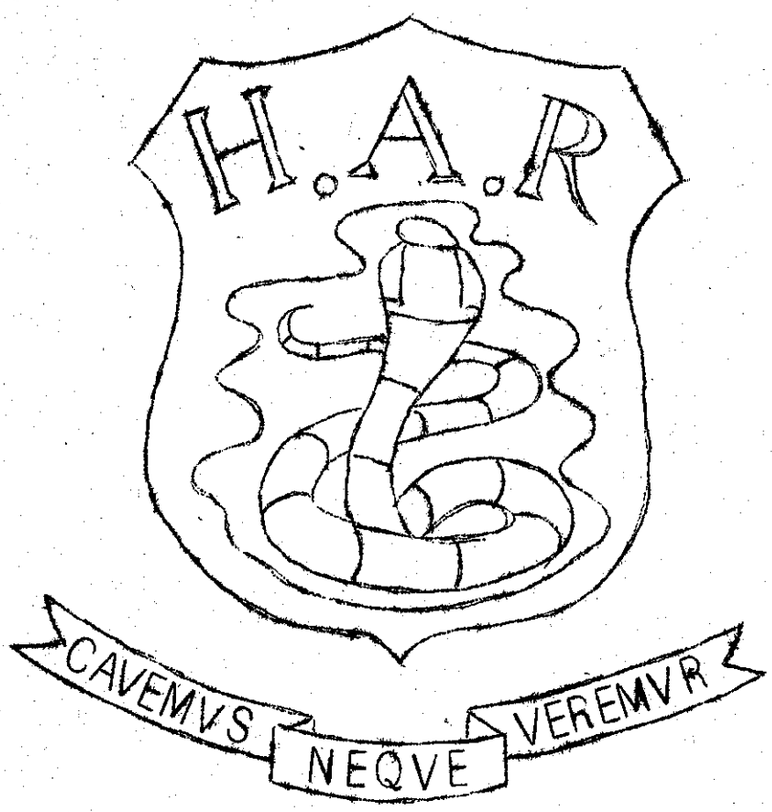

The Badge of the Herpetological Association of Rhodesia.

A List of Founder Members and their addresses:

D.G. Broadley, Honorary Secretary/Treasurer.
c/o Roads Department, P.O. Balla Balla, S. Rhodesia.

D.K. Blake, Honorary Branch Secretary, Umtali Branch.
61 First Street, Umtali, S. Rhodesia.

W. Armitage (Umtali Branch)

S, Warren (Umtali Branch)

Rev. K. Tasman, S.J.
Monte Cassino Mission, P.O. Macheke, S. Rhodesia.

A.H. Siemers
Prince Edward School, P.O. Box 8076, Causeway, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia.

V.J. Wilson
Game & Tsetse Control Dept., Kalichero Camp, P.O. Box 37, Fort Jameson, N. Rhodesia. (On leave until May, 1958)

E.L. McCarthy
15 "J" Avenue, Luanshya, N. Rhodesia.

CONSTITUTION AND RULES.

1. The name of the Association shall be the Herpetological Association of Rhodesia.

OBJECTS

2. The objects of the Association are:-
(a) To collect and exchange, inter alia, through the medium of the Association Journal, information on all aspects of the distribution, ecology and habits of the herpetofauna of Rhodesia. To encourage the publication of this information in both scientific journals and popular literature. Scientific names will

be used to avoid confussion. A revised Checklist of the Rhodesian Herpetofauna will be published bi-annually.

(b) To build up at the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia a comprehensive study collection of the Rhodesian Reptiles and Amphibians.

(c) To educate the public towards a sane and reasonable attitude to reptiles and amphibians in general and snakes in particular. This object may be carried out by means of lectures, exhibitions, films and articles.

(d) To promote, where necessary, the addition of further reptiles and amphibians to the list of protected fauna. To ensure that the protection afforded by existing laws and by National Parks and Wild Life Sancturies is effectual.

