

## LACERTIDAE

### *Meroles ctenodactylus* (Smith 1838)

#### SMITH'S DESERT LIZARD

On 20 April 2007 three species of *Meroles* were found in close proximity on the eastern edge of the southern dune sea west of Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge, NamibRand Reserve, Southern Namibia (24°50'03.3"S, 15°49'36.7"E 856m). They included two specimens of *Meroles ctenodactylus* (Fig. 1), that were accessioned into the Port Elizabeth Museum (PEM) herpetological collection (PEM R17290-91). They were sympatric with *Meroles cuneirostris* (Strauch 1867) and *Meroles anchietae* (Bocage 1867), also accessioned into the PEM as PEM R17288-89 and PEM R17286 respectively.



**Figure 1:** *Meroles ctenodactylus* (PEM R17290) Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge, Namib-Rand Reserve, Southern Namibia (Photo: Bill Branch).

Microhabitat differences between the species were evident. *Meroles ctenodactylus* were active in the well-vegetated dune slacks and dune

hummocks (left, Fig. 2), *M. cuneirostris* on the more sparsely vegetated dune tops (right, Fig. 2). Both species were found in microsympatry in intermediate habitats. *M. anchietae* was less common and only active on the largest mobile dune slipfaces (bottom right, Fig. 2).



**Figure 2:** Southern dune sea west of Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge, Namib-Rand Reserve, Southern Namibia (Photo: Bill Branch).

Branch (1994) recorded *M. ctenodactylus* from Rooilepel Depression (28° 16' 56" S, 16° 37' 23.5" E 440m) in the Sperrgebiet, southern Namibia, and noted that it appeared to be the northern record for the species. The Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge records extend the species' range a further 300km north, and is the first time that sympatry between these three psammophilic *Meroles* species has been documented.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My wife and I thank Peter Dunning and Vernon Swanepoel (Sossusvlei Desert Lodge) and the other staff at the “&Beyond” Lodge for access and hospitality during fieldwork in the region. Specimens were covered under Namibian Research/Collecting Permit 1068/2006.

## REFERENCES

BRANCH, W. R. 1994. Herpetofauna of the Sperrgebiet region of southern Namibia. *Herpetological Natural History* 2(1): 1-11.

## SUBMITTED BY:

**WILLIAM R. BRANCH**, Department of Herpetology, Bayworld (Port Elizabeth Museum), P.O. Box 13147, Humewood 6013, South Africa. E-mail: wrbranch@bayworld.co.za.

\*\*\*\*\*

## GEKKONIDAE

### *Pachydactylus rangei* (Andersson, 1908)

#### Web-footed Gecko

Small dune hummocks along the Orange River, Sperrgebiet National Park (ca. 80km east of Oranjemund and 30km southwest of Rosh Pinah, S28.10 E16.51), Namibia. Sparsely vegetated – mainly stunted *Euclea pseudebenus* trees and shrubs – sandy area between the Orange River riparian vegetation and ancient gravel terraces in December 2012. Observed by Peter Cunningham. 6 specimens – photographed (Fig. 1).

According to Koch (1962), Haacke (1976) and Visser (1984) *Pachydactylus* (formerly *Palmatogekko*) *rangei* occurs from the mouth of the Orange River to southern Angola and never further inland than 160 km. They are common in the sand sea south of the Kuiseb River as well as the coastal dunes and ephemeral river beds in the Namib Desert (Haacke 1976, Stuart 1980, Russell & Bauer 1990), mostly associated with fine sand and rainfall below 125mm p.a. (Haacke 1976) and fog (Louw 1972, Seely & Griffin 1986). It is estimated that 80% of the potential proportion of the taxon's range falls within Namibia (Griffin 1985) and it is viewed as a Namib Desert endemic (Herrman & Branch 2012).