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Agama planiceps PETERS, 1862 as prey item for Black Mongoose *Galerella (sanguinea) nigrata*

On three occasions during July and August 2003 (9/07, 20/07, 19/08) adult Namibian Rock Agamas (*Agama planiceps planiceps* PETERS, 1862) were observed being caught and eaten by adult male Black Mongooses *Galerella (sanguinea) nigrata* in the Erongo Mountains west of Omaruru in western Namibia.

Whilst conducting fieldwork on the habitat use and home range of *G. nigrata* it was noticed that they often attempted to prey on *A. p. planiceps* individuals although mostly unsuccessfully. The three occasions when *A. p. planiceps* individuals were caught occurred during the early morning between 08:30 and 09:30 on cool days when the agamas were less mobile. Once caught, they were quickly subdued by being vigorously shaken for a few seconds and then totally consumed. On one occasion cooperative hunting by two *G. nigrata* individuals on *A. p. planiceps* was even observed albeit also unsuccessful.

According to SKINNER & SMITHERS (1990), Sauria rank second behind Insecta in the diet of *Galerella sanguinea* as identified from 60 stomach contents from southern Africa. The only *Agama* identified from the stomach contents however, was *A.*

cyanogaster (RÜPPELL, 1835) (Tree Agama). Predators of *A. p. planiceps* include hornbills and rock kestrels and up to 30% of adults have been documented with broken tails (BRANCH 1998). Although it is expected that small predators other than raptors prey on *A. p. planiceps*, this is most likely the first record of *A. p. planiceps* being preyed upon by *Galerella nigrata*

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Python natalensis SMITH, 1833 preys on South African Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis*

On 12 December 2003 a dead adult Southern African Python, *Python natalensis* SMITH, 1833, of 3 m in length was found approximately 60 km north-west of Okahandja on the farm Okarumetero in central Namibia with the carcass of an adult South African Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis* individual inside it. The quills of the porcupine were protruding through the skin of the python possibly indicating that the python had caught and consumed the porcupine after which the quills resulted in the death of the individual. It would seem from the carcass remains that the python was disturbed after ingesting the porcupine and tried to regurgitate its prey consequently resulting in the death of the snake.

The diet of *P. natalensis* consists mainly of warm-blooded prey and includes rock hyrax, hares, cane rats, monkeys, small antelope, fish, monitor lizards, small crocodiles

and game birds (MARAIS 1992; BRANCH 1998; CLAUSS & CLAUSS 2002). Bigger prey is also consumed and records include sitatunga, reedbuck, young waterbuck, occasionally humans and even difficult prey such as porcupine (BROADLEY 1990).

According to WALKER (1984) the principal predators of *H. africae australis* are lion and leopard. SKINNER & SMITHERS (1990) note that *H. africae australis* quills have been known to damage predators such as lion and leopard and can cause fatal wounds. KENMUIR & WILLIAMS (1992) state that although larger predators may kill porcupines they seldom emerge unscathed from the attack. This observation indicates that although *P. natalensis* may prey on *H. africae australis* they also succumb to the defense mechanism of the latter species.

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Nomenclatural validity of the name *Testudo weissingeri* BOUR, 1995

The testudinid taxon *Testudo weissingeri* BOUR, 1995 was described ten years ago from south-western Peloponnese in Greece. The type locality is Kardamili, Messenia, Greece, by original designation. The species was named in honour of the late HEINZ WEISSINGER who had previously worked with this population.

BRINGSØE et al. (2001) claimed later that the name *Testudo marginata weissingeri* TRUTNAU, 1994 - which appeared unintentionally before BOUR's (1995) description in a terrarium book - would be available because of inclusion of a minimal characterisation ("a diagnosis"). Additionally, the name *Testudo weissingeri* BOUR, 1995 [where the date of authority was erroneously and consistently quoted as 1996] was said to be a primary older homonym and thus not available in any case (BRINGSØE et al. 2001). These interpretations are erroneous, however. TRUTNAU's (1994) "description" goes as follows: "Auf dem Peloponnes [sic!] wurden vor kurzer Zeit kleiner bleibende *Testudo marginata* entdeckt, die sich außer in der Größe auch in anderen Merkmalen unterscheiden und die wohl in Zukunft als *Testudo marginata weissingeri* in die Systematik eingehen werden." ICZN (1999) Article 15.1 rules however that, "A new name or nomenclatural act proposed conditionally and published after 1960 is not thereby made available." If one checks in the Code's glossary (ICZN 1999), it says under the term "conditional": "Of the proposal of a name or a type fixation: one made with stated reservations [Art. 15.1]." TRUTNAU's (1994) expression "...wohl in Zukunft" means "possibly/likely in the future", therefore the paragraph is conditional and the author has reservations. In conclusion, *T. marginata weissingeri* TRUTNAU is not an available name according to the present Code (ICZN 1999), and thereby the name *Testudo weissingeri* BOUR, 1995 is available and valid. A piquant aside is that the collection of the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna has several *T. weissingeri* specimens collected by the late H. WEISSINGER and his friend P. KEYMAR labeled with the working title "*Testudo marginata modesta*" by the collectors themselves [the citation of this name appears here for curiosity reasons only and is not a nomenclatural act].

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