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Further descriptions of Reptiles and Batrachians
from South Africa

BY JOHN HEWITT.

[Plates XX—XXIV.]

ORDER CHELONIA.

PELUSIOS SINUATUS SMITH.

In his important account of the "Herpetology of the Belgian Congo," Schmidt (1) alludes to the difficulty in distinguishing this species from *nigricans*, and, following Nieden (2), seems to think it may have to enter the synonymy of that species. However, after examining a series of twenty specimens I do not hesitate to accept Siebenrock's (3) conclusion that they are distinct species.

There appear to be several forms or subspecies of *sinuatus*. The typical form described by Smith (4), and apparently taken in the Kalahari region, is only known to me from Smith's account. It differs from that about to be described below in the second the third vertebral plates which are nearly horizontal, in the less pronounced vertebral protuberances, and in the curvature of the sides of the carapace, the shell being convex: also, the fourth costal seems to be rather larger, judging from the original figures, and probably the margins of the shell between the limbs are less salient, the outline of the shell being somewhat ovoid.

A second form now termed *Pelusios sinuatus zuluensis* subsp. nov. is based on a series of specimens in the National Museum, Bloemfontein, collected by Dr. van Hoepen near the Umsinene River, Zululand, August, 1922. (Pl. XX, fig. 1-3 and Text fig. 1.d.) 'At that time, the river was drying out and the water was undrinkable, being salt and bitter. The biggest speci-

- (1) Bulletin American Museum Nat. History, XXXIX, p. 411.
- (2) Mit. a.d. Zool. Mus. Berlin, 7, I, 1913, p. 55-64.
- (3) Zool. Jahrb. (suppl. 10), 1909, p. 556.
- (4) Illust. Zool. S. Africa, 1849, Pl. I.

photos at back
are by Zelda Wahl
October 1978. Negatives
stored in HQ, Cape Town

Jeig

are sharp. Gular shields a little smaller than in *zuluensis*. Vertebrae II-IV are all markedly elongate and narrow, much more so than in *zuluensis*. This probably represents a distinct race near to *zuluensis*, but I refrain from naming it owing to insufficiency of material.

PELUSIOS NIGRICANS Donn.

Of this species we have a series of fairly typical specimens from Mpika district, N.E. Rhodesia (E. Knowles Jordan), and one from British East Africa (R. Douglas). These agree sufficiently well with Siebenrock's descriptions and figure (in Voeltzkow: Reise in Ostafrika 1903-1906. tab. 5, fig. 19). They differ however from the Central African form figured and referred to by Schmidt as *nigricans*: this on the characters of the intergular shield seems worthy of separation therefrom. Another series of specimens also from Mpika district and sent by Mr. Knowles Jordan seems to represent a distinct form which I now describe as:—

Pelusios nigricans rhodesianus subsp. nov. (Pl. XXI, fig. 2 and 3 and Text fig. 1a and c). Resembling *P. n. castaneus* Schw. but differing therefrom in the form of the intergular shield: this, according to Siebenrock's figure, is broad in front and more or less pear-shaped in outline in *castaneus*, but in *rhodesianus* is somewhat diamond-shaped, pointed in front and broadest about the centre. Carapace elongate and rather high, sides smooth and rounded, vertebral shields without protuberances, the fourth fairly raised postero-mesially and a trifle broader than long, second and third a little longer than broad: sides of second vertebral divided at about the middle point. Outer borders of pectoral and humeral shields subequal in length: inner border of humeral ~~much~~ longer than that of pectoral. Axillary shield lacking. ~~Costal VIII~~ ^{Costal VIII} apparently not meeting the abdominal shield in full grown specimens. Plastron ~~more or less~~ blackened throughout. Total length of shell 213, breadth 130, height 83, length of third vertebral 43, breadth 39: length of fourth vertebral 33, breadth 35.

There are also two specimens in the collection of the Natal

looks like
it's over
the curve

Museum which seem very near to *rhodesianus*: one was labelled from Durban Bay (Col. Bowker), and the other from Mashonaland (Text fig. 1. b). Probably the Durban record is an error, the late Col. Bowker having been resident in Rhodesia. They both have a rather narrow and long intergular shield, pointed in front. Vertebrae II and III are broader than long, and the shell on the whole is rather flatter than in *rhodesianus*.

