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African Herp News

**Newsletter of the
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GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTIONS

AMPHIBIA: ANURA

BUFONIDAE

Bufo dhufarensis Parker, 1931 Dhofar Toad

Saudi Arabia, Plateau, head drainage of Shaib al Ajma (Wadi Mutim system), Ibex Reserve (ca. 250km southeast of Riyadh, N 23.48° E 46.49° & app. 1100 m.a.s.l.). Drainage line with temporary water flow after heavy rainfall in May 2010, on Jurassic limestone Plateau. Observed by Torsten Wronski. Verified by Peter Cunningham. 1 specimen – photographed (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: *Bufo dhufarensis* from the Ibex reserve, Saudi Arabia. Photo Torsten Wronski

Leviton et al. (1992) show that the range of *Bufo dhufarensis* includes the southern Arabian Peninsula south of N 22° along the west coast, Yemen, coastal Oman and the United Arab Emirates east of N 56°. From central Saudi Arabia they are known from Hayr and Riyadh, but viewed as introduced to these areas (Balletto et al. 1985).

This sighting of *B. dhufarensis* in the Ibex Reserve was made after 77 mm of rain fell in the area of Wadi Mutim, with the average annual rainfall for the Ibex Reserve being 85.4 mm (Robinson 2007). *Bufo dhufarensis* aestivate underground by burrowing into the soil with frantic breeding spells observed throughout the year after unpre-

dictable rainfall events (Balletto et al. 1985, Cunningham & Feulner 2001).

This range extension for *B. dhufarensis* suggests either an indication of geographic spread from the Riyadh area over time (unlikely) or that they occur naturally in the rugged mountainous escarpment running from north of Riyadh in the central Najd area down to the Uruq Bani M'arid area on the south western boundary of the Empty Quarter, but never verified due to under collecting from this generally inaccessible area.

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Submitted by:

PETER CUNNINGHAM, Environment & Wildlife Consulting Namibia, P. O. Box 90717, Windhoek, Namibia. E-mail: pckkwrwc@yahoo.co.uk, and **TORSTEN WRONSKI**, King Khalid Wildlife & Research Centre, P. O. Box 61681, Thumamah, Saudi Arabia, and the Zoological Society of London, London. E-mail: t_wronski@gmx.de.

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA

ELAPIDAE

Naja ashei Wüster & Broadley, 2007 Ashe's Spitting Cobra

Ashe's Spitting Cobra (*Naja ashei*) is Africa's largest cobra and was only described in 2007 (Wüster & Broadley 2007). The first and largest specimen was 2.8 meters (9 feet and 2 inches), and caught much earlier in 1960 by James Ashe and C.J.P. Ionides, the famous snake catcher (Wykes 1960). It had killed and swallowed a domestic cat and got injured in the process but survived. It was kept in captivity for three weeks but unfortunately escaped before it could be taken to the Nairobi Snake Park. There remains some confusion as to where it was caught, but Ashe recorded that "I think it was somewhere in Kilifi", about 45km from Watamu, coastal Kenya, where he later built his snake park (Saving Snakes 2007).

The distribution of *Naja ashei* is currently believed to be restricted to eastern and northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, southern Somalia and eastern Uganda (Wüster &