

ARTICLES

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN HERPETOLOGY AWARD: WULF DIETRICH HAACKE

MICHAEL F. BATES

*Department of Herpetology, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, Bloemfontein, 9300,
South Africa; E-mail: herp@nasmus.co.za.*

Wulf Dietrich Haacke was born in Windhoek, Namibia, on 15 December 1936. His parents were German and in 1929 and 1930 they immigrated to the former South West Africa, where they were married. Wulf spent the first 20 years of his life in Namibia. His first job, in 1955, was as an assistant to the mineralogist at Tsumeb Mine in Namibia. In 1957 he moved to South Africa where he studied for a BSc degree at the University of Pretoria. Wulf took up a post in the Section of Locust Control and Research at the Department of Agriculture in February 1960, and in June 1961 he was appointed as head of the Department of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates at the Transvaal Museum. He was head of the department, later re-named Department of Herpetology, from 1961 until his retirement in 2002, a period of over 40 years. During that time the herpetological collection at the Transvaal Museum increased in size from 26 000 to 85 000 specimens.

In addition to curating the herp collection, Wulf was appointed as Assistant Director of the Transvaal Museum in June 1988, as Deputy Director from August 1991 to June 1992, and as co-ordinator of vertebrate studies from December 2000 until his retirement in January 2002. Soon after his retirement, in February 2004, he was appointed as Honorary Curator of Herpetology.

When he began work at the Transvaal Museum, Dr Vivian FitzSimons was still the Director. His association with FitzSimons ranks as the first highlight in Wulf's career. At the time, FitzSimons had only one functional eye, and was virtually blind. FitzSimons nevertheless still insisted on publishing two editions of his *Field Guide to the Snakes of Southern Africa*, as well as an Afrikaans version of the book. Wulf edited the first edition of the book and had to read each and every amendment to FitzSimons. Wulf also co-operated with Barry Barratt, the artist, supplying him with specimens and evaluating his illustrations. Wulf later updated the second edition of the *Field Guide*, again having to read each and every change to FitzSimons. He was even more intensely involved in the production of the Afrikaans version of the *Guide*. This was no problem for Wulf, who is fluent in German, English and Afrikaans. He was therefore able to associate closely with FitzSimons, who Wulf refers to as a "great man" who "never lost interest in his main study subject". Wulf also noted that FitzSimons was "a very dignified and approachable man, who I admired and respected".

While at the Transvaal Museum, Wulf completed a Masters degree on the burrowing geckos of southern Africa. The field work involved in this project and the prepara-

tion of the five major journal articles that resulted from it, which were published in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, rank as another highlight in Wulf's career. The publication of these papers in 1975 and 1976 firmly established Wulf as an expert on geckos, a group of reptiles in which he has maintained a lifelong interest.

Wulf has had a long association with the HAA, being one of its longest serving members. He was HAA journal editor from 1980 to 1982, and has also served on the journal's editorial committee. He is an Honorary Life Member of both the Transvaal Herpetological Association and the East Rand Herpetological Association. In fact, he is a past Chairman and founder member of the THA. Wulf was also the South African representative on the Council of the World Congress of Herpetology from 1994 to 1998.

Wulf has authored about 80 scientific and semi-scientific articles and about 20 popular articles. He has presented papers in three languages at 22 national and international symposia. It is interesting to note that his first paper, published in 1963, was not on herps, but on the discovery of the first live specimen of the Namib Golden Mole, published in the *IUCN Bulletin*. Reptile taxa described by Wulf include *Ptenopus kochi* and *Typhlosaurus braini* in 1964, *Afroedura africana tirasensis* and *Rhoptropus bradfieldi diporus* in 1965, *Pachydactylus tsodiloensis* in 1966, *Bitis xeropaga* in 1975, *Chondrodactylus angulifer namibensis* and *Colopus wahlbergii furcifer* in 1976, *Typhlosaurus lomiae* in 1986, *Afrogecko swartbergensis* in 1996, *Typhlacontias rudebecki* in 1997, and *Afrogecko plumicaudus* in 2008. He was also co-author on the descriptions of *Kaokogecko vanzyli* with Steyn in 1966, and of *Lygosoma miopus* from Somalia with Greer in 1982. The latter species was later re-named *Haackgreerius miopus* in honour of the authors. None of the species Wulf has authored have been synonymised.

