

The Natal hinged tortoise *Kinixys natalensis*: a new record for the Kruger National Park

G.V. HAAGNER

Gazankulu Division Nature Conservation, Manyeleti Game Reserve, P.O. Manyeleti, 1362 Republic of South Africa.

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Since its original description by Hewitt (1935, *Records of the Albany Museum* 4:283-357) *Kinixys natalensis* has undergone some taxonomic changes. Loveridge & Williams (1957, *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology* (Harvard University) 115: 161-557) placed it in synonymy with *Kinixys belliana* as did Wermuth & Mertens (1961, *Schildkröten, Krokodile, Brückenechsen*. VEB Gustaf Fisher Verlag, Jena, 411pp.). In 1981 when reviewing *Kinixys* in southern Africa, Broadley (1981, *Annals of the Cape Provincial Museums (Natural History)* 13: 195-216) reinstated *Kinixys natalensis* as a full species. The distribution of *K. natalensis* was then given (Broadley (*op.cit.*)) as the hilly terrain of the Natal Midlands and the Lebombo range along the Swaziland/Mozambique border.

Additional specimens collected subsequently indicate that the species occurs over a much wider range, but remains a southern African endemic. The species has also been recorded in the south-eastern Transvaal from Komatipoort northwestwards to Hoedspruit (1988, Boycott & Jacobsen, *Durban Museum Novitates* 14(5): 93-101).

On 2 September 1988 a female *Kinixys* specimen was collected approximately 200 metres south of the Tswiriri River (24°52'S; 31°41'E), 360 metres above sea level on the firebreak between the Sabi Sand Private Nature Reserve and the Kruger National Park approximately 17 km north of Skukuza. The animal was noticed crossing the road at 06:42

and because my attention had been drawn to the lack of *K. natalensis* material from the Transvaal (W.D. Haacke *pers. comm.*) the specimen was investigated. Recognising it as an adult female of this species, it was taken to the Manyeleti Game Reserve where the following measurements were taken: total length 94,8 mm, carapace width 69,7 mm, carapace height 41,1 mm and live mass 131,6 g. The specimen was photographed and deposited in the herpetological collection of the Transvaal Museum (TM 68250).

The collection of this specimen on the Kruger National Park border does not greatly extend the known range of the species, but does indicate the presence of the species within the park. Together with the leopard tortoise *Geochelone pardalis* and the savannah hinged tortoise *Kinixys spekii*, it brings the number of terrestrial tortoise species known from the Kruger National Park to three. Other recorded localities in the eastern Transvaal are Manyeleti Game Reserve (2431Cb - TM 64809), Hoedspruit (2430Bd - TM 65799) and Mananga Kop, 60 km south of Komatipoort (2531 Dd - TM 59180) where it occurs in sympatry with *Kinixys spekii* (Boycott & Jacobsen 1988).

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