

Unexplored Corner: Herpetological Surveys

In this project, biodiversity data will be mobilised for two major groups of vertebrates from an area of South Africa that is unexplored for these groups, but where infrastructure development is set to take place. Given that South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, infrastructure development must be achieved responsibly, drawing from biodiversity data and ensuring conservation of species. Prior to development, evidence based Strategic Environmental Assessments must be carried out. Currently, there are little to no data available for reptiles and amphibians in the western North-West Province yet the region is targeted for expansion of road, rail, energy and water transmission, as well as mining and agriculture. We propose to survey targeted sites in this area to collect 600 primary biodiversity records for reptiles and amphibians. These primary data will be incorporated in the SPECIFY database at the South African National Biodiversity Institute, and be used directly to support key conservation initiatives and products, such as updated Conservation Sector Plans, RedList Assessments, RedList Indices, and spatial products for the National Biodiversity Assessment. In addition, we will produce DNA 80 barcodes, which will be used to provide baselines and identifications. This information will be useful for informing the design of follow-up phylogenetic studies, and ultimately for informing taxonomy, ensuring that national species check-lists reflect the best knowledge.