

Province, South Africa (3325 CB, 33° 42' 38" S, 25° 18' 32" E), 26 Sept. 1992, M. Burger; PEM R3432, 3466, Addo Elephant National Park, Kirkwood District, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa (3325 BC), 2 Oct. 1981, W. R. Branch; PEM R4875-76, Addo Elephant Park, Zuurkop, (3325 BC), W. R. Branch.

The Amanzi specimen, along with the unpublished record from Groendal, extend the known range approximately 100 Km west of the Albany records. They occur 25-30 Km from records from the AENP, and west of the intervening Sunday's River valley. Currently the species is restricted to two populations within the Algoa Bay region of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The typical population, centred around the restricted type locality (Broadley, 1972), occurs in the Albany region (Thomas Baines Nature Reserve, north through Grahamstown to the Great Fish River Reserve complex), whilst the other population (Groendal to AENP) occurs in the western Algoa Bay hinterland. However, the species is terrestrial and secretive and easily overlooked within the dense mesic succulent thicket from which most records are known. Additional specimens from the intervening area may be discovered with more detailed surveys.

The species remains rare in collections (only 33 specimens are known) and, together with *Bitis albanica*, *Cordylus tasmani*, *Acontias orientalis*, *Scelotes anguineus*, and *Bradypodion taeniabronchum*, is endemic to the Algoa Bay region and forms a minor centre of endemism in the Eastern Cape.

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## **OREOCRYPTOPHIS PORPHYRACEUS**

**COXI** (Thai Bamboo Ratsnake). PATTERN ABNORMALITY. *Oreocryptophis porphyraceus* (= *Elaphe porphyracea*) is a snake species characterized by a highly variable colour pattern which plays a key role in its sub-specific taxonomy. There are two subspecies groups differentiated by their distinctly different pattern. The *O. porphyraceus*-group has dark stripes restricted to the posterior part of the body, or alternatively stripes are completely absent, while the *O. nigrofasciatus*-group has stripes covering the entire body (Schulz & Helfenberger, 1998). The subspecies *Oreocryptophis porphyraceus coxi*, which is assigned to the *O. nigrofasciatus*-group, is diagnosed by the possession of stripes which are up to 2 dorsals wide. These stripes may be accompanied by 1 or 2 dark blotches on the anterior part of the body.

On 5 August 2006, a juvenile female with aberrant pattern hatched from a clutch of 4 eggs laid by a *O. p. coxi* F2 captive-bred female (origin: Thailand, Loei province) after incubation on wet vermiculite at 27-28°C. This juvenile had no dark blotches and stripes were absent on the anterior third of the body. Although two dark dorsolateral stripes were slightly visible on the middle part of the body, they were normally developed on the posterior part of the body and on the tail. The head

pattern was normal, with two dorsolateral stripes abruptly terminating in the neck region. Normally coloured female specimens hatched from two other eggs of the same clutch while the remaining egg contained a normally-patterned dead prodichotomic (two-headed) embryo. The specimen with the aberrant pattern is still being kept alive and after 18 months its colouration has become less contrasted, although the pattern itself has not undergone any change.

Stripes are common in snakes' colour pattern, and they are believed to be related to the avoidance of predators (Shine, 1991). The striped pattern and uniform colouration create the illusion of immobility when the snake is moving forward (Bittner, 2003). Compared to the uniformly coloured snake, this



**Figure 1.** The freshly hatched *Oreocryptophis porphyraceus coxi* showing the pattern reduction on the anterior part of the body.

illusion may be enhanced in a striped snake as its body looks narrower. Stripes also function disruptively making the pattern more cryptic (Jackson et al., 1976). This could confer a selective advantage in comparison to conspicuous uniformly coloured *O. p. coxi* specimens and could explain why no wild specimens with reduced pattern have been found so far. The pattern reduction observed in the juvenile may be caused by inbreeding under human care, although the taxon has not been subjected to multi-generational selective breeding. Another possible explanation is epigenetic, where the pattern may represent an example of phenotypic plasticity influenced by artificial incubation.

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**NOROPS SAGREI** (Brown Anole) PATHOLOGY AND ENDOPARASITE. An introduced population of the Brown Anole, *Norops sagrei* (= *Anolis sagrei*), was discovered July 2000 in Taiwan (Norval et al., 2002). To date, the only reported pathologies from this population were two cases of hepatic granulomas (Norval et al., 2005) and an abnormal testis (Norval et al., 2006). Here we report the presence of a gular cyst and a nymph of the pentastome *Kiricephalus pattoni*.

On 17 June, 2007, an adult *N. sagrei* male (SVL – 58 mm. TL – 120 mm, 5.2 g) was collected by hand at night, from a Betelnut Palm (*Areca catechu*) plantation in Santzepu, Sheishan District, Chia-yi County (23° 25' 43' N, 120° 29' 05' E; datum: WGS84), as part of a trial to test the feasibility to exterminate this species in Taiwan. After returning from the field, the lizard was examined and found to have a large lump in the right lateral gular region posterior to the ear and a smaller lump anterior to the right hind leg (Fig. 1). The lizard was killed with ether, and dissected by making a mid-ventral incision, to examine the causes of the lumps.