

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SUBMITTED BY:

**JENS REISSIG**, P.O.Box 62, Kelvin, 2054. Gauteng, South Africa.  
E-mail: jens@ultimatecreatures.com

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## COLUBRIDAE

### *Amblyodipsas polylepis* (Bocage, 1873) Common Purple-glossed Snake

#### Mimicry

On the evening of 8 February 2014, at approximately 20:00 an adult Common Purple-glossed Snake (*Amblyodipsas polylepis*) was encountered on a dirt road in the Crocriver Conservancy near Mbombela, Mpumalanga, South Africa (25°353'15.51" S; 31°08'28.15"E; 700 m.a.s.l). Accessioned into the Reptile Map Virtual Museum as SARCA No. 151657. While photographing the snake it began to exhibit stereotypical defensive behaviour, including hiding the head under body coils, and raising the tail tip (Marais 2004). However, further handling of the snake with large forceps resulted in an as yet undescribed stereotyped defensive behaviour that resembled the defensive hood-spreading typical of a cobra (*Naja*). While keeping the head protected under body coils the snake dorso-ventrally flattened the last 120 mm of the body, and curled the tail tip perpendicular to the body (Fig. 1). In doing so, it assumed a replica position of those adopted by defensive *Naja*. When the body of the snake was grasped gently using a pair of forceps, the snake twisted the body so that the "hood" was facing the point of contact in the same way that a cobra follows a moving threat. Additionally, the snake would arc its body in a manner that imitated an artificial strike, such that the tip of the tail (= the cobra's head) would contact the forceps.

*Naja* species. occur through the geographic distribution of *A. polylepis* (Branch 1998, Spawls *et al.* 2002), suggesting that they would make an appropriate mimic

model. Moreover, the hooding behaviour of *Naja* spp. represents an unambiguous anti-predatory display that is likely understood by numerous predators of snakes. We are uncertain as to the prevalence of such behaviour, and concede that our interpretation of such posturing may represent nothing more than coincidental similarity. However the similarity between the posture and movements observed and those displayed by *Naja* is striking, and certainly warrant further investigation.

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## SUBMITTED BY:

**BRYAN MARITZ**, School of Animal, Plant, & Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, P.O. Wits, 2050, South Africa. E-mail:

bryanmaritz@gmail.com; **JOHN L. BLACKBURN**, 2133 South Turkey Creek Rd., Portal, AZ, USA, 85632 & **PAUL HUANG**, 10 Warner Rd., Los Lunas, NM, USA, 87031.



**Figures 1-3: While handling the snake it began to show stereotypical defensive behaviour including hiding the head under body coils and raising the tail tip. Further handling with forceps resulted in behaviour resembling that of a spread hood.**