



Conservation status  
of the  
**reptiles**  
of South Africa, Eswatini  
and Lesotho

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SURICATA 10

## Family Typhlopidae

### *Afrotyphlops bibronii* (Smith, 1846)

Bibron's Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

#### Previous Red List categories:

2018: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

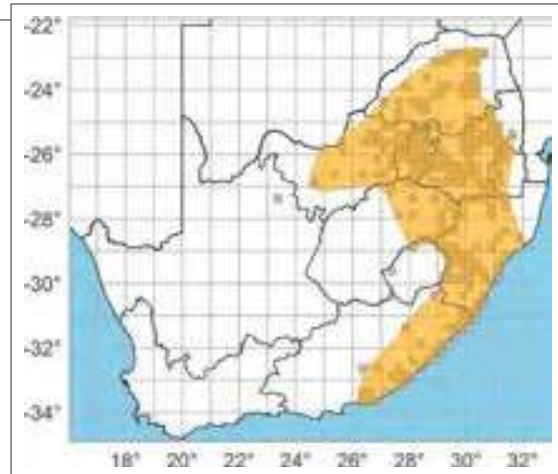
2017: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern (Regional assessment).

**Assessment rationale:** A widespread and common species with no major threats.

**Taxonomic notes:** There is an isolated subpopulation in eastern Zimbabwe that could potentially represent a separate taxon. *Other important names:* *Typhlops bibronii*.

**Distribution:** This species is distributed across eastern and northern South Africa, extending into extreme southeastern Botswana (Broadley & Wallach 2009; Broadley & Blaylock 2013). It is unlikely to occur in southern Mozambique as had been previously thought (Broadley 1990b). There are several isolated records from southeastern Free State province and adjacent Lesotho. There is also an isolated



subpopulation in eastern Zimbabwe (Nyanga and Chimanimani districts) and possibly in adjacent western Mozambique (Broadley 1990a; Broadley & Wallach 2009; Broadley & Blaylock 2013). *EOO:* 665 000 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution:* 398 000 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Countries of occurrence:** Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

**Habitat and ecology:** Burrows in loose soil, entering the upper strata, or appearing on the soil surface especially after rain in search of macro-invertebrate prey items (Broadley 1990a). Occurs in old termitaria and under rocks and rotting logs (De Waal 1978; Jacobsen 1989) at elevations from sea level to 2 000 m a.s.l. (Broadley & Wallach 2009). *Habitat:* Grassland, Savanna.

**Threats:** No significant threats.

**Population trend:** The population size is assumed to be stable because this is a widespread species with large parts of the range that are not impacted by habitat transformation.

**Conservation and research recommendations:** The subpopulation in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe requires a taxonomic assessment, and the occurrence of this species in Mozambique requires confirmation. Material from the contact areas, especially in the Lebombo Mountains, between this species and *A. fornasinii* should be checked for identification.



*Afrotyphlops bibronii*, East London, Eastern Cape province (© C. Keates).



## Family Typhlophidae

*Afrotyphlops fornasinii* (Bianconi, 1849)

Fornasini's Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

**Previous Red List categories:**

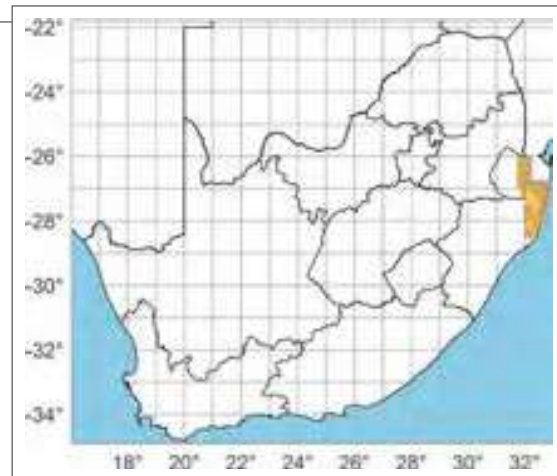
2021: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern (Regional assessment).

**Assessment rationale:** Although the South African portion of the range is not large, the species is common and appears to be tolerant of moderate habitat change.

**Taxonomic notes:** The taxonomic status of the insular populations off the coast of Mozambique and the population in southeastern Zimbabwe are not known. *Other important names:* *Typhlops fornasinii*.

**Distribution:** Occurs from the coastal plains of northern South Africa, northwards into southern



Mozambique, including the adjacent offshore islands. An apparently isolated population occurs in southeastern Zimbabwe (Broadley 1990b, 1990b; Branch 1998; Broadley & Wallach 2009). *EOO*: 20 180 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution*: 15 300 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Countries of occurrence:** Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

**Habitat and ecology:** Occurs in coastal sand associated with leaf litter (Branch 1998), at elevations lower than 100 m a.s.l. (Broadley & Wallach 2009). *Habitat*: Forest, Grassland.

