

GENERAL MEETING

The last meeting was held on the 26th May 2006.

Gustav Collins gave a very interesting talk about his recent trip to Sierra Leone. Some of us could only hope to see the beauty which lies within up close and personal.

The next meeting is to be held on the 21st July 2006. The time will be 19h30 for 20h00 as usual.



**TRANSVAAL HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
TRANSVAAL HERPETOLOGIESE VERENIGING**

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Giant tortoise 'taken for muti'

26/06/2006 17:28 - (SA)

Pietermaritzburg - Six months after being convicted of stealing a lion cub, a Cato Ridge man was charged in Pietermaritzburg on Monday with stealing an endangered 75-year-old giant Seychelles tortoise from the same complainant, the Natal Lion Park Zoo.

The zoo is near Cato Ridge, between Pietermaritzburg and Durban. Nhlakanipho Eugene Ngcobo, 29, was refused bail on Monday by magistrate Brad Osborne, who said it was clear Ngcobo had some involvement in the theft or possession of the tortoise.

Ngcobo said during his bail application he had sold the tortoise, but would plead not guilty to its theft.

An alternative to the theft charge is possession of, or dealing in, or handling specially protected game reasonably suspected to have been unlawfully hunted or acquired.

Sangomas given bail

Two of his co-accused were granted bail of R2 000 each on June 22 and a third was released on warning.

Two sangomas, who allegedly bought the tortoise - presumably to use as muti, were granted bail of R2 000 each after being charged with dealing in or handling parts of an endangered tortoise.

Osborne said that one of the sangomas and some of Ngcobo's co-accused had agreed to testify he was the main perpetrator of the theft of the tortoise.

It weighed more than 100kg, was worth R35 000 and was carrying many eggs.

The sangomas, Sindisiwe Mkhize, 47, and Bonisiwe Mhlongo, 39, were arrested after putrid, maggot-infested, stinking tortoise viscera and eggs were found hanging from a tree in Imbali, Pietermaritzburg.

Lion and leopard skins also had been found at the site.

They appeared in court in colourful sangoma regalia.

Lion park owner Brian Boswell believed the tortoise had been killed at park.

Blood had been found in the area.

Ngcobo told the court he had worked at the lion park previously, but had been fired for the theft of the lion cub.

He was fined R1 000 (plus 30 days' jail suspended) in December 2005 by Camperdown magistrate's court.

According to police, poaching had increased recently because there was a huge illegal trade in endangered species parts for the muti trade and game areas.

Recently, police seized ivory, rhino horn and several lion, leopard and antelope hides.

Bred only in captivity

The Seychelles giant tortoise, once thought to be extinct, is a critically endangered species that can live to more than 100 years.

In the Seychelles, it is bred only in captivity.

They grow so large and strong that children ride on them.

The case resumes on July 25.

www.News24.com

Tortoise smugglers guilty

24/06/2004 20:27 - (SA)

Cape Town - Four Czech nationals were convicted on Thursday by a Vredendal regional magistrate of trying to smuggle protected angulate tortoises out of the country.

The men, who have not been granted bail, will be sentenced on June 30.

Erik Covacs and brothers Bohus and Marian Simek pleaded guilty to hunting and possessing 94 tortoises, and the transport of 13.

Petr Motycka was convicted only of possession and transport of the 13, which were found in the boot of the car he was driving when he and his companions were stopped by police outside Doringbaai on May 11.

The other 65 were discovered wrapped in cloth bags in holes in the veld in the same area.

Covacs and the Simeks admitted in their written guilty plea that they had intended to courier all the creatures out of the country.

Motycka, however, claimed he had merely been taking nature photographs in the area, and had not been aware that his companions were hunting tortoises.

The men face a maximum fine of R10 000 or two years' jail on each of the hunting, transport and possession charges.

In addition, they may be required on each charge to pay three times the commercial value of the tortoises.

Two Slovaks poachers convicted on similar charges in 2001, after being arrested in the same area, were fined R168 000 each.

The angulate tortoise (*Chersina angulata*), colloquially known as the rooipens skilpad because of the reddish colour of the underside of its shell, is protected under the Western Cape's Nature Conservation Ordinance.

No tortoise may be collected from the wild, possessed, imported or exported without a permit.

Trade in the species is also controlled by the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).

Last week, Bellville regional court imposed fines totalling R320 000 on an Indonesian and two Japanese who tried to smuggle 37 live armadillo girdled lizards out of the country.

www.News24.com

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

This Borneo snake has colourful secrets...

June 27 2006 at 05:09AM

Geneva - Biologists working in the forests of Borneo have found a previously unknown type of snake which can change its colour spontaneously like a chameleon, the environmental body WWF said on Tuesday.

