

Possible Rare Scorpion in Kruger

By Hendrik Sithole and Ian Engelbrecht

There are more than 20 scorpion species that have been recorded within KNP. These records date from as far back as the 1960s to the recent study by Prof. Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman of the Arachnida Unit of the Agricultural Research Council's Biosystematics Division. In October 2005, Ian Engelbrecht and Martin Paulsen visited the Letaba area to collect arachnids for the National Collection at the Arachnida Unit. On this particular expedition they collected a rare scorpion species, *Uroplectes chubbi*, just north of Letaba Restcamp. This is only the second record for this species from the KNP, the first having been collected by Dr. U. de V. Pienaar and his team in 1962 and 1963 at Matukwane, west of Punda Maria (see Kudu no. 7).

Uroplectes chubbi, a member of the family Buthidae, looks very similar superficially to *U. vittatus*, a much more common species in the park which occurs on trees and dead wood. The difference is that *Uroplectes chubbi* has dark hands on the pincers, and lots of little dimples on the ventral and lateral surfaces of its tail segments. These surfaces are smooth in *U. vittatus*. While *U. vittatus* is often responsible for scorpion stings when people collect firewood from the veld, neither it nor *U. chubbi* can cause any more serious effects than intense pain at the site of the sting in humans.

Within South Africa there are a few scattered records for this species from north of the Soutpansberg, and several more in the western parts of Zimbabwe. It is not known why *U. chubbi* is rare in South Africa, but it could simply be a result of under-sampling in the right habitats for this species.



Uroplectes chubbi. Photo: I. Engelbrecht.



Uroplectes vittatus. Photo: A. Mathie