(e) To encourage the study of reptiles and amphibians in captivity and exchange specimens among members.

(f) To organise expeditions to the lesser known areas of Central Africa and to render all possible assistance to members on collecting trips away from their own districts.

(g) To collect and receive subscriptions and donations for the purpose of carrying out the above objects. Ten per cent of the net profits made by any exhibition run under Association auspices shall revert to the Association Funds.

MEMBERSHIP

(3) (a) Membership shall be open to any herpetologist, resident in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland or the British Territories in East Africa, who has given satisfactory proof of his enthusiasm and ability.

(b) Candidates for membership may be introduced by a member or may qualify by submitting material and observations to the Hon. Secretary.

4. A member may be expelled from the Association for failing to support its objects. Such action shall require a two-thirds majority in a vote by all members.

5. (a) Members shall pay an Entrance Fee of £1 (one pound) and also an Annual Subscription of £1 (one pound)

(b) The Entrance Fee and First Subscription shall be paid on admission to membership. Thereafter, subscriptions shall fall due on the first of April each year. Members joining after the first of October in any year shall be required to pay only half the Annual Subscription for that year.

6. Branches may be formed within the Association in order to co-ordinate the activities of members in their own district. The Branch shall have no voting powers, all voting shall be done individually. The Branch shall have an Honorary Branch Secretary/ Treasurer. Branches shall be self supporting.

7. All Association and Branch Accounts shall be audited annually.

8. The Officers of the Association shall consist of an Honorary Secretary/Treasurer until such time as the size of the Association requires that separate Officers be appointed. A Chairman shall be elected prior to the first General Meeting

D.G. Broadley: For exchange : Thelotornis k. capensis; Naja n. nigricollis
Bitis a. arientans (small)
Required: Philothamnus i. irregularis; Natriciteres spp.;
Lycodonomorphus spp. ;Naja melanoleuca.

A SOUTHWARDS EXTENSION IN THE RANGE OF THE GREY GRASS-SNAKE (DROMOPHIS LINEATUS)

Two specimens of Dromophis Lineatus have recently been added to the National Museum Collection. A specimen from Nampini, on the south bank of the Zambezi 50 miles above the Victoria Falls, is the most southerly yet recorded. The other snake was collected by W.F.H. Ansell of the Game and Tsetse Control Dept. in the Kafue National Park. Dromophis Lineatus ranges south from the Sudan through East Africa, but the most southerly records in the litcrature are from Lake Bangweulu (Pitman) and Nyasaland (Boulenger).

Dromophis is very similar to Psammophis in external appearance, but is distinguished by the dentation. In Psammophis, the maxillary teeth are interrupted below the anterior border of the eye by two greatly enlarged fang-like teeth, separated before and behind by an interspace, followed by more small maxillary teeth, then a third interspace preceeding the enlarged grooved fangs situated below the anterior border of the eye. In Dromophis and Psammophylax, the maxillary teeth form a continuous series up to the interspace which preceeds the fangs. Dromophis lineatus has a lower ventral count than any Psammophis species. The lepidosis being Midbody scale rows 17; ventrals 138-159; subcaudals 83-105. In build it resembles Psammophis subtaeniatus and the markins are rather similar. The head is dark brown, with two narrow light lines crossing the back of the head; upper labials and chin are white. The body is grey-brown, the vertebral scale row lighter, the 3 scale rows on each side black-edged, followed by a lighter dorso-lateral strips merging into grey-brown below. Ventrals are greenish yellow with a black transverse marking at the end of each ventral for the anterior two-thirds of the body.

Dromophis frequents streams and swamps and presumably subsists principally on frogs. The Kafue specimen was taken " in a damp, shady place by the bank of the Lufupa River" (Ansell). This snake measures 930 (655 - 275) mm., which is about average.

Members in Northern Rhodesia are urged to watch out for this interesting species, which must occur in suitable localities throughout most of the country. In Southern Rhodesia it should be looked for in the Zambezi Valley.

