

**RANIDAE*****Pyxicephalus adspersus*****African Bullfrog****EMERGENCE BEHAVIOUR**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2002, during a night drive at Rietvlei Nature Reserve (25°52'S; 28°17'E; 1493m a.s.l.) on the Acacia route, we saw an adult male African Bullfrog on the tar road at 19:30. We stopped and picked it up and found its body covered with wet soil, which indicated that it had emerged the same day. After examination of the frog, it was released. No other African Bullfrogs were observed on the tar road for the duration of the drive. October 2002 was a relatively dry month at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, with only 18.5mm (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October) rain until the 25<sup>th</sup> October. On the 26<sup>th</sup> 10.5mm fell, none on 27<sup>th</sup> October and 7.5mm on the 28<sup>th</sup> (Riaan Marais, *pers. comm.*). This indicates only 18mm of rain had fallen in the preceding time before the bullfrog emerged. All the temporary ponds were still dry and no breeding could have taken place. Two more bullfrogs were found on separate occasions in December 2002, but there were no recorded attempts of breeding at all at Rietvlei Nature Reserve for the 2002/2003 breeding season for African Bullfrogs (Riaan Marais, *pers. comm.*). Rietvlei Nature Reserve is the only protected area in the Gauteng province where the African Bullfrog is known to breed. In other areas of Pretoria successful breeding did take place during 2002/2003. The standard literature states that African Bullfrogs need 65mm of rain or more to emerge and to breed (Channing, A. 2001. *Amphibians of Central and Southern Africa*, Protea Book house, Pretoria. p.470. It seems far less rain can cause some bullfrogs to emerge. For successful breeding much more rain is required in order for temporary ponds to fill up. African Bullfrogs can also emerge in any particular season and without not necessarily breeding.

**Submitted by**

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**REPTILIA : CHELONIA****TESTUDINIDAE*****Homopus signatus signatus*****Namaqualand speckled padloper****AGGRESSIVE COURTSHIP BEHAVIOUR**

Courtship behaviour in captive *Homopus signatus signatus* has been described to consist of a male constantly following a female, and head-bobbing prior to mounting attempts (Loehr, 1999, *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* 3:468-473). Within the stud-book on this species at the Homopus Research Foundation (to date six mating pairs or groups), no aggressive courtship behaviour was observed between 1995 and 2004.

A female (SCL 99.0 mm) that had been housed in a wild-caught group consisting of a male and another female died on 14 May 2004. The group had been kept together since 1995, and the male had always shown typical courtship behaviour towards both females. The enclosure had a surface of app. 150 x 150 cm and contained many hiding places and visual barriers. On 16 May 2004 the dead female was replaced by a reproductively active captive-bred daughter born on 30 November 1996 (SCL 98.5 mm) (note: eggs would not be incubated as they would result in inbred specimens). Courtship behaviour of the male was extended to this female, but became aggressive, including biting of the marginal scutes and the hind and front limbs, before mounting. On 4 June 2004 the female was separated from the wild-caught couple, as wounds started to form on the front limbs. To date, no aggressive courtship behaviour has been shown towards the remaining female.

It is unclear why the male showed different courtship behaviour towards the captive-bred female, and why it differed from all other courtship behaviour observed in the stud-book population. There are no accounts of courtship behaviour in the wild, but both wild and captive males can be aggressive amongst each other (Loehr, 2002, *Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society* 37:1). It is recommended to closely observe mating pairs in captivity, and to separate them timeously when necessary to prevent stress and wounds.

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**TESTUDINIDAE*****Psammobates tentorius verroxii*****Bushmanland Tent Tortoise****CLUTCH SIZE**

According to Boycott & Bourquin (2000. *The Southern African Tortoise Book*, Russell Friedman Books, Halfway House, South Africa) the clutch size for all *P. tentorius* subspecies varies from 1 to 3 eggs although it "appears that only one egg is produced at a time during spring or summer" for *P. t. verroxii*. Branch (1998. *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*, Struik Publishers, Cape Town) mentions that the western races – i.e. *P. t. verroxii* and *P. t. trimeni* – lay 1 or 2 eggs during summer. The egg size as described by above mentioned authors falls within the range of 21-28 x 27-35 mm.