

SHORT NOTE

A note on *Pythonodipsas**carinata* Günther

(Western keeled snake)

in South West Africa, with
new distribution records

by

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Pythonodipsas carinata Günther was first collected by J. Chapman and described by Günther in 1868; the type locality is given as "Zambezi". Broadley (1971) has shown that the types of both *P. carinata* and *Xenocalamus bicolor* were probably collected in Damaraland rather than on the Zambezi, for J. Chapman travelled to the Victoria Falls from Walvis Bay via Lake Ngami in 1861 and returned by the same route in 1863.

Very little work has been done on this species because of its apparent scarcity. Fitzsimons (1962) gives the general distribution of *P. carinata* as northern Damaraland, southern Angola and the southern part of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).

Fitzsimons (1962) records the following localities in South West Africa: Omaruru/Otavi, Orupembe, Walvis Bay and Warmbad N. In addition to these records Mertens (1971) notes the following: Jochmannswand (Brandberg), Central Namib and Kaokoveld.

Some of these records are vague however and accurate distribution plotting is impossible. The Orupembe, Warmbad N. and the Jochmannswand records are shown on the map as blacked in squares. In the case of the Walvis Bay specimen there is some uncertainty as to its origin and Mertens (1955) believes it may have been collected at Salem, approximately 100 km inland, while Fitzsimons (1962) puts forward the theory that this specimen was washed up on floating debris from another area.

During the course of a reptile survey in the Namib Desert Park, South West Africa, which centres on approximately 23°15'S;15°15'E, two specimens of *P. carinata* were collected and J. E. W. Dixon donated a third specimen. The first snake collected (R.42) was taken on 20 January 1973 in the canyon region of the Kuiseb River (23°39'S;15°24'E). The riverine forest is of a fairly dense nature with a

substantial amount of bushy undergrowth and plant debris. While Mertens (1955) states that they are not found near water, specimen R.42 was taken in an area where there are semi-permanent pools in the Kuiseb bed. The second specimen (R.90) was collected at Hebron (22°40'S;15°34'E) in the north-eastern corner of the Park. It was discovered in a derelict outhouse under a pile of old sacks. The area around Hebron is extremely arid and rocky with very little vegetation. The third specimen (R.132) was a road casualty and was found in the vicinity of the Kuiseb River-bridge (2315BCb). This is an area of broken rock and very little vegetation.

The three new records are marked on the map as blacked in triangles. The three specimens are lodged in the collection of the Namib Desert Research Station.

No.	Date	Locality	Length				
			Total	Body	Tail	Ventrals	Sub-caudals
R.42	20/1/73	2315CBd	517	461	56	191	51
R.90	7/9/73	2215DAc	459	387	72	195	53
R.132	13/5/74	2315BCb	504	448	56	190	45

The total and body lengths of R.42 and R.132 are only approximate as both these specimens are damaged.

The gut content of the three snakes was examined; R.42 was found to be empty but R.90 had recently taken an adult *Pachydactylus bibroni* which measured 120 mm R.132 contained the remains of two small rodents; they could not be identified. Fitzsimons (1962) notes that the two syntypes of *Afroedura africana* were removed from the gut of the *P. carinata* collected at the Walvis Bay locality.

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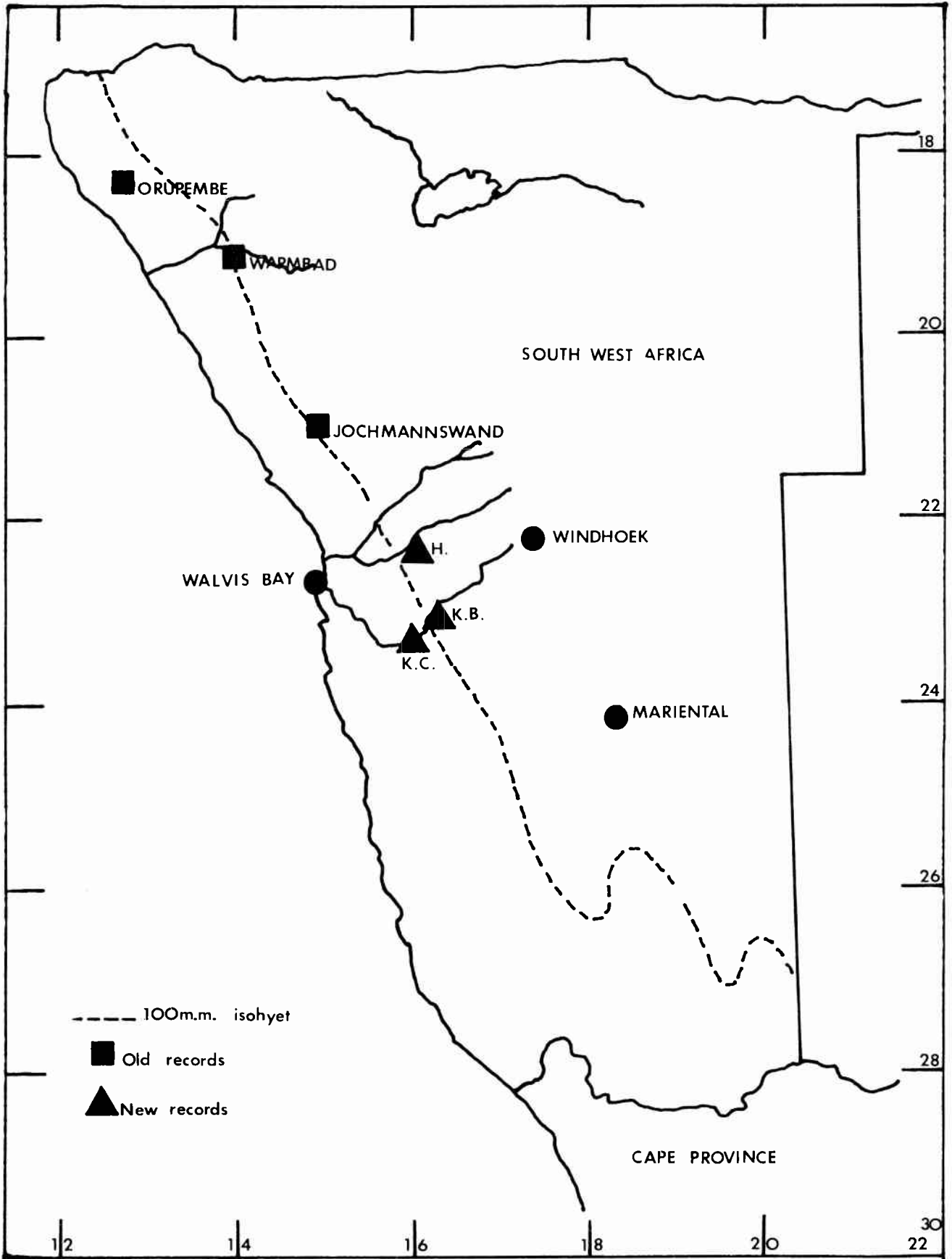
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Map. The known distribution of *Pythonodipsas carinata* in South West Africa.