OCCURRENCE OF THE FOREST COBRA (NAJA MELANOLEUCE) IN RHODESIA.

The Black-lipped Forest Cobra is typically a species of the Rain Forest, ranging from the Congo to Kenya, then extending south through Tanganyika and Mozambique to Zululand. W.F.H. Ansell one from Solwezi and a fine 7 foot male from the Lunga Game Reserve L.D.E.F. Vesey-FitzGerald has taken the species at Abercorn. This cobra occurs throughout Nyasaland so it may have a wide range in Northern Rhodesia. Only further collecting can fill the present lacunae.

Although this species has not yet been recorded from Southern Rhodesia, it may well occur in the Eastern Districts. It has a similar distribution to the Gaboon Viper (Bitis g. gabonica) and the Green Mamba (Dendroaspis angusticeps), both of which have been recorded from this area. I suspect that a Forest Cobra eluded me at Mount Selinda last December, by diving to the bottom of a deep pool on the Umzilizwe River. This behaviour is very unlike Naja Haje, which is not fond of the water, and Naja nigricollis although often semi-aquatic, normally swims on the surface. Naja melanoleuca, on the other hand, is well known as a fish-catching cobra in Lake Victoria (Pitman) and the huge brownish cobra I encountered may well have been this species. I hope to settle the matter this December, when I visit Mount Selinda with H.A.R. members of the Umtali Branch.

9. There shall be a General Meeting in 1960 at a place to be appointed by the Hon. Secretary. Thereafter there shall be a General Meeting every three years until such time as the size of the Association Warrents and Annual General Meeting.

10. Any amendment to the Constitution shall be the subject to a two-thirds majority in a vote by all members of the Association. All voting shall be by post.

11. The official organ of the Association shall be the "Journal of the Herpetological Association of Rhodesia", published quarterly and circulated to all members. This will be compiled by the Hon. Secretary from information and material received from members and data gleaned from scientific journals, etc.

12. The Association Badge shall be a rearing Branded Cobra (Naja haje var. Annulifera) in black and gold, on a green field, with the initials H.A.R. above in gold. Below, on a scarlet scroll, is the motto "Cavemus neque veremur" (We respect but do not fear). This badge and motto shall be properly registered.

JOTTINGS FROM "COBRA CORNER"

Dear Member,

So at last our Association is established and the first edition of the "Journal" makes it's appearance. Subscriptions continue to come in slowly, but the proceeds of the Bulawayo and Umtali Shows will give us an initially sound financial position.

The position with regard to the Checklist is as follows. I am at the moment preparing the final MS of "The reptiles of Southern Rhodesia. Part 1 Snakes", this should be published early next year. The second part, covering the Tortoises, Terrapins, Crocodiles and Lizards, will not be ready for at least 12 months, due to the shortage of material. Preliminary work on "A Check List of the Snakes of Northern Rhodesia", which I am producing in conjunction with Captain C.R.S. Pitman, is proceeding steadily but once again much more material is required before anything conclusive can be attempted. So far I have examined less than 150 snakes from Northern Rhodesia; for the Southern Rhodesian work I was able to collate the data for 1300 specimens. My requests for N.R. material have brought an encouraging response from the Department of Game and Tsetse Control, and I anticipate that we shall see more new members following Vivian Wilson from that quarter.

In this edition I include articles on the Grey Grass Snake (Dromophis lineatus), the Forest Cobra (Naja melanoleuca) and Fatalities following bites from Dispholidus and Thelotornis Look out for my article on the Cape Vine-Snake in the December edition of "African Wild Life".

I hope to be able to outline the distribution of the races of Thelotornis kirtlandii in the next edition of the "Journal". More material is required from N. Rhodesia and also Mashonaland, the vital data is the ventral count, which can be taken off live specimens if necessary.

As the rains settle in, the world of reptiles is waking up so I will wish all members,

Good hunting and the Compliments of the Season,

D.G. Broadley,
Hon. Secretary/Treasurer, H.A.R.

