

## ON A SMALL COLLECTION OF LIZARDS FROM NIGERIA

PIOTR SURA

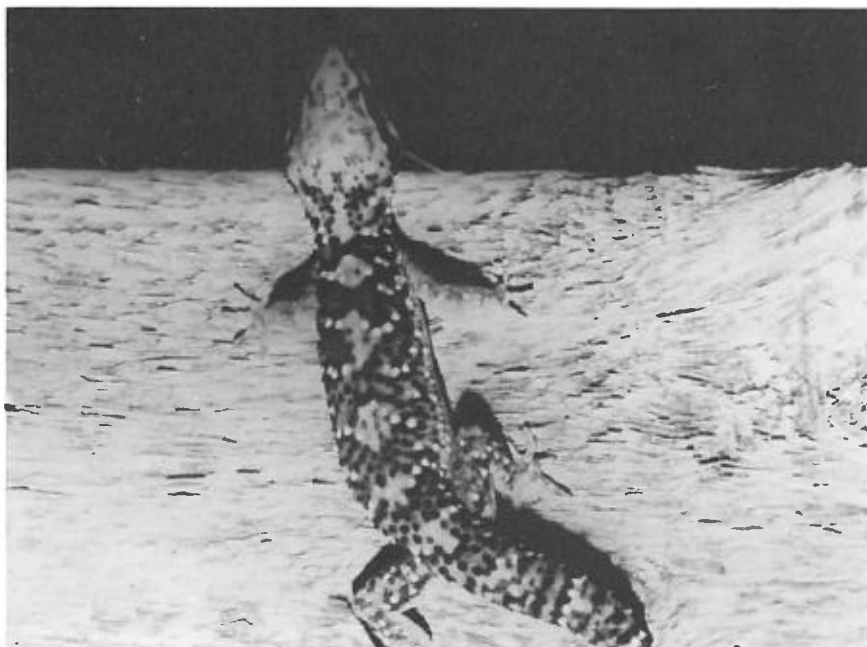
*Department of Biology, Medical Academy, Kopernika 7, 31-034 Kraków, Poland*

During a three month journey to Nigeria in February-May 1984 I collected, besides others, 121 specimens of lizards from four families: Gekkonidae (41), Scincidae (55), Agamidae (21), Chamaeleonidae (4), which were deposited in the Museum of Natural History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. The most common species, e.g. *Agama agama*, are represented in the collection by only a few individuals. In this short communication some observations on different lizard species and general impressions re presented.

The trip began in Lagos on 12 February and during the whole time spent in Nigeria (a total distance travelled of 8,000kms) an almost complete lack of animals became the most conspicuous feature. The dry season restrains even insect populations (except mosquitoes!). Searching under hundreds of stones for scorpions and other invertebrates produced very poor results. However, in the beginning of May the number of various species in southern parts of Nigeria noticeably increased especially if moths are regarded. The only rich groups seen everywhere and everytime were birds and lizards. A more detailed report on this expedition has been made elsewhere (Sura, 1986).

The following species of lizards are represented in the collection:

1. *Hemidactylus brooki angulatus* Hallowell (plate 1)  
The most common gecko. In Abeokuta they were abundant on both the walls of houses and rocks. Several specimens collected in Abeokuta, Osi, Yankari Game Reserve (see map). At the end of April some individuals seen hunting around lamps fishing on flying termites.



