AL HAMDAB DAM: A CHECKLIST OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES, PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Although no checklist of Sundanese amphibians and reptiles has been published, several species have been recorded (e.g. Flowers, 1990 : Loveridge, 1947 : Venkatraman and Badawi, 1969; Belail, 1979; Osman and Tag Elsir, 1988) and/or studied (e.g. Cloudsley-Thompson, 1965, 1967, 1970; Mahmoud and El Naeim, 1986). The disappearance of the card indexes of reptile species in the Sudan Natural History Museum and the deterioration of the preserved material therein necessitate the updating of locality records. In this connection we had an opportunity to collect amphibians and reptiles from the area of the proposed Al Hamdab dam.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study area extends from Merowie Island (construction site) to Ras el Gezira (Mograt Island), River Nile State, Sudan (Fig 1). A detailed account of its geomorphology, plant and animal ecology was given by Mahmoud et al (1966). Manual and/or pitfall trap collections and observations were made primarily in 9 locations: Ras El Gezira (1), Kabna (2), Shiri Island (3), Al Ashamin (4), El Nekheila (5), El Ganagra (6), Kirbekan (7), Hamdab East (8) and Hamdab West (9) (Fig 1). Locations are given in numerals for the sake of brevity. Specimens, except for 40 *Uromastix aegyptius* deposited in the vivaria of the Sudan Natural History Museum, were released as close as possible to the site of collection. Herptile species collected and/or observed during this study were identified to the species level following Anderson, 1898; Anderson, 1935; Loveridge, 1947 and Schmidt, 1919. The study was performed during December (1995)/January (1996) and February/March (1996).

Herptile fauna

Class Amphibia:
Order Apoda
Family Bufonidae, *Bufo regularis* (locations: 1 to 9). Habitat: Found along river banks and cultivated sites.

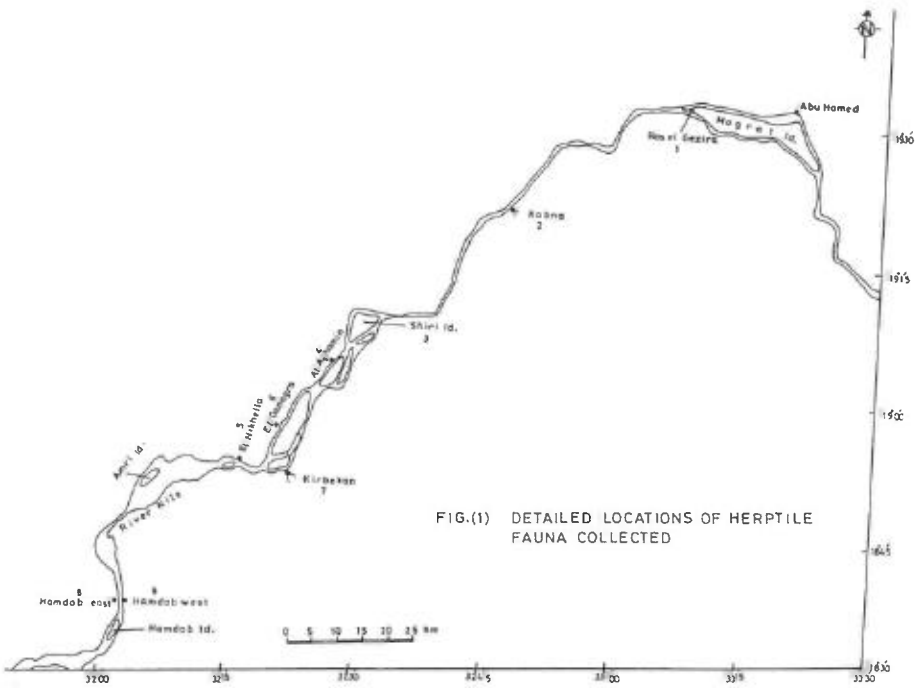
Class Reptilia:
Order Chelonia
Family Trionychidae, *Trionyx triunguis* (locations: 1,9). Habitat: They remain concealed beneath water, probably emerging at night. They were collected by seine net.

Order Squamata

Family Gekkonidae, *Tarentola annularis* (locations: 1 to 9). Habitat: Very common in houses as well as on trees, rocks and ruins.

Family Gekkonidae, *Stenodactylus stenodactylus* (location: 7). Habitat: Several specimens were found beneath stones.
Family Gekkonidae, *Pristurus flavipunctatus* (Location: 7). Habitat one specimen was found on an acacia tree.
Family Gekkonidae, *Hemidactylus brookii* (Location: 6, 7). Habitat: Crevices of trees and buildings. Few specimens were collected.
Family Agamidae, *Agama spinosa* (Locations: 5, 6, 7). Habitat: Very common on rocky outcrops and open spaces.
Family Agamidae, *Uromastyx aegyptius* (Locations: 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9). Habitat: Usually found beneath stones (sometimes in association with scorpions) or basking during early morning or late afternoon.
Family Scincidae, *Chalcides ocellatus* (Locations: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9). Habitat: Very common in cultivated areas.
Family Scincidae, *Scincopus (= Scincus) fasciatus* (Locations: 1, 2, 4, 8, 9). Habitat: Cultivated areas.
Family Scincidae, *Mabuya quinquetaeniata* (Locations: 1, 2, 8). Habitat: Cultivated areas.
Family Varanidae, *Varanus niloticus* (Locations (1, 9): Habitat: Few specimens were seen along river banks.
Family Viperidae, *Causus rhombeatus* (Locations: 1, 6): Habitat: Beneath stones.
Family Viperidae, *Cerastes cornutus* (Locations: 1, 6): Habitat: Sandy regions.
Family Elapidae. *Naja nigricollis* (Location: 1): Habitat: Riverine cultivation.

Fig (1)
Detailed Locations of Herptile Fauna Collected



Order Crocodilia

Family Crocodylidae, *Crocodylus niloticus* (Locations: 1, 9). Habitat: Seen basking on small islands.

The present investigation showed that:

1. One amphibian species *(B. regularis)* is present in the area.
2. The number of reptilian taxa in the area (3 orders, 8 families and 12 species) is far greater than that of amphibians.
3. Gekkonidae are represented by 4 species. It is interesting that the people in the study area appreciate the role of *T. annularis* in the control of mosquitoes and other insects. The superstitions about it recorded by Cottam and Cottam (1923) are invalid at least in the study area.
4. While agamids are found on the desert fringes, skinks are dominant around human settlement and cultivated sites.
5. The two vipers reported here were considered to be highly poisonous (Venkatraman and Badawi, 1969). The few specimens encountered in this study were killed during collection.
6. *T. triunguis, V. niloticus* and *C. niloticus* are becoming endangered due to countless irrigation water pumps that have altered the calm riverine habitat and the illegal hunting of *V. niloticus* and *C. niloticus* for their highly valued skins.
7. *Varanus griseus* was described by local people at Al Ashamin and El Nekheila in such a way that there was no doubt about their classification.
8. The possibility of finding *Stenodactylus petrii, Ptyodactylus hasselquistii* (Gekkonidae), *Acanthodactylus ascutellatus* (Lacertidae) *Leptotyhlops cairi* (Leptotyhlopidae), *Psammophis aegyptius* and *P. sclocaris* (Cloubridae) recorded by Mathiasson (1964) around the second cataract or more taxa should not be neglected.

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