

Two New Skinks (Lacertilia : Scincidae) from Western Australia

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Abstract

The new species are *Ctenotus ehmanni* from the far north of the State and *Lerista stictopleura* from the lower north-west.

Introduction

For reasons not yet understood, a considerable number of Australian lizards are very narrowly distributed. It takes a long time to locate such species in a State as vast as Western Australia. It is thus not surprising that new species of the large genera *Ctenotus* and *Lerista* should be found in areas where there was previously little or no collecting, namely the interior of north-west Kimberley and the country around Mt Augustus.