**Plate 1.**  
*Hemidactylus brooki angulatus* from Abeokuta



**Plate 2.**  
*Agama paragama* from Obudu Cattle Ranch



**Plate 3.**  
*Agama benueensis* (ventral side)



**Plate 4.**  
*Chamaeleo senegalensis*



**Plate 5.**  
*Chamaeleo gracilis*



2. *Hemidactylus fasciatus fasciatus* Gray  
One juvenile and one female (SVL 85mm) were collected by night on the oil palm trunks in Abeokuta on 3 March.
3. *Hemidactylus muriceus* Peters  
One specimen (SVL 56mm TL 114mm) caught by day in the vicinity of Owode when frightened away after lifting a tree branch on the floor of tropical forest.
4. *Cnemaspis spinicollis* (Müller)  
Two specimens collected on 24 April under a rotting log in a jungle near Ado-Ekiti (SVL 35 and 47mm).
5. *Ptyodactylus hasselquisti hasselquisti* (Donndorff)  
Large specimens were collected in New Bussa (the biggest had SVL 93mm, TL 180mm) where they inhabited buildings. Also one individual was caught on rocks in Rano.
6. *Mabuya affinis* (Gray)  
Common species near Abeokuta. One specimen also collected several kms north of New Bussa (TL 172mm, SVL 61mm).
7. *Mabuya quinquetaeniata scharica* (Sternfeld)  
The only skink observed both in south and north Nigeria (Abeokuta, Osi, Jos, New Bussa, Kano). This most agile species inhabits especially rocky areas where it is very difficult to catch. The largest specimen from Kano measured SVL 78mm, TL 190mm.
8. *Mabuya perroteti* (Duméril and Bibron)  
Frequently observed in Jos and Osi. A large specimen of 293mm (SVL 131mm) was collected in the last locality, but larger are known (Dunger, 1972; Hoogmoed, 1974).
9. *Mabuya maculilabris maculilabris* (Gray) (Plate 2)  
Common along the mountain road to Obudu Cattle Ranch (plate 3). The largest specimen measures 209mm (SVL 81). On April 17 I found also under a stone 7 eggs ( $x = 18, 5 \times 12$ mm) from which after several days young hatched of a size 60mm (SVL 26mm).



Plate 6.  
*Mabuya maculilabris maculilabris*

10. *Panaspis kitsoni* (Boulenger)  
Common species in south-western Nigeria especially near Abeokuta and Owode, where at the end of April lots of hatchlings appeared in the bamboo leaf litter (average size — SVL 21mm, TL 47mm). The largest specimen measured 117mm (SVL 55mm). In Abeokuta and near Ado-Ekiti *P. kitsoni* and *M. affinis* lived sympatrically, feeding mainly on abundant termites.
11. *Panaspis togoensis* (Werner)  
One female (SVL 44mm, TL 117mm) found under a stone near Gurara Waterfalls (about 85kms SE of Minna). Not recorded by Dunger (1973).
12. *Lygosoma guineensis* (Peters)  
Two individuals of this cryptozoic and partially fossorial skink collected in Osi and vicinity of Owode respectively. The latter is larger (SVL 67mm).
13. *Agama agama* (Linnaeus)  
This commonest and most conspicuous saurian commensal of man was seen in every town and village visited. Agamas appeared to be active even in very high temperatures, hunting insects or protecting their territories. In Abeokuta I accustomed some specimens living on a wall of hollow clay blocks to eat moths and butterflies from my hand. Also one male was observed eating plant leaves. Hatchlings appeared there at the end of April.
14. *Agama paragama* (Grandison)  
Several specimens collected in different parts of Nigeria (Yankari Game Reserve, vicinity of Owode and Obudu Cattle Range). All of them inhabited wooded areas away from human settlements and were often caught on tree trunks. The appearance of specimens from the population on the mountain road to Obudu Cattle Ranch partly agree with Grandison's description (1968) though none of the males had a white head (plate 4). Some features are common, however, to *Agama silvanus* (Macdonald, 1981) which has also been found recently in Cameroon (Joger, 1982).



Plate 7.  
Mountain road to Obudu Cattle Ranch

15. *Agama benueensis* Monard (= *Agama doriae benueensis* Monard)  
Observed on the University Campus in Jos. One male measured TL 227 (SVL 83mm) (plate 5).
16. *Chamaeleo senegalensis* Daudin  
Several chameleons were discovered on the University Campus in Jos among banana leaves (plate 6). One was preserved (SVL 131mm, TL 245).
17. *Chamaeleo gracilis* Hallowell  
One specimen from the vicinity of Ilorin (TL 276mm, SVL 139mm) (plate 7). Because it readily ate insects I decided to take it to Poland alive, however, unfortunately it died when crossing the Sahara since the temperature in Arlit-Assamaka in Guezzam rose to 49°C in the shade at the end of May.
18. *Chamaeleo basiliscus* Cope  
These chameleons could be found on bushes and trees in Sokoto by night with electric light because being white during sleeping they were easily seen.

The number of species collected in Nigeria could be higher, but sadly political instability during that time made it impossible to travel safely all over the country. As a matter of fact, the big expedition truck caused some astonishment among Europeans or Americans working in sometimes out-of-the-way places, as Nigeria is not now a tourist country. To add to misfortune problems in exchanging currency made life a little more difficult.



Map of Nigeria showing the localities where lizards were collected.

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