

## Unusual prey of some African Scorpions

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It is generally accepted that spiders and scorpions feed mainly on arthropods. Yet several accounts have been published by reliable authors describing how some spiders catch and eat annelids, molluscs, small mammals, reptiles and birds (Andre and Lamy, 1941).

Few observations of a similar nature have been published on scorpions. Kock (1969) describes how he found a specimen of *Pandinus pallidus* (Scorpionidae) feeding on a harvest-mouse *Leggada minutoides* near Kadugli in the Sudan, and infers that another small mouse *Mus musculus* is more probably preyed upon by this species of scorpion, particularly during drought periods. Kock also lists some papers which mention occurrences of scorpions preying upon or being preyed upon by various small vertebrates. In a paper in press (Lamoral, 1971) I have described how a species of scorpion, *Opisthophthalmus carinatus histrio* (Scorpionidae), feeds on small molluscs (Fig. 1) in times of drought in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

The purpose of this short paper is to report on two unpublished cases of predation by scorpions on small vertebrates, observed by myself.

The first observation was made near Rossing (42 km N-E of Swakopmund, South West Africa) in mid-February 1969. While collecting at night, an adult specimen of *Parabuthus villosus* (Buthidae) was found feeding on a palmate desert gecko, *Palmatogecko rangei* (Gekkonidae), which it had presumably caught. The head of the gecko had been eaten and the scorpion was feeding on the neck and shoulder regions, holding its prey with the right pedipalp. Both of these animals wander at night in search of food at the base and sides of sand dunes. *P. rangei* is commonly found through most of the Namib Desert and is known to be preyed upon by the large white dune spiders of the Namib (species of the genera *Leucorchestris*, *Orchestrella* and *Carparachne*, family Sparassidae).

The second observation was made while collecting in daytime on the calcrete banks of the Auob River at Gemsbok Plain (40 km North of Twee Rivieren,

Kalahari Gemsbok National Park). A juvenile of the common Cape gecko, *Pachydactylus capensis capensis* (Gekkonidae), disturbed by my presence, took refuge in the burrow of an *Opisthophthalmus carinatus histrio* (Scorpionidae). When this scorpion, a particularly large specimen, was dug out it was found holding the gecko with one of its pedipalps. The gecko was dead. Both were put in a cardboard box. When opening the box at the end of the day's collecting, the gecko was found almost completely eaten.

### References

- ANDRE, M. & LAMY, E. 1941: Sur l'alimentation des Araignées et des Opilions, notamment aux dépens des Mollusques. *Bull. Mus. Hist. nat.*, 2<sup>e</sup> s. 13 (5): 435-441, 1 fig.
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Fig. 1. *O. carinatus histrio* with the broken shell of a *Xerocerastus (Xerocerastus) burchelli* (Mollusca, Subulinidae) on which it fed.