**Threats:** There are no substantial threats to this species.

**Population trend:** The population size is assumed to be stable because this is a widespread species with portions of the range that are not significantly impacted by habitat transformation.

**Conservation and research recommendations:** Surveys of the intervening sections of the Mozambique plain would assist in assessing whether the population in southeastern Zimbabwe is truly disjunct.



*Afrotyphlops fornasinii*, St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal province (© J. Marais).

## Family Typhlopidae

### *Afrotyphlops mucruso* (Peters, 1854)

Zambezi Giant Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

#### Previous Red List categories:

2021: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern as *Megatyphlops mucruso* (Regional assessment).

**Assessment rationale:** Although not often seen, this species is common and has a moderately large range in South Africa with no major threats.

**Taxonomic notes:** Recently Trape & Collet (2021) suggested reviving *Afrotyphlops dinga* for *A. mucruso*, but that is not yet widely accepted. *Other important names:* *Rhinotyphlops schlegelii mucruso*; *Megatyphlops mucruso*.

**Distribution:** Widespread across southern Africa, extending into central Africa, East Africa and Angola (Broadley 1990a; Broadley & Wallach 2009). In South Africa, it is restricted to extreme northern Limpopo province, north of the Soutpansberg, with a single isolated record in the central Kruger National Park (Broadley & Wallach 2009). *EOO:* 33 000 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution:* 15 000 km<sup>2</sup>.

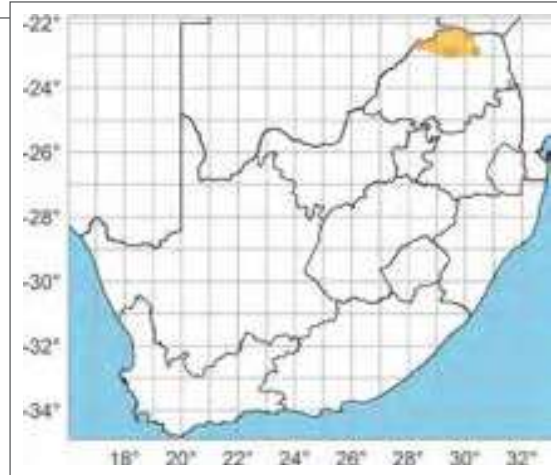
**Countries of occurrence:** Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**Habitat and ecology:** A fossorial species that occurs in relatively hard substrates, at elevations from sea level to 1 740 m a.s.l. (Broadley & Wallach 2009). *Habitat:* Savanna.

**Threats:** There are no substantial threats to this species.

**Population trend:** In spite of the small geographic range of this species regionally, it occurs in an area where there has been little habitat transformation. Population size is thus assumed to be stable.

**Conservation and research recommendations:** No recommendations.



*Afrotyphlops mucruso*, Waterpoort, Limpopo province (© R.I. Stander).

*Afrotyphlops mucruso*, Inhassoro, Mozambique (© L. Verburgt).





## Family Typhlopidae

*Afrotyphlops schlegelii* (Bianconi, 1849)

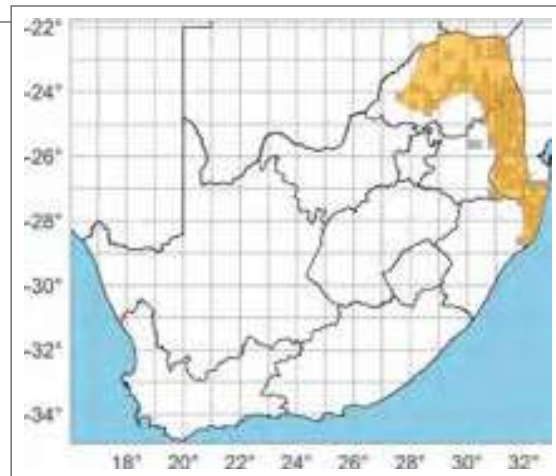
Schlegel's Giant Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

**Previous Red List categories:**

2021: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern as *Megatyphlops schlegelii* (Regional assessment).**Assessment rationale:** Widespread and common with no significant threats.**Taxonomic notes:** With the revision of the African Typhlopidae, *A. schlegelii petersii* was considered a junior synonym of *A. schlegelii* (Broadley & Wallach 2009). This has not been tested in a phylogenetic framework and needs further work. *Other important names:* *Rhinotyphlops schlegelii schlegelii*; *Rhinotyphlops schlegelii petersii*; *Megatyphlops schlegelii*.**Distribution:** Occurs in the northeastern regions of South Africa, from KwaZulu-Natal province northwards into much of central and western southern Africa (Broadley & Wallach 2009). Although this species has been mapped into North West province,*Afrotyphlops schlegelii*, Hoedspruit, Limpopo province (© D.W. Pietersen).