As many of you already know, Wulf's interest has largely centered on the reptiles of Namibia. Apart from his seminal works on the burrowing geckos, other important contributions include papers on the reptiles of Maputaland, accounts of the herpetofauna of the southern Kalahari, and of the Kamanjab and Damaraland regions, and a systematic and biogeographical analysis of the genus *Typhlacontias*. Some smaller but nevertheless notable contributions include the re-discovery of *Australolacerta australis*, a number of reptile range extensions in Namibia, and more recently, various short notes with Mica Barts, documenting captive maintenance and reproduction of Southern African geckos. Wulf has worked mainly on lizards and snakes, but has published a few papers on frogs, including the first record of *Amietophrynus lemairii* from Southern Africa. He also co-authored papers on the frogs of southwestern Angola and Lesotho. The Angola paper, published in 1993, includes the description of *Bufo grandisonae* by Poynton and Haacke.

Wulf is a co-author of the book *Reptiles of the Kruger National Park*, published in 1983, and first author of a small book titled *Frogs* published in 1987. He also contributed species accounts for the 1988 South African Red Data Book of Reptiles and Amphibians. More recently, he was very active as a member of the Expert Panel of SARCA and spent a considerable amount of time identifying images of reptiles, later reviewing various sections of the Reptile Atlas manuscript. He is currently occupied with a taxonomic revision of the genus *Telecopus* in southwestern Africa.

Apart from his published contributions to herpetology, Wulf has also been a source of inspiration and counsel to many young herpetologists. He has reviewed countless manuscripts and dissertations, and always found the time to welcome visitors to his of-

office or home in Pretoria, sharing in his wealth of knowledge. Wulf's various collections of reptiles and amphibians, made during trips throughout the subcontinent, should be seen as yet another significant contribution. Many taxonomic revisions have benefited substantially from this material. Most of Wulf's expeditions were conducted using a Land Rover which he built from scratch, and maintained himself, after becoming something of an expert vehicle mechanic. In recognition of his contribution to southern African herpetology, Wulf has had two lizards named after him, namely *Afroedura pondolia haackei* and *Pachydactylus haackei*. It is also noteworthy that during the time when his department included invertebrates, Wulf collected everything that caught his attention, resulting in colleagues naming a grasshopper, tenebrionid beetle, solifugid, scorpion and snail after him. His comprehensive collection of excellent photographs deserves mention too, and many of these have been used by colleagues in field guides and other publications. Wulf has also presented numerous talks and slide shows, and his expert advice has been aired on radio and television.

Wulf has traveled extensively, visiting several African countries, including Angola, Tanzania, Kenya and Algeria, as well as North and South America, Australia, Europe, and most recently Antarctica which he visited with his wife. Wulf has a special interest in the pre-colonial and colonial history of Namibia, Botswana and Namaqualand. He recently conducted an expedition to Botswana in search of a battlefield dating back to skirmishes between German colonial troops and indigenous people who had fled across the border from South West Africa.

Since his retirement in 2002 Wulf has been active as a freelance environmental consultant and has prepared 441 environmental impact assessment reports. He has also continued with some herpetological research and as recently as 2008, described one of the most remarkable geckos in Africa, the feathery-tailed gecko *Afrogecko plumicaudus* from Angola. The discovery of this gecko, and its description, rank as the most recent highlight in Wulf's career.

The Herpetological Association of Africa is proud to present its highest honour, the *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* award, to Wulf Haacke.

THE STATUS OF THE RINKHALS *HEMACHATUS HAEMACHATUS* IN THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN METROPOLITAN AREA, WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

GRANT SMITH

Applied Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Roeland Street, Cape Town, 8000. E-mail: grantsmith148@hotmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, conservation authorities believed that the monotypic elapid *Hemachatus haemachatus* was extinct in the City of Cape Town (CCT) metropolitan area in the