



The Jacksonville Herpetological Society

Cold Blooded

June 2020



by **Monica Pierson, Secretary** on June, 4

Dear members, as we deal with this global pandemic, all activities, meetings and field trips are canceled until further notice. We hope you all are safe and healthy during this trying time.

On a more somber note, Jim Darlington, Curator of Reptiles at St. Augustine Alligator Farm, was injured in the line of duty. The official statement from SAAF is below.



**St. Augustine Alligator Farm
Zoological Park**

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May 30 at 5:51 PM · 🌐

Late this afternoon, Jim, our Curator of Reptiles, was on the water in our Swamp & Rookery inside the canoe and was involved in an incident with one of the alligators; he was grabbed by the arm. His years of experience with crocodilians helped him to get out of the situation as safely as possible. Jim is doing well and receiving treatment at Flagler Hospital. We invite you all to join us in wishing Jim the best and quickest recovery. Our entire team reacted quickly and handled the situation well. A big thank you to the paramedics that arrived on the scene moments later.

We wish him well. It would be a nice gesture if we sent him Get Well cards. If you wish to do so please send them to the SAAF.

Jim Darlington

% St. Augustine Alligator Farm

999 Anastasia Blvd

St. Augustine, Fl 32080

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THIS Month's
TOP STORIES



by **Your Name** on May 20, 2020

A new species of semi-aquatic cobra, *Naja nana* sp. nov. has been described from Lake Mai-Ndombe in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The new species, known as the dwarf water cobra, is locally abundant and is thought to be endemic to the region. According to the researchers – Marcel Collet and Jean-François Trape – it differs from the two other local species of semi-aquatic cobras, *Naja annulata* and *Naja christyi* by a series of morphological characters, including

its small size, colouration and scale counts.

Lake Mai-Ndombe (formerly Lake Leopold II) is located 290 meters (951 feet) above sea level and sits in the equatorial forest zone. It stretches from North to South for approximately 140 kilometres (87 miles) with a surface area of 2300 square kilometres (1430 square miles) and a maximum depth of 10 meters (33 feet). The banks are low, with sandy and rocky areas and the lake seasonally floods large areas of forest and secondary savannah. In the local language Mai-Ndombe means 'black water' owing to its dark brown colouration caused by large amounts of dissolved organic matter.



Dwarf water cobra (*Naja nana*). Photo credit: Wolfgang Wüster ©

The dwarf water cobra has been known locally for a number of years and one of the authors of the study has been collecting specimens for 20 years but it has, until now, remained undescribed. According to Dr Wolfgang Wüster, a herpetologist at Bangor University, U.K., it has been exported to private collections under several names, including, erroneously as *Naja christyi*. Known locally as 'Musso', the dwarf water cobra feeds exclusively on fish and is frequently caught in the nets of fishermen. According to villagers who live around Lake Mai-Ndombe the snake can also be found amongst the boulders that line the shore and during periods of high water it can be found in the branches of flooded vegetation bordering the lake.

The dwarf water cobra, as its name suggests is a small species reaching a maximum length of 1m (3.2 feet) and the specific epithet comes from the Latin word 'nanus' (feminine *nana*) meaning small.

It has a dorsal colouration that is more or less black with small white or yellowish spots and the ventral side is mostly whitish with each ventral scale being bordered laterally in black. The underside of the tail is completely black. There are two other similar species of water cobra in the region but *Naja annulata* is light brown with dark bands and *Naja christyi* is dark brown with yellow transverse lines in the anterior part of the body. Neither of these species have a ventral colouration that is similar to *Naja nana* sp. nov. and both these species exceed 2.5m (8.2 feet) in length.

Naja nana sp. nov. also differs from the other species of water cobra in scale counts. Mid body dorsal scale rows are usually 19 (rarely 17 or 18 in males and 18, 20 or 21 in females) instead of 17 in *Naja christyi* and 21-25 in *Naja annulata*.

When threatened the dwarf water cobra adopts the characteristic hooded display of all cobras, raising its body to a height of one third of its total length. The toxicity of this species is not currently known but like other members of the genus it is likely to be capable of delivering a fatal bite to humans. Local reports however, suggest that the cobra is not afraid of people and fishermen and children handle it frequently. According to one snake collector who has handled more than 300 specimens and has been bitten fifteen times, the symptoms of envenomation are moderate, with mild local pain and oedema resolving in 24-48 hours.

This latest study highlights our lack of understanding of snake ecology in tropical and politically unstable regions like the Congo and its discovery brings the total number of semi-aquatic cobras in the sub-genus *Boulengerina* to nine. The sub-genus *Boulengerina* groups together the African cobras which live in or have an affinity with water. These are: *Naja nana* sp. nov., *N.annulata*, *N.christyi*, *N.multifasciata* and five species of Forest Cobra (*N.melanoleuca*, *N.guineensis*, *N.savannula*, *N.subfulva* and *N.peroescobari*), which until a study I was involved in were all considered to be just one wide-ranging species (Wüster et al., 2018).

