

Special Chameleon 13 August 2008 - Source: nrc.nl

The chameleon '*Furcifer labordi*' spends more than half of his life in an egg. This has never been seen in any vertebrate on four legs. Researchers of Oklahoma State University made this amazing discovery on Madagascar.



The researchers have published their findings in the the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. *Furcifer labordi* is endemic in Madagascar.

In November the animals emerge from their eggs. The small chameleons have to look after themselves, as their parents have already passed away. They animals grow rapidly. After two months time they are grown up and ready to mate. Mating occurs in January and February. After this, the decline sets in. The animals lose weight daily and show signs of old age. Researchers saw chameleons that had difficulty to crawl over the branches just after mating or even lost their grip and fell down. Around April all chameleons were dead. Then the dry season starts on Madagascar. The eggs survive the dry season and in November, when the wet season starts, they crawl from the egg. During the dry season, no adult chameleons can be found.

Such short life span is very special for an invertebrate on four legs. It is only seen in insects. It is also unique that the different stadia run synchronous. The animals all emerge from the egg at the same time, mate around the same time, and die almost simultaneously.

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