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Calls For Information

Is there a Zanzibar leopard in your collection?

For about ten years Dr Martin Walsh and I have been investigating the Zanzibar leopard (*Panthera pardus adersi*), an endemic subspecies found on the main island of the Zanzibar archipelago, off the coast of Tanzania (East Africa). In international scientific circles, the Zanzibar leopard is generally assumed to have been extirpated during recent decades, though Zanzibaris (who associate the leopard with witchcraft) continue to report leopard sightings and attacks on livestock. We've presented our findings in several peer-reviewed and popular publications, which we are happy to send electronically to anyone interested.

To our knowledge, leopards' skins (sometimes accompanied by skulls) documented to have originated in Zanzibar (all collected pre-WWII) are located in just three museums: Zanzibar's Museum of Natural History; the Natural History Museum in London; and the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I've had the opportunity to examine first-hand all of these specimens.

We would be very grateful for tips leading us to Zanzibar leopard skins (or other parts!) stored in museum collections elsewhere. More generally, we're interested in any information relating to the Zanzibar leopard and hunting in Zanzibar.

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Broad-headed snake enquiry

The broad-headed *Hoplocephalus bungaroides* (Reptilia: family Elapidae) is probably the most endangered snake in Australia. Its range is only about 250 kilometres radius of Sydney, and it is threatened by urbanization and by rock removal for landscaping. Its decline was noticed as early as 1869 by Gerard Krefft, Director of the Australian Museum, and author of the first book on Australian snakes. Krefft stated in this work that he sent "many hundreds" of specimens of *H. bungaroides* as gifts or on exchange to unnamed "kindred institutions" and to specimen dealers in the 1860s and 1870s. Hence, we are now undertaking a worldwide search of zoological collections for this species.

We have so far found only a small number of specimens preserved in museums and related institutions outside Australia, including Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Austria, Denmark and in the Netherlands. Only about 10 specimens we have found can definitely be attributed to Krefft. For example, in the United Kingdom we have so far found 7 specimens in two museums (Natural History Museum, London and Oxford University Museum of Natural History), but only one of these specimens is attributed to Krefft or as a gift from the Australian Museum. We are seeking help from curators of zoological collections to check on whether *Hoplocephalus bungaroides* is present or absent from their holdings.

If it is absent from your collection, could you please send me a quick email to confirm that for my tabulations. If it is present, it would be greatly appreciated if you could advise me of specimen/registration numbers as well as collection dates and localities, collector name, specimen type (i.e. spirit or skeleton) and other details that may be recorded with the specimens, such as sex, age (adult or juvenile), and length.

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