

## REPTILES

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### Sources of information

- “Transvaal” Museum, Pretoria
- National Museum, Cape Town - Atlas of lizard distribution in Southern Africa
- Port Elizabeth Museum
- Various other Museums
- University collections and data sets
- IUCN
- Biodiversity data base of the Provincial Department of Nature Conservation in Polokwane.
- National Parks Board collections
- Private collections and data sets.

This information is readily available but human resources are required to access and collate it.

Information in this synthesis is based on Branch (1998). Because his maps are of a general nature it was in some cases difficult to know whether a species has actually been collected from the Soutpansberg. Uncertain localities were discarded so the list might be conservative. Also, the reptiles of the Soutpansberg have not been surveyed thoroughly so it is highly likely that new distribution records and even new species may be found in future.

### Summary statistics

Based on this information, a total of at least 116 reptile species have been recorded in the Soutpansberg. This biodiversity is remarkably high for such a small area and makes up 36% of the total number of reptile species that have been recorded in South Africa. This is roughly the same number of species (119) that occur in the Kruger National Park. The diversity is high compared to biodiversity hotspots of the world and the species diversity per unit area is higher than that of most of these hotspots. Most of the species (92 or 79%) are either catholic or occur in “savannah” or bushland. Nine species (8%) are mainly restricted to grassland, the same number are associated with forests and five (4%) occur in wetlands. Twelve species show a distinct preference for rocky outcrops.

The following eighteen species are of particular conservation importance:

*Amblyodipsas microphthalmus nigra*

White lipped snake

Near endemic subspecies

*Xenocalamus transvaalensis*

Transvaal quill-snouted snake

Isolated population

*Dasypeltis inornata*

Southern brown egg eater

Isolated population

*Chirindia langi langi* and *C. l. occidentalis*

Lang’s round headed worm lizard

Near endemic subspecies

*Monopeltis sphenorhynchus sphenorhynchus*

Slender spade snouted worm lizard

Isolated population

*Typhlosaurus lineatus subtaeniatus* and *T. l.*

*richardi*

Cregoi’s blind legless skink

Endemic subspecies

*Scelotes limpopoensis albiventris*

Limpopo dwarf burrowing skink

Near endemic subspecies. Occurrence in Mountain to be verified.

*Australolacerta rupicola*

Soutpansberg rock lizard

Endemic species

*Nucras lalandi*

Delalandes sandveld lizard

Relict population (not restricted to the Mountain)

*Cordylus vandami*

Van Dam’s girdled lizard

Isolated population

*Platysaurus monotropis*

Orange throated flat lizard

Endemic to Blouberg

*Platysaurus relictus*

Soutpansberg flat lizard

Endemic species to the Soutpansberg

*Platysaurus intermedius inopinus*

Common flat lizard

Near endemic subspecies

*Bradypodion* cf. sp. *transvaalensis*

Transvaal dwarf chameleon

Isolated population. Revision of the group might show that it is a different species or subspecies

*Colopus wahlbergii wahlbergii*

Kalahari ground gecko

Isolated population

*Homopholis mulleri*

Muller’s velvet gecko

Near endemic

*Lygodactylus nigropunctatus incognitus*

Black spotted dwarf gecko

Endemic subspecies

*Lycodactylus ocellatus soutpansbergensis*

Spotted dwarf gecko

Endemic subspecies

Due to a lack of information the conservation status of these species in the Soutpansberg is not known. Two of the three endemic species and at least one of the endemic subspecies seem to be well protected on private reserves in the Western Soutpansberg. The dwarf chameleon seems to be extremely rare. Habitat loss in the eastern part of the mountain is of concern for this species.

### Major studies and publications

None on the Soutpansberg as such.

General publications on South African reptiles:

BRANCH, B. 1998. *Field guide to the snakes and other reptiles of southern Africa*.

BROADLY, D. G. 1990. *Fitzsimons' snakes of Southern Africa*. Delta Books (Pty) Ltd, Johannesburg.

### Recommendations for priority studies

A detailed distribution survey to update the check list and to record distribution patterns and habitat preferences.

DNA analysis to determine the taxonomic status of groups such as the dwarf chameleons and flat lizards.

### “Hot spots” of particular importance

Due to a lack of information it is not possible to determine hot spots for rare species. The best approach would be to concentrate conservation efforts on biotopes that are under most threat such as forests, wetlands and montane grassland.



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