Original article found here:

<https://awildlife.blog/2020/05/20/new-species-of-semi-aquatic-cobra-described-from-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>



PHOTO BY NATALIE CLAUNCH VIA FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Insanely constipated Florida lizard just broke the record for biggest poop

by Colin Wolf on May 6, 2020

After a steady diet of pizza grease and sand, a lizard in Florida recently broke the record for largest crap relative to a living organism's body size.

As recently published in the *Herpetological Review*, a team of herpetologists from University of Florida was tracking down reptile samples in Cocoa Beach when they stopped by a local pizza joint and discovered a bulbous Northern curly-tailed lizard, which had unusually large fecal bolus that made up nearly 80 percent of its entire body mass.

Ph.D. candidate Natalie Claunch says her team just assumed the female lizard's abnormally large size was because she was ready to lay eggs, but when they took her in for a CT scan it was revealed she was in fact filled with a giant poop.

"When we went to feel for eggs," said Claunch, "it just felt like it was full of Silly Putty."

The poor lizard absolutely smashes all known records for biggest relative crap, which was previously set by a Burmese python that dropped a deuce of 13 percent of its body mass.

"I was blown away by how little room there was left for all the other organs – if you look at the 3D model, it has only a tiny space left over in its ribcage for the heart, lungs and liver," said director of the Florida Museum's Digital Discovery and Dissemination Laboratory Edward Stanley. "It must have been a very uncomfortable situation for the poor lizard."



FLORIDA MUSEUM IMAGE BY EDWARD STANLEY

Typically found in Cuba, the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands, Northern curly-tailed lizards are invasive to Florida, and it's believed they were intentionally released in the early 1940s to battle sugarcane pests. A typical diet for a curly-tailed lizard is bugs and other lizards, but the omnivorous reptile will also eat just about anything, including pizza grease dripped onto a sandy beach.

"They're like sparrows or gulls at a fry stand, without the chirping or swooping," said Claunch, who studies the northern curly tail's immune system, heat tolerance and adaptability in the lab of Christina Romagosa, assistant research professor in the department of wildlife ecology and conservation.

Sadly, Claunch says the team had to humanely euthanize the invasive lizard, whose giant unpassable crap was causing it to suffer from starvation, but at least the turd lives on in scientific literature.

"We are unaware of any records from wild or captive animals that approach our finding," Claunch said to *Inverse*. "We hope for the sake of the individual animals that there are not any out there!"

Original article found here:

<https://m.orlandoweekly.com/Blogs/archives/2020/05/06/insanely-constipated-florida-lizard-just-broke-the-record-for-biggest-poop>

Scientists Have Discovered Real-Life Kermit The Frog Living In Costa Rica

by **Nature & Animal** May 2020

Kermit the Frog's nearly identical twin has been discovered deep in the jungles of Costa Rica. New species are discovered every day, sometimes in the most unexpected places. Scientists have been working in the Talamanca Mountains for over a century, but it wasn't until this year that a tiny, semi-translucent frog resembling a real-life Kermit the Frog hopped under their radar.



The new species known as *Hyalinobatrachium dianae* made its first appearance to the world in the February issue of the taxonomy journal *Zootaxa*. Glass frogs are characterized by a lack of skin pigmentation. There are 149 known glass frog species, 14 of which have been found in Costa Rica.

This cute see-through species of frog is rare and only found in parts of Central and South America. The *H. Dianae* glass frog is one of the most translucent of all; in fact you can actually see the frog's organs through their underbelly. It's not the translucent quality that resembles real-life Kermit The Frog, but instead those adorable big, bright black and white eyes.

Brian Kubicki, Stanley Salazar and Robert Puschendorf were the scientists that discovered the frog between 400m and 800m up the mountain. This marks the first glass frog discovered in Costa Rica in over 40 years. The frog was named *H. dianae* after one of the frog discoverer's mother—Janet Diana Kubicki. Its name is also in honor of the Roman hunting goddess known as Diana.



H. dianae is unique to other glass frogs for a number of reasons, including its long, thin feet, Kermit The Frog eyes, as well as morphological and genetic differences. The nocturnal frog also uses a rather unique call to attract females, one that is different from any other species ever discovered. The call is described as a long metallic whistle with rapid pulses, more similar to an insect than other frogs. Scientists believe it was this insect-like call that helped disguise the frog from discovery for so long.

Original article found here:

<https://www.natureandanimal.com/foto-galeri/scientists-have-discovered-real-life-kermit-the-frog-living-in-costa-rica/190/resim/>

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<http://www.jaxherpsociety.com>