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PSAMMOPHIIDAE
Psammophis trigrammus
GÜNTHER, 1865
Western Sand Snake

R. VAN HUYSSTEEN, C.R. HUNDERMARK & M. PETFORD

The Western Sand Snake (*Psammophis trigrammus*) is considered a peripheral species in South Africa, occurring along the Orange River in the far north of the Northern Cape Province (Branch 1998; Broadley 2002; Bates et al. 2014) and is currently only known from the Richtersveld region (Bauer and Branch 2001). The species has a much wider distribution in Namibia, occurring further east along the north bank of the Orange River (Manamela & Ranwashe 2020, Ueda 2020). In this note, we report two observations of *P. trigrammus* which indicate that this species has a wider range in South Africa than previously recorded.

While on a hike at Aggeneys, Northern Cape Province, South Africa (29° 11' 38.5188" S, 18° 52' 12.2808" E, QDS 2918BB, 932 m a.s.l.) at approximately 22:30 PM on 14 October 2020, RVH and MP came across a dead *P. trigrammus* on the track (Fig. 1). The snake appeared to have been recently killed (as indicated by the fresh blood and the fact that *rigor mortis* had not set in) by a mammalian predator based on the damage inflicted. The snake was identified as *P. trigrammus* by the distinct longitudinal stripes; the yellowish belly; the 5th and 6th supralabials touching the eye; and a divided anal scale (Branch 1998; Broadley 2002; Marais 2004). This record was uploaded to

iNaturalist and can be viewed at <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/63960597>.

On the afternoon of 28 October 2017, CRH and Tristan Russell recorded a dead *P. trigrammus* (Fig. 2) in the parking area at Augrabies Falls National Park reception (28° 35' 35.4"S, 20° 20' 15.2" E, QDS 2820CB, 626 m a.s.l.), presumably killed by a vehicle. This individual was identified using the same characteristics as the previous record. This record was uploaded to the ReptileMAP virtual Museum and can be viewed at <http://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=ReptileMAP-162974>.



Figure 1. Dead Western Sand Snake (*Psammophis trigrammus*) from Aggeneys, showing striping and diagnostic head scalation. Photo: R. van Huyssteen and M. Petford.

The Aggeneys record represents a range extension of 45 km from the nearest Namibian record (Ueda 2020) and is 189 km east of the nearest South African record in the Richtersveld National Park (<https://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=ReptileMAP-8412>). It is also the most southerly record for the species. CRH initially suspected that the Augrabies Falls National Park record was a potential translocation as it was found within the car park, which is frequently visited by travellers, and was 310 km east of the Richtersveld records (which at the time were the nearest South African records). However, the Aggeneys record suggests that the Augrabies Falls National Park record, which is 157 km to the east, likely represents a valid range extension. Therefore, the Augrabies Falls National Park record is now the easternmost record of this species in South Africa. These two new records indicate that *P. trigrammus* is not solely restricted to the Richtersveld in South Africa, with the now most easterly record 310 km away, and is likely to be more widespread in the arid regions of the Northern Cape Province than previously thought.



Figure 2. Dead Western Sand Snake (*Psammophis trigrammus*) from Augrabies Falls National Park, as found in the reception parking area. Photo: C.R. Hundermark.

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