Hon. Keeper of Herpetology
National Museum of S. Rhodesia.

EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT (Live specimens)

Naja melanoleuca is distinguished from our other cobras by having 7 upper labials, the 6th largest, the 3rd and 4th entering the orbit. Lepidosis (4N.R. & Nyasaland snakes): Midbody scale rows 19; ventrals 208-214 (higher than in N.haje or N. nigricollis); subcaudals 65-70.

Rain Forest specimens are uniform glossy black above and below. The two N.R. Cobras are yellow brown anteriorly passing to uniform blue-black posteriorly, above and below. The labial sutures are black; there is a broad black band on the throat and the yellow belly is heavily speckled with black. One Nyasaland snake is described as brown above, freely speckled with black, tail almost black, below creamy white copiously speckled with black. (loveridge).

FATALITIES FROM THE BITES OF DISPHOLIDUS AND THEOLOTORNIS AND A PERSONAL CASE HISTORY

The recent tragic death of Karl Schmidt of the Chicago Natural History Museum from the bite of a Boomslang (Dispholidus typus) will come as a shock to all herpetologists. The snake had been sent from Chicago Zoo for identification and Schmidt was bitten while handling it, before he had established it's identity. He deliberately refrained from taking any remedial action, in order to study the effects of the venom. For the first 24 hours the symptoms were not serious, but a severe reaction set in during the next 24 hours, from which he did not recover.

The first recorded fatality following a Thelotornis bite occurred in 1953, when F.J. de R.Lock, a Tanganyika Game Ranger, died 48 hours after being bitten on the thumb by a Thelotornis 2'5" in length. The post mortem revealed haemorrhage of every organ in the body and slight haermorrhage of the brain. In this case the Venom was absorbed internally after the victim had sucked the site of the bite.

In most back-fanged snakes (particularly Crotaphopeltis) the venom causes local haemorrhage, which in itself helps to wash out the venom. This is not always the case, as I recently found out.

On 1.xi.57 I spotted a pair of Thelotornis k. capensis mating in a thorn tree at Lumane. While perched in the tree, trying to get both snakes into the bag at once, the larger Vine-Snake(just over 4 feet in length) fastened onto the base of my right index finger. I released the other snake, which glided over my shoulder and into a thick bush. Having descended to the ground, I detached the snake from my finger and bagged it before attempting to capture the other snake. I sucked the fang punctures and took no further action, the time was 3.30p.m. I gave up the search for the other snake after half an hour(I caught it in the original tree 2 days later) and noted that the finger was rather swollen. By 5p.m. there was slight haemorrhage from the fang punctures. At 9p.m. the finger was very swollen and discoloured at the joint, with persistant haemorrhage from the fang punctures and all the scratches on my legs, received when climbing the thorn tree, blood also oozed from small shaving cuts, etc. there was no pain.

The haemorrhage continued all that night and all the next day. The blood was very slow to clot and I left pools of blood whereever I went. By 9p.m. on the 2nd the haemorrhage was easing off and confined to the legs only. By 7a.m. on the 3rd the bleeding had stopped, the finger was still swollen and the hand puffy. The swelling started to go down on the 5th.

In this instance I think that the venom of the Vine-Snake was of exceptional potency, as we had just had our first rain and the snakes were ermerging from aestivation (I caught 6 Thelotornis in 10 days). The numerous scratches on my body apparently acted as "safety valves" and saved me from the dreadful internal haemorrhage normally caused by this venom.

Members are strongly advised to take no chances with bites from Dispholidus or Thelotornis, apply a ligature, cut at the punctures and squeeze out the venom. The Lock case is a warning against reckless sucking of fang punctures.

D.G. BROADLEY

HERE AND THERE. (Extracts from Member's letters)

A 4½ foot Naja haje var. annulifera taken from a meter box at Umtali (D.K. Blake).

A Philothamnus hoplogaster 2'2" long taken on the Shawanoe River (A.H. Siemers).
