

TESTUDINES

Homopus signatus signatus

Speckled Padloper

OBSERVATIONS ON NATURAL DIET

Published data about the natural diet of *Homopus s. signatus* is scant. Currently, a research project focusing on this aspect (among others) is in preparation through the Studbook Breeding Programme *Homopus*. During a preceding stay in Springbok, Namaqualand on September 16 - 19, 1999 I was able to make observations on feeding by this species on three separate occasions.



On 17 September, 1999 a large female specimen (straight carapace length (SCL) = 103 mm, plastron length (PL) = 93 mm, shell width (SW) = 70.5 mm, mass = 199 g) was observed feeding on the lower branches of a bush later identified as *Hermannia trifurca* L. She was found in the shade at 14:00 hours where the temperature measured 62° Fahrenheit (16.7° C). It was a clear day, temperature in full sun was 71.7° Fahrenheit (22.1° C). The relative humidity was 53 % due to rain which had fallen the night before.

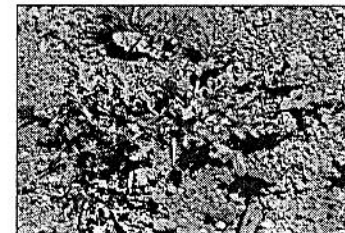
*Hermannia trifurca* L.

A second observation was made on 18 September, 1999 of an adult male *H.s.signatus* (SCL = 80 mm, PL = 63 mm, SW = 55.3 mm, mass = 107 g) found feeding on low browse later identified as *Grielum humifusum* Thunberg. He was discovered at 12:45 hrs in full sun where the temperature was recorded at 95° Fahrenheit (35° C). The relative humidity was 21 %.

This would later seem to be an important food source for tortoises in the area as a second

feeding observation was recorded on 19 September, 1999 on the same plant by an adult female *H.s.signatus* (SCL = 90.2 mm, PL = 84.5 mm, SW = 67.3mm, mass = 156 g). She was found at 11:37 hrs in full sun where the temperature

read 98° Fahrenheit (36.7° C). The humidity was 15 %. A third observation was made earlier that morning at 11:05 a.m. of an adult female *Chersina angulata* feeding on the same plant as well (see following note).



On 19 September, 1999 an adult female (SCL = 94.6 mm, PL = 84.7 mm, SW = 69 mm, mass = 118 g) was found feeding on a clover species (*Oxalis*). The species could not be identified as the plant was not in bloom

Grielum humifusum thunberg

at the time. This was found growing underneath and in the shade of larger bushes where this specimen was observed feeding. The temperature in the shade was 76° Fahrenheit (24.4° C), 96° Fahrenheit (35.6° C) in the sun. The relative humidity was 14 %. Night time temperatures during this period ranged from 36° - 48° Fahrenheit (2.2 - 8.9° C).

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