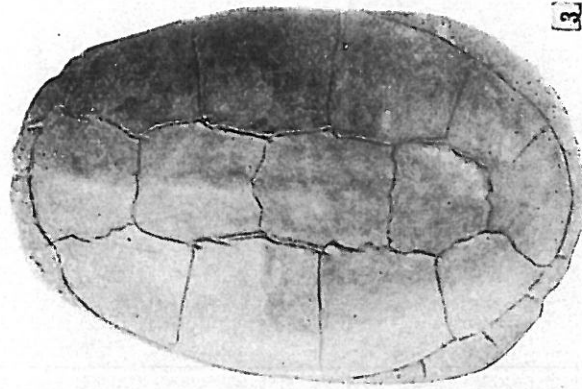
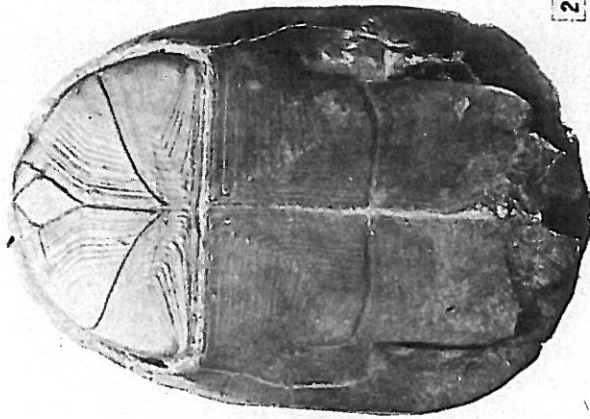
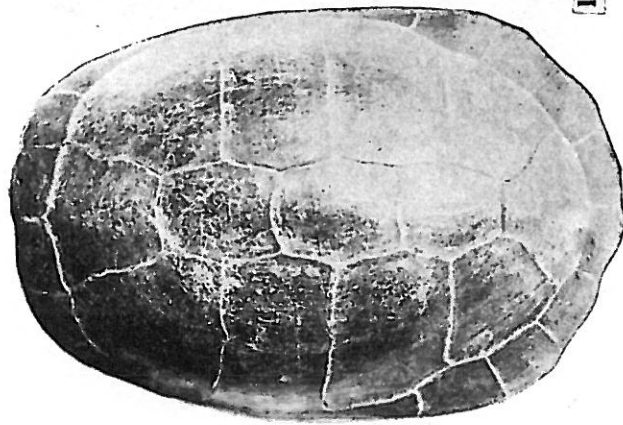
It seems quite likely that the form of the intergular shield will prove to be relatively constant, and, if so, it may be permissible to separate *rhodesianus* specifically from *nigricans* and *castaneus*. The last mentioned form is unknown to me except through the descriptions. Apparently, the specimen figured by Siebenrock came from Pemba island: in that specimen, the inner borders of the humeral and pectoral shields are more nearly equal than in any specimens of *nigricans* that I have seen.

ORDER LACERTILIA.

TROPIDOSAURA MONTANA RANGERI Hewitt.

(Annals S. Afr. Mus., vol. xx, p. 485, pl. XLIV.)

Since the description of this subspecies was published, a series of nine specimens has been received from Mr. Ranger. It is now clear that the character on which I chiefly relied in distinguishing *rangeri* is too variable for that purpose—the shape of the interparietal and frontal shields. Nevertheless, *rangeri* is well separated from the typical form both in colour and in structural characters. I am indebted to M. Angel for the following notes on the three type specimens from Cap de Bonne Espérance, now in the Paris Museum. The male has 8.8 femoral pores, females 6.7 and 7.8. In two of these specimens, each ventral scale has a deep brown spot, more or less separated from the neighbouring spots: brown spots also occur on the throat, but they are smaller than those on the belly and below the tail. In the third specimen there are no spots ventrally. There are two pale stripes laterally: the inferior one commences at the armpit and reaches to the groin. There are also traces of a brown vertebral band.



1. *Pelusios sinuatus* Smith var. From Kgedoospoort.
- 2 and 3. *P. nigricans rhodesianus* subsp. nov. From Mpika Dist.