

mens are similar in other aspects of scalation and body proportions, and both exhibit the described typical characters of the new species. ZFMK 88684 lacks the lower parts of the body because it was recovered from a cat, which had partially eaten it. Therefore, it was not designated as a paratype, but it is useful for comparisons of head and anterior body characteristics.

Colouration in life: Nuptial colouration of adult males unknown. Non-nuptial males with sandy-white ground colour laterally to brownish on upper parts of body, and with a distinct large black patch on shoulders (Fig. 2a). Enlarged body scales pale sandy-whitish, distinct from ground colour. Head and throat dirty whitish. Subadult males likely show the adult female colouration (Fig. 3), similar to other taxa of the complex (e.g., KLAUSEWITZ 1953, 1957, WAGNER et al., unpubl. data): upper parts of head brownish, becoming pale bluish laterally. Upper and lateral parts of body brownish on upper parts, with black patch on shoulders and irregular transverse black lines on flanks. Some enlarged whitish scales form indistinct transverse rows. Ju-

veniles (only known from photographs, Fig. 4) brownish with a black patch on shoulders, sometimes with a pale blue head. Four dark brown, broad transverse bands between limbs, each with a diamond-shaped, whitish patch in the vertebral region, and margins of enlarged scales yellow. Upper and lateral parts of tail with brown and whitish bands. Colouration of females unknown due to the long-term preservation of the only known specimens, but they also possess an obvious large black patch on the shoulders similar to those found in males.

Distribution: The new species is known from localities within the Luangwa (Chipata, Chikowa, Sayiri Court) and Zambezi (Lusaka) valleys in Zambia. In Lusaka, it is known from several localities: Great East Road, Makishi Road, both within the city, and the Pioneer Camp about 25 km outside Lusaka on the road to Malawi, and from about 80 km ENE of Lusaka. It is also known from areas between these two regions (Katete, Petauka). In Malawi, it has been found in Lilongwe, the Chongoni Forest Reserve, southeast of Lilongwe, and Chikowa. Very recently



Figure 3. Subadult male paratype (alive) of *Acanthocercus branchi* sp. n. (ZFMK 88683) from opposite the Manda Hill Shopping Centre, Lusaka, Zambia.

(March 2012) the first author also recognized the species from Ruwa (-17.895359, 31.242528) near Harare, Zimbabwe. A specimen was seen sitting on a stump within the garden of the municipality.

Habitat and ecology: This new species is a tree dweller as it is typical for the *A. atricollis* complex (REANEY & WHITING 2003), although not for all subspecies (WAGNER unpubl. data). In Chipata, it was collected in dense Miombo woodland with large trees and a structured canopy. In Lusaka, it was captured on a solitary tree. At both localities, other individuals were also observed, but it was not possible to identify them as males or females. Specimens from Pioneer Camp were observed while climbing on tree trunks.

Etymology: This new species is named in honour of our friend and colleague WILLIAM ROY BRANCH, in recogni-

tion of his important contributions to our knowledge of African amphibians and reptiles over several decades, and in commemoration of his nominal retirement as curator of herpetology at the Port Elizabeth Museum (Bayworld).

Discussion

Referring to sibling species, BICKFORD et al. (2006) defined cryptic species as two or more species that are or have been recognized as a single nominal species, because they are at least superficially morphologically indistinguishable. We follow this definition but suggest that, if the species are differentiated by DNA sequence data, it will often subsequently be possible to find differences in morphology or mating signals. A preliminary morphological and genetic review (WAGNER et al., unpubl. data) of the *A. atricol-*



Figure 4. Two juveniles of *Acanthocercus branchi* sp. n. of unknown sex, both from the Pioneer Camp East of Lusaka, Zambia.