The poisonous snake, about half a metre long, was discovered in the wetlands and swamp forests of Betung National Park in the Indonesian part of the island, which is also shared by Malaysia and Brunei.

When picked up and put in a bucket, it was reddish-brown but later changed its colour to white, apparently in an automatic reaction to blend in with surroundings, according to the WWF.

The biologists named the serpent, two specimens of which were recovered, the Kapuas Mud Snake after the river that flows through the region.

The WWF said although some reptiles with legs, like the chameleon lizard, had the ability to change colour, it was rare for snakes.

www.iol.co.za

MEMBERS LETTERS / ARTICLES

Catching Stats July 05-June 06

It states the Specie caught, Number of specie, Town and suburb

- 12- Puff Adders
3 in Randfontein,-----Greenhills,kocksoord,Randfontein south
5 Magaliesburg,--Maanhaarrand
2,Goudkoppies,Wolwekrans,Zeekoeihoek
1 Westonaria-----,Central
2 Krugersdorp,----Tarlton,Noordheuwel
1 Carletonville}---- Oberholser
- 10- Rinkhals
3 Randfontein,----Greenhills,Central,Randgate
3 Krugersdorp-----,Mindalore,Helderblom,Swartkrans
1 Carletonville-----,Blyvooruitzicht
1 Westonaria,-----Waterpan
2 Magaliesburg} ----Hekpoort,Newthorndale
- 2- Striped skaapstekers
1 Magaliesburg-----,Doornhoek
1 Randfontein}---- Culemborg park
- 2- Spotted bush Snakes
2 Magaliesburg} ----Sluis,Hartebeesfontein
- 2- Spotted skaapstekers
1 Randfontein,----Greenhills
1 Magaliesburg}----Orient
- 6- Night Adders
3 Magaliesburg,----Newthorndale,Hekpoortwes,bechaden
2 Krugersdorp,-----Kdp wes,Monument
1 Carletonville}----Wesdriefontein
- 5- Snouted Cobras
3 Magaliesburg,-----Maanhaarrand 2,Doornpoort
1 Krugersdorp,----Muldersdrif
1 Randfontein}---Brandvlei
- 2- Mozambique Spitting Cobras
2 Magaliesburg} ----Newthorndale,nooitgedagh
- 1- Boomslang
1Magaliesburg} ---hartebeesfontein
- 1- Short-snouted Whipsnake – Magaliesburg – maanhaarrand
- 4- Crossed Whipsnakes
2 Krugersdorp,-----Tarlton,sterkfontein

- 1 Magaliesburg,-----wowekrans
- 1 Randfontein}----- finsbury
- 3- Herald Snakes
 - 1 Westonaria,----hillshaven
 - 1 Randfontein,----Pelsvale
 - 1 Magaliesburg}---central Town
- 1- Centipede-eater – Magaliesburg – Wolwekrans
- 1- African Rock Python – Magaliesburg – Zuikerbossfontein
- 6- Brown house Snakes
 - 3 Randfontein,----Finsbury, Westergloor, Randgate
 - 2 Magaliesburg,----- hekpoort, orient
 - 1 Carletonville}--- Oberholzer
- 1- Olive house Snake – Krugersdorp – Rangeview
- 3- Aurora House snakes
 - 1 Magaliesburg,---Wolwekrans
 - 1 Krugersdorp,---Noordheuwel
 - 1 Carletonville} --Wolverdiend
- 8- Brown water Snakes
 - 4 Magaliesburg,---Malony's eye 4
 - 1 Krugersdorp,----Rand and dal
 - 1 Randfontein,---Homelake
 - 2 Carletonville}--- Oosdriffontein
- 4- Mole Snakes
 - 2 Randfontein---,kocksoord, Mohlakeng
 - 1 Krugersdorp,----Munsiville
 - 1 Carletonville}----- Khutsong
- 3- Egg-eaters
 - 1 Randfontein,---Greenhills
 - 1 Krugersdorp,---Wesrandcons
 - 1 Magaliesburg}---hekpoort

Gerhard Nieuwoudt

BIRTHDAYS

On behalf of the THA we would like to wish you all a happy birthday.

JULY

02 – Ali Smith
 05 – Vaughan Seale
 10 – Cynthia Havenga
 18 – Damien Olivier
 31 – Ester Marais
 31 – Casper van der Linde

JULY THA MEETING

Please note!!!! The July meeting will be taking place on the 21st July 2006. Marius Burger from SARCA will be the guest speaker.

EDITORS NOTE

Thank you to those who submitted articles. We would like to request original articles, which have been written by members.

Please visit our website www.tha.co.za. We are open to any suggestions to improve the website. There will be some exciting changes in the near future, which will include a discussion forum and a news page.

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