## Family Typhlopidae



*Afrotrophlops schlegelii*, Hoedspruit, Limpopo province (© D.W. Pietersen).

South Africa (<https://vmus.adu.org.za/>), this refers to a record from Botswana (Auerbach 1987). *EOO*: 218 290 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution*: 133 170 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Countries of occurrence:** Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa.

**Habitat and ecology:** A fossorial species that is most often observed when crossing roads after rain. It occurs at an elevational range from sea level to 1 200 m a.s.l. (Jacobsen 1989; Bourquin 2004). *Habitat*: Grassland, Savanna.



*Afrotrophlops schlegelii*, Hoedspruit, Limpopo province (© D.W. Pietersen).

**Threats:** There are no substantial threats to this species.

**Population trend:** The population size is assumed to be stable because this is a widespread and fairly common species with portions of the range that are not significantly impacted by habitat transformation.

**Conservation and research recommendations:** The taxonomic status of the synonym *A. s. petersii* should be evaluated in a phylogenetic framework.



## Family Typhlophidae

*Rhinotyphlops lalandei* (Schlegel, 1839)

Delalande's Beaked Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

**Previous Red List categories:**

2021: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern (Regional assessment).

**Assessment rationale:** This species is widespread and common with no known substantial threats.**Taxonomic notes:** No notable issues. *Other important names:* none.**Distribution:** Widespread across southern Africa from Mozambique westwards through South Africa to Namibia (Broadley & Wallach 2009; Pietersen et al. 2013). It is widespread regionally, although absent from KwaZulu-Natal province (east of the Drakensberg). *EOO:* 1 517 000 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution:* 1 048 000 km<sup>2</sup>.**Countries of occurrence:** Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe.**Habitat and ecology:** Fossorial, also occurring under rocks and rotting logs, and in moribund termitaria from near sea level to just over 1 400 m a.s.l. (DeWaal 1978; Jacobsen 1989; Broadley & Wallach 2009). *Habitat:* Grassland, Savanna, Shrubland.**Threats:** There are no substantial threats to this species.**Population trend:** The population size is assumed to be stable because this is a widespread and common species with portions of the range that are not significantly impacted by habitat transformation.**Conservation and research recommendations:** No recommendations.*Rhinotyphlops lalandei*, Beaufort West, Western Cape province (© L. Verburgt).

## Family Typhlopidae

### *Rhinotyphlops schinzi* (Boettger, 1887)

Schinz's Beaked Blind Snake

■ LC – Least Concern (Regional)

Assessor: Measey, J.

**Previous Red List categories:**

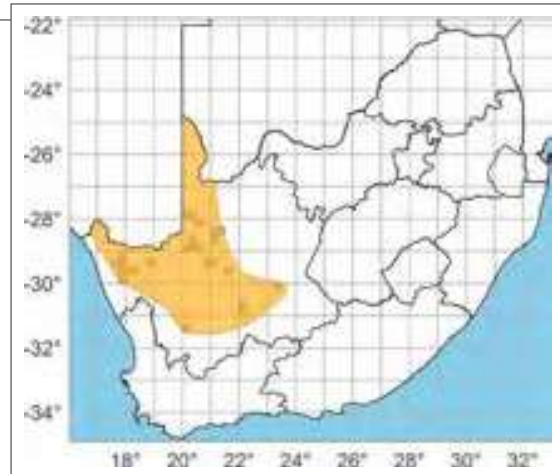
2020: Least Concern (Global IUCN assessment).

2014: Least Concern (Regional assessment).

**Assessment rationale:** Widespread, occurring in areas with relatively little habitat transformation.

**Taxonomic notes:** No notable issues. *Other important names:* none.

**Distribution:** Distributed in the more arid western regions of southern Africa (Broadley & Wallach 2009). Within South Africa, it occurs only in the Northern Cape



province from the central Karoo, northwards to the Kalahari and into Namaqualand. *EOO:* 288 000 km<sup>2</sup>; *Distribution:* 169 000 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Countries of occurrence:** Botswana, Namibia, South Africa.

**Habitat and ecology:** The beak of this snake suggests that it is capable of burrowing into hard ground in the arid zones that it inhabits. *Habitat:* Desert, Savanna, Shrubland.

**Threats:** There are no substantial threats to this species.

**Population trend:** Because this snake occurs mainly in arid regions that have not been significantly impacted by habitat transformation, the population size is not thought to have declined significantly.

**Conservation and research recommendations:** No recommendations.



*Rhinotyphlops schinzi*, Askham, Northern Cape province (© C. & S. Dorse).