

**LACERTIDAE*****Meroles knoxii* Milne-Edwards, 1829****Knox's Desert Lizard****FORCED COPULATION**

On 29 September, 2009, near the farm Noup on the Namaqualand Coast, Northern Cape Province, South Africa, I was walking in semi-vegetated Sandveld dunes when I flushed a female *Meroles knoxii* across an open sandy area. A male *M. knoxii* noticed the female lizard and ran approximately 1.5 m across the open sand to intercept her path. Initially the male bit the female's head, but then released it only to bite her again approximately at mid-body. Concomitantly, the obstructed female turned and bit the male mid-body. The two individuals struggled for approximately 30 s before the female released her bite. The male, still biting the female, forced his cloaca under her tail and appeared to begin copulation, which lasted approximately 5 s. On release, the female turned and bit the male, forcing him to retreat approximately 0.1 m away. The male proceeded to circle the female several times. In response, the female positioned her body to be facing towards the male, all the while holding her mouth open and repeatedly bobbing her head. The male remained approximately 0.15 m away, and she continued to head-bob. The female then lifted the base of her tail, flattened her pelvis and appeared to wipe her cloaca on the sand. She continued to head-bob irregularly, while the male frequently tongue-flicked. Eventually the female moved off and the male did not pursue her. The entire encounter lasted approximately 2 min. Forced copulation is known to occur in several lizard lineages including Lacertids (e.g., Anderson & Vitt 1990, Olson 1995, Moreira & Birkhead 2004), yet this appears to be the first such observation for *Meroles knoxii*.

**REFERENCES**

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