

Eggs and nesting of the Mozambique Agama, *Agama mossambica* Peters, 1854, in Mozambique (Agamidae)

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During a field trip in the area of Nhica do Rovuma, northern Mozambique (10°45.36'S, 40°13.06'E) on 30 November 2009 (Ineich, 2011), I observed a female *Agama mossambica* Peters, 1854 laying her eggs at 10:45 am. Herein I describe the nest and indicate egg size and number. The nest was dug by the female in loose and sandy soil at about 5 cm deep only (Figure 1). Rain had just begun very slowly one day before our observation, made nearly at the end of the dry season. Even though it was not heavy rain, the soil was relatively humid that day and the rainy season was about to start soon after.

Once disturbed the female was not fearful. It had the characteristic purple or orange dorsal coloration and marks (Figure 2).

I dug the nest and took out five elongated eggs (Figure 3). I measured the eggs with a caliper: 14.97x9.55, 15.37x10.17, 14.02x8.98, 15.08x9.25, and 15.45x9.29 mm. Mean size and standard deviation were 14.978 +/- 0.466x9.448 +/- 0.368 mm (n=5), not far from 15x9.5 mm.

According to the venter size and shape of the female on Figure 2 after laying five eggs, I conclude that not all eggs were certainly laid. My observation lasted about 45 minutes. The female was released and not preserved so it was not possible to make a dissection to see if eggs

were left in the genital tract, which is likely. However Alexander and Marais (2007) indicated 5-18 eggs for several South African *Agama* species including *A. mossambica*. Anyway, even if not complete, those data are, at the best of my knowledge, the first time egg size is indicated for the species in natural conditions (Spawls *et al.*, 2002; Alexander & Marais, 2007; Wagner, 2010). Barbour & Loveridge (1928) mentioned 6-10 eggs from oval (15x9 mm) to round (8 mm) for the closely related *Agama montana* Barbour & Loveridge, 1928.



Figure 1. *Agama mossambica* female beneath the nest it dug in loose sand in the middle of a path.



Figure 2. The female of *A. mossambica* with the laid eggs on the left, before I dug them out for measurement.



Figure 3. The five eggs *in situ* as laid by the female in a hole about 5 cm deep in loose humid sand.

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