

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

African Herp News publishes brief notes concerning the biology of the herpetofauna of the African continent and adjacent regions, including the Arabian peninsula, Madagascar, and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

A standard format is to be used, as follows: **SCIENTIFIC NAME**; **Common name** (using Bill Branch's *Field Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, third edn., 1998, for reptiles; and Passmore & Carruthers' *South African Frogs*, 1995, for amphibians, as far as possible); **KEYWORD** (this should be one or two words best describing the topic of the note, e.g. Reproduction, Avian predation, etc.); the **Text** (in concise English with only essential references quoted and in abbreviated form); **Locality** (country, province or state, location, quarter-degree unit, and latitude and longitude if available; elevation above sea level; use metric units); **Date** (day, month, year); **Collector(s)**; **Place of deposition and museum accession number** (required if specimens are preserved). Submitted by: **NAME**, Address (in parentheses).

REPTILIA
CHELONIA

TESTUDINIDAE

HOMOPUS FEMORALIS

Greater Padloper

EGG AND CLUTCH SIZE

At 15h45 on 1 November 1993 Mr. Colin King discovered a large female Greater Padloper digging a nest hole on his farm "Fairfield" (Winterberg Mountains, Tarkastad District, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa; 3226AD). Construction of the nest hole continued until 17h08 when egg laying commenced. By 17h13 three large eggs had been laid, and these were settled into place until 17h22, when the female started to fill in the nest hole. The eggs were not measured, and no further notes on egg development are available.

In 1999 Mr. King discovered the shell of another female Greater Padloper on his farm. Three large unlaidd, shelled eggs were present in the empty shell. The identification of the dried shell (which lacked skull and limbs) as *Homopus femoralis* was confirmed by the presence of 11 marginals on each side, the pronounced ridge on the bridge marginals 4-8, and the habitat and distribution details. The shell (PEM R15530) measured: carapace length (CL) 122 mm; plastron length 108 mm; carapace width 88 mm; carapace depth (CD, midshell) 52 mm. The eggs were ovoid in shape and measured 36 x 27 mm, 36 x 27 mm and 36 x 26 mm; they were too dry to weigh.

Relatively little data are available on clutch and egg size in *Homopus*. Bourquin and Boycott (1988, *The South African Tortoise Book*. Southern Book Publishers; 148pp.) record a clutch size of 1-2 eggs measuring 29.0-35.2 x 25.0-27.3 mm. The shell of the dead female *H. femoralis* is not exceptionally large; Bourquin and Boycott (*op. cit.*) record females up to CL 160 mm and CD of 70 mm. The Common Padloper (*H. areolatus*) is closely related to the Greater Padloper, but does not grow as large (maximum CL 120 mm, CD 60 mm). Clutch sizes of 2-4 eggs have been recorded (Bourquin and Boycott, *op. cit.*).

It is thus likely that three egg clutches, and perhaps more, in the Greater Padloper are not unexpected.

Submitted by

W. R. BRANCH (Department of Herpetology, Port Elizabeth Museum, P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa).

SAURIA

CHAMAELEONIDAE

CHAMAELEO TIGRIS; Seychelles Chamaeleon
SIZE AND BREEDING

On 12 October 1996, a captive adult female Seychelles Chamaeleon was obtained from a local Seychellois in the town of Victoria, Mahé, Republic of the Seychelles. The animal was transported to the nearby Cousine Island where it was housed in a large outdoor cage in which a pot-plant was placed. On 6 November it developed a swollen eye and was subsequently unable to catch its prey. On 12 November it laid five eggs on and in the soil in which the pot-plant was standing, but was too weak to dig a deep nest-hole, laying three of the eggs on the surface and two just under the surface of the soil. Because the eye showed no signs of healing the animal was killed and preserved, and is lodged in the Cousine Island collection.

There has been controversy as to whether the species is viviparous or ovoviviparous, or both (Cheke 1984, in Stoddard (ed.): *Biogeography and ecology of the Seychelles Islands*. W. Junk, The Hague) and Cheke (*op. cit.*) indicates a clutch size for the species being 3 to 4. He gave no egg measurements.

The five eggs weighed between 0.5 and 0.7 g (mean 0.62 g) and measured 15.7 x 9.0, 15.2 x 8.3, 14.3 x 8.2, 14.2 x 9.2, and 14.2 x 9.0 mm.

The freshly dead female measured 81 mm snout-vent length, and 78 mm tail length, and weighed 9.9 g. The maximum snout-vent length is recorded as 88 mm (Cheke, *op. cit.*).

No other specimens of this endemic Seychelles chamaeleon were seen on Mahé, and only one badly damaged road kill was seen on Praslin, even though a fair amount of walking was carried out on both islands, in habitats suitable for the species. Although Henkel and Schmidt (1995, *Amphibien und reptilien Madagaskars, der Maskaren, Seychellen und Komoren*. Verlag Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart) indicate that the species is particularly common in and near the Vallee de Mai on Praslin, no chamaeleons were seen there during two walks into and through the area during 1996.

Submitted by

O. BOURQUIN (P.O. Box 1083, Hilton 3245, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa).