

Project Update: February 2010

Since receiving funding from RSG this project has moved from strength to strength, and we have achieved several of our objectives. Some of the research highlights are described below.

The mark-recapture project that we have been conducting has provided some striking results. Initial results indicate that in suitable habitat, Namaqua dwarf adders occur at high population densities. Such areas may host up to 18 adults per ha, making our study population one of the densest populations of snakes recorded in Africa. This finding has important implications for conservation as previous conservation assessments may have underestimated the size of the global population.

Data from radio tagged snakes have also provided valuable insights into habitat use and behaviour of Namaqua dwarf adders. We have demonstrated that individuals generally exhibit strong site fidelity, with most male and female snakes utilizing small home ranges. Such findings have important implications for gene flow among populations of this threatened species. One possible implication of the sedentary nature of these animals is that populations separated by large areas of unsuitable habitat may show significant genetic divergence. This idea would need to be empirically tested in the future, and would have important conservation implications for the species.



Left: NDA fitted with radio transmitter. Right: Regurgitated prey item from juvenile NDA.