

53491 Desert Chameleons S18.89715 E12.81961



From: Andre Brümmer

Sent: 2008 October 10 15:26

To: Marius Burger

Cc: swbeachbum@gmail.com; Wouter Brand

Subject: RE: Chameleon behaviour

Hi Marius

Thanks for the reply. I must admit that I have no idea as to what the differences are between chameleons and there seems to be 16 species from what you say. The photo's I sent you were taken recently (Aug2008) about 10km south of the Khumib River just outside the Skeleton Coast Park. This specific type of chameleon (I think they look the same) we observe quite often when traveling this area, which we try and do twice a year. As a matter of fact I would say we see chameleons on nearly every trip we do. On this last trip in Aug we probably saw 5 to 6 of them close to or within the road /

track. In May 2007 we photographed a similar one just 30km upriver on the Khumib just past Purros. They thus seem to abound in this area.

We observed this specific pair for ± 5 minutes and the smaller one, which we thought would be the male, stood over the female and would then walk about and come back to her. She kept still the whole time and was at no point aggressive towards him. Maybe we just happened to intrude the honeymoon pair and he posed for us quite nicely, never taking one of his eyes off his lady.

Andre

From: Marius Burger
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2008 1:41 PM
To: Brümmer, Andre
Cc: SW Burger
Subject: RE: Chameleon behaviour

Hello Andre and SW Burger – sorry for the delay in answering – my life's too hectic at the moment...

Firstly let me say that the Namaqua Chameleon (*Chamaeleo namaquensis*) is a personal favourite of mine, one that I've only encountered once in my life before.

Secondly, it is great to see a bunch of adults (and children) going all ga-ga over a chameleon.

Some answers to your questions:

Southern Africa (Namibia included) is home to about 16 species of dwarf chameleons (of the genus *Bradypodion*) and two typical chameleons (of the genus *Chamaeleo*). The dwarf chameleons give birth to live babies, whereas the two larger typical chameleons lay eggs. So your big female would thus presumably have been gravid with eggs.

I think you may be correct in your assessment of the sexes. The smaller, greener one clearly has a thickened area at the base of the tail, where the hemipenes are situated, and thus it is a male. The tail base of the other specimen is not clearly visible, but to me it also looks as though she may contain eggs.

So those were the easy bits to answer. Why the male came running out and straddled over her is difficult to know – I have not heard of this behaviour before. If she is already gravid, then I would expect her to be hostile to a male's approach. Chameleons generally do not like each other, except for a very short period of time when the female is ready to mate. If, on the other hand, she was just fat and not gravid with eggs, well this might have been that small window of time when females are approachable, and what you witnessed was the 'foreplay' to a mating event. Who knows for sure, but I wished that I could have been there too to observe this affair.

By the way – I might be working on a documentary on chameleons of the world, starting next year sometime. And the Namaqua Chameleon is high on my list of things to film. So please let me know of exact localities where you have encountered this species before, or if you know of areas where they are commonish. When were these photos taken?

All the best -- Marius Burger

Ps – maybe it's just that the male also wanted to be in the photo...

From: Andre Brümmer
Sent: 06 October 2008 07:46 AM
To: Marius Burger
Subject: Chameleon behaviour

Hi Marius

I sent these photographs to Wouter Brand of Tracks4Africa recently on 2 chameleons we encountered near the Khumib River in Damaraland here in Namibia. When we stopped, the smaller chameleon, which we assumed to be the male, came running and stood over the larger chameleon, which we assumed to be the female. We were there for a few minutes and he just stayed with her. The friend of mine (on the one photo) is a medical doctor and he picked her up and said that it feels as if she is "pregnant". The photo's clearly shows that she has a rather large belly. On the T4A website it was suggested that you might be the right person to explain this behaviour. The questions we had are basically twofold:

1. Would this behaviour be common that a chameleon male protect "his" female, or was this part of a mating ritual?
2. Does chameleons lay eggs or how does the young get born?

Regards
Andre Brümmer

From: SW Burger
Sent: 2008 October 05 11:09
To: PIET DU PLESSIS; Brian&Vivian Schrenk; Koos Scholtz; Paul van As; Anneri Burger; Wouter Brand; Andre Burger; Marius Burger
Subject: Fwd: [T4A] The smalls of Damaraland

Die persoon wat die beste antwoord hierop kan gee is Marius Burger.
http://adu.org.za/staff_page.php?staff_id=12

Groete

SW Burger

-----Original Message-----

From: tracks4africa@googlegroups.com On Behalf Of Wouter Brand
Sent: 2008 October 05 10:37
To: tracks4africa@googlegroups.com
Subject: [T4A] The smalls of Damaraland

Andre

These photos speak more.. = Getting the children interested in the SMALLS...
= the SMALL-5.. instead of the BIG-5 and the visiting Africa at huge expense just to come
see the BIG-5.. and when you've seen them all.. You've seen NOTHING at all.



In the greater ADO area (Nelson Mandela Bay) S33.70388 E26.17860 now expanding all the way to the coast line.. I hear they speak of the BIG-7 (to include the Great White Shark and the Southern Right Whale). For the tourism industry bigger is better.. the reality is very different.

The two desert chameleons.. I think it is a mating thing going on.. I wonder if somebody in the ranks knows these little creatures... and do the need to drink water ?..

>-----Original Message-----

>From: Brümmer, Andre
>Sent: 2008 October 02 11:25
>To: Wouter Brand
>Subject: In die padgesteek

>

>Jy het nou al 'n padsteek en 'n veldsteek waypoint, maar het jy al
>hierdie een gesien. Naby die Khumib het ons 'n dragtige wyfie
>verkleurmannetjie gekry in die pad. Toe ons stilhou, kom die mannetjie
>aangehardloop (ehmmm) en kom staan beskermend bo-oor haar en blaas vir
>ons. Voorwaar ongelooflik. Nie waarna dit op die een foto (veldsteek)
>lyk nie, net beskermend.

>
>Groete
>Andre