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ON THE HERPETOLOGICAL FAUNA OF THE
LOBATSI-LINOKANA AREA.

By J. H. POWER.

(With a Map, Plates XVIII-XXII, and one Text-figure.)

PART I.—LOBATSI, 25° 8' S., 25° 43' E.

INTRODUCTION.

The first excursion to the above neighbourhood was made in 1924 ; the results proved so interesting that each succeeding year the visits have been continued.

The author's best thanks are due to the Research Grant Board, without whose assistance these expeditions would not have been possible.

The topography of this area (see map) is sufficiently interesting to deserve a short account :

After leaving Mafeking the country for miles is absolutely flat with no sign of hills from horizon to horizon ; then hills begin to appear to the north. These are the Linokana Hills and extend from the west of Lobatsi to the east of Linokana.

From being low, hazy specks on the horizon these gradually loom up until eventually, on passing through a narrow gap (see Pl. XVIII, fig. 1), the basin-like valley of Lobatsi breaks on one's view with dramatic suddenness.

The little village nestles in a pretty, almost circular, valley among the hills. The road from Lobatsi to Linokana, a distance of over 23 miles, lies in a valley between two ranges of hills ; the mean width of the valley is 1½ miles.

The hills and kloofs surrounding Lobatsi and Linokana, together with the valley connecting the two, is the area collected (see map).

The author's headquarters while in the Lobatsi area were at the railway station. He had access to three distinct types of habitat :

1. The hills, some of which have very little vegetation, while others are covered with aloes and various trees and shrubs, are mostly dolomite and quartzite formations, and in some cases have precipitous sides.
2. The grassy valleys in which flourished various species of Acacia,

Locality.	No. of Upper Labials.	No. of Labials entering the Eye.	Ventrals.	Praeocular and Frontal in Contact.	No. of Praeoculars.	Character of Rostral.	
Lobatsi	9	3	169	Ne.	2	0	0=broader than deep.
Lobatsi	9	3	168	Ne.	2	Δ	Δ=deeper than broad.

Trimerorhinus tritaeniatus, Günth.

This snake occurs both on the foothills and in the valleys, but is not common; only two specimens were seen.

Thelotornis kirtlandi, Hallow.

Although this species was not met with by the author, from information given by the inhabitants he is of opinion that it probably occurs in the bush round Lobatsi.

Naja nigricollis, Reinh.

This is by far the commonest snake of the area, for, although only nine specimens in all were secured, many more could have been collected. It seems to have a preference for the neighbourhood of human habitations and is consequently very dangerous. One large specimen was killed on the verandah of the hotel, others near the native huts.

Chelonia.

Cinixys lobatsiana, n. sp.

(Plates XIX and XX.)

Description based on Three Adults and One Juvenile.

Anterior and posterior margins of carapace reverted and dentated, the former slightly, the latter strongly so; a narrow nuchal shield; shields concentrically grooved; vertebrals generally as broad as the costals.

Hinge between the seventh and eighth marginal, the second and third costal, the third and fourth neural shields. Posterior part of the carapace sloping. Plastron with thick anterior lip which is notched and projecting beyond the carapace, the length of the gular shield nine times into the total length; caudal shield short, very openly notched, its width half the width of the bridge. The longest median suture is between the abdominal

shields, which equals two and three-quarter times that between the pectorals; the smallest shields are the gulars. Inguinal large, axillary very small and divided.

Carapace uniform reddish brown or yellowish brown; plastron uniform yellowish. The one juvenile specimen had scales yellowish brown in the centre, becoming reddish brown towards the outer margin; dark splashes or rays on the outer half of each scale.

All-over length of shell	14.7	centimetres.	♂.
„ „ „	16.1	„	♀.
„ „ „	12.5	„	juvenile.

This species is nearest to *C. erosa*, from which it differs in the presence of a nuchal shield. It differs from *C. homeana*, in that the plastron projects beyond the carapace anteriorly, and the posterior part of the carapace is sloping.

All the specimens collected were found in the kloofs among the hills; one was found eating a mushroom.

Pelusios sinuatus, Smith.

Numbers of water tortoises were seen, but unfortunately the author was unable to secure a specimen. However, from observation he supposes them to be referable to the above species. Every permanent pool and dam had some of these creatures.

Batrachia.

Rana oxyrhynchus, Smith.

This frog is found in abundance around Lobatsi. An account of the habits and life-history is at present in the press (14); to this the following additional note is now added:—

The eggs are also laid in masses, very similar to the egg-masses of *Phrynobatrachus natalensis* which float on the surface, or they may be attached in a mass to weeds at the bottom.

Pyxicephalus adspersus, Tschudi.

This species was not observed, but the inhabitants are quite emphatic as to its occurrence in the neighbourhood. The following account of the metamorphosis is drawn up from observations made at Kimberley:—

Eggs to the number of approximately between 3000 and 4000 were found lying on the bottom in very shallow water, near the edge of a pool, on the morning of 18th December 1926. They had probably been laid the previous night.



FIG. 1.

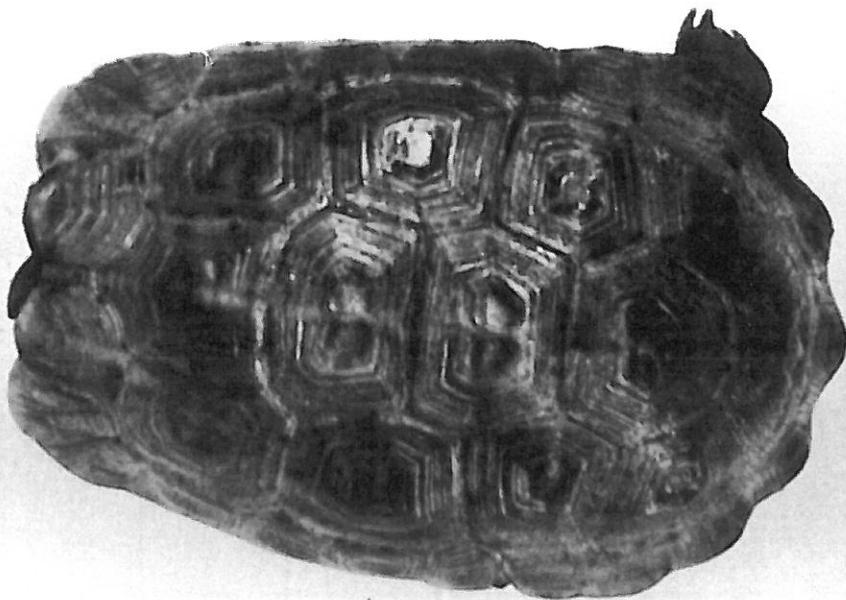


FIG. 2.





FIG. 1.

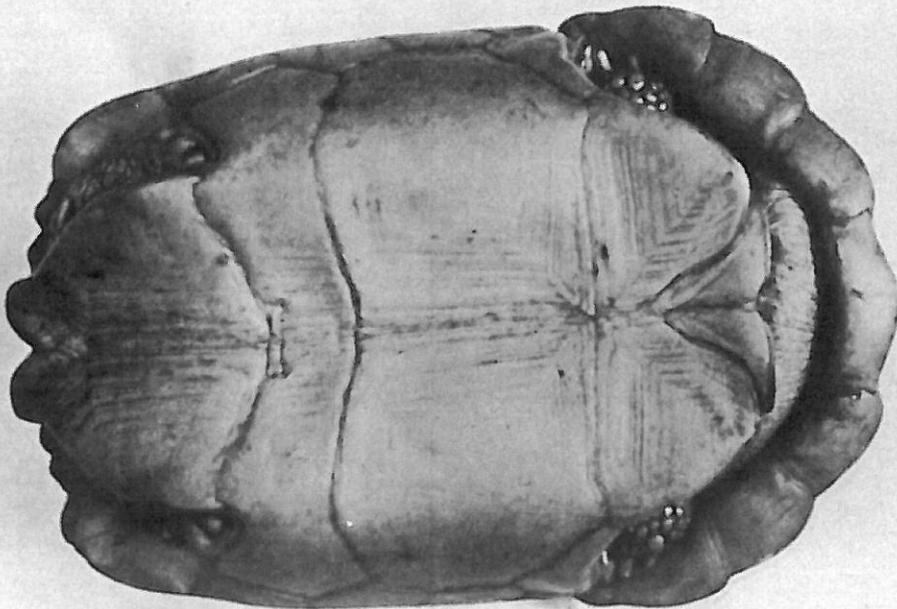


FIG. 2.



MAP OF THE LOBATSI—LINOKANA AREA

— BY —
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REFERENCE.

- HILLS 
- RIVERS 
- VILLAGES 
- RAILWAYS 
- BOUNDARIES 
- BUSA & LARGETREES 

Scale of English Miles

