

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA; SERPENTES

COLUBRIDAE

Pseudaspis cana (Linnaeus, 1754)

Mole Snake

MAXIMUM SIZE

On 28 October 2006, I was called out to remove a snake from the premises of an auto carrier company in Bellville South, Cape Town (South Africa; Western Cape; 3318DC; 33°55'40"S, 18°38'59"E). On inspection, a large Mole Snake (*Pseudaspis cana*) was found curled up under a vehicle.

After capture, the sex of the snake was determined as female by a subcaudal scale count of 54 scales as well as by cloacal probing, which confirmed it as a female. Broadley (1990: *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*. Jonathan Ball and Donker Publishers, Parklands) gives male subcaudal counts as 55-70, and female counts as 44-57).

The total length (TL) and snout-vent length (SVL) of the snake were measured by placing a piece of string along its body along the midline from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail, and from the snout to the vent, respectively, and then measuring the string with a tape measure. The average of three measurements was taken because of general movements of the snake. We here record the TL of this specimen as being approximately 2131 mm, and the SVL as 1820 mm. Table 1 indicates the respective measurements.

	TL mm	SVL mm
Measurement 1	2131	1820
Measurement 2	2129	1819
Measurement 3	2132	1820
Average	2131	1820

Table 1: Measurements (mm) of a female Mole Snake, *Pseudaspis cana*

FitzSimons (1974) indicates that Mole Snakes from the Western Cape are known to "attain a maximum length of just over" 2000 mm in TL, but average at approximately 1800 mm. Broadley (1990) records maximum (female) Mole Snake TL and SVL as 1520 mm and 1280 respectively. Branch (1998) records the maximum female Mole Snake SVL as 1280 mm, and the maximum Mole Snake TL in the South Western Cape as up to 2000 mm. Marais (2004) indicates that Mole Snakes reach a maximum size of 2000 mm.

This record of a female Mole Snake's TL of 2131mm and SVL of 1820mm respectively therefore exceeds the previously published maximum measurements for the species.

The snake was collected under CapeNature catch-and-release permit no. AAA004-00014, and she was released in a safe, natural environment shortly after capture. This record was submitted to the South African Reptile Conservation Assessment project (Record No. 001818).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Pierre Joubert, who was involved with the collection of the snake; Georgene Witberg and Pierre Joubert, who assisted with taking the measurements; Dr Ernst Baard of CapeNature; and Dr. Tony Phelps of the Cape Reptile Institute for comments on the format and contents of this note.

References

- BRANCH, W.R., 1998. *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*: Third Edition, Struik, Cape Town)
- BROADLEY, D.G., 1990. *FitzSimons' Snakes of Southern Africa*. Jonathan Ball and Donker, Parklands.
- FITZSIMONS, V.F.M., 1974. *A Field Guide to the Snakes of Southern Africa*: Second edition. Collins, St James's Place, London.
- MARAIS, J., 2004. *A Complete Guide to the Snakes of Southern Africa*. Second edition. Struik, Cape Town.

Submitted by

MARCEL WITBERG, 5 Marion Street, Stellenberg, Bellville, Cape Town, 7530, South Africa. E-mail: witbergm@absamail.co.za



Pseudaspis cana from Bellville, South Africa. Photo: Marcel Witberg



Pseudaspis cana from Bellville, South Africa. Photo submitted by Marcel Witberg.