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Type specimens in the Port Elizabeth Museum, South Africa, including the historically important Albany Museum collection. Part 1: Amphibians

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Abstract

The Port Elizabeth Museum houses the consolidated herpetological collections of three provincial museums of the Eastern Cape, South Africa: the Port Elizabeth Museum (Port Elizabeth), the Amatole (previously Kaffarian) Museum (King Williams Town), and the Albany Museum (Grahamstown). Under John Hewitt, Albany Museum was the main centre of herpetological research in South Africa from 1910–1940, and he described numerous new species, many based on material in the museum collection. The types and other material from the Albany Museum are now incorporated into the Port Elizabeth Museum Herpetology collection (PEM). Due to the vague typification of much of Hewitt's material, the loss of the original catalogues in a fire and the subsequent deterioration of specimen labels, the identification of this type material is often troublesome. Significant herpetological research has been undertaken at the PEM in the last 35 years, and the collection has grown to be the third largest in Africa. During this period, numerous additional types have been deposited in the PEM collection, generated by active taxonomic research in the museum. As a consequence, 43 different amphibian taxa are represented by 37 primary and 151 secondary type specimens in the collection. This catalogue provides the first documentation of these types. It provides the original name, the original publication date, journal number and pagination, reference to illustrations, current name, museum collection number, type locality, notes on the type status, and photographs of all holotypes and lectotypes. Where necessary to maintain nomenclatural stability, and where confused type series are housed in the PEM collection, lectotypes and paralectotypes are nominated.

Key words: Amphibia, Port Elizabeth Museum, Albany Museum, types

Introduction

The Port Elizabeth Museum (hereafter PEM) is situated in the Bayworld complex, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Established in 1856, it is the third oldest museum of the old Cape Province (restructured into the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape provinces in 1995). Herpetological studies at the museum date back to the early part of the last century, with the appointment of Frederick William FitzSimons as Director (1906–1936), and the formation in 1919 of the first Snake Park in Africa (Pringle 1941). The snake park, which was also the world's second, has been situated within the museum complex ever since.

Frederick W. FitzSimons, born in Londonderry, Ireland, was only 35 when he was appointed Director of the Port Elizabeth Museum, a post he held until his retirement 31 years later. Although he organised amongst other things the collections and displays as well as public functions, his main interest was in snakes. The new Snake Park became a major tourist attraction. He rapidly established himself as an authority on local snakes with the publication of several books, including *The Snakes of South Africa: their Venom and the Treatment of Snake Bite* (FitzSimons 1910, 1912), of which the second, expanded edition was one of the first popular books on snakes published anywhere in English. Two subsequent books, *Pythons and their Ways* (FitzSimons 1930), and *Snakes* (FitzSimons 1932), the second also published in German, confirmed his local and international herpetological status. However, although he was a great promoter of snakes, F.W. FitzSimons did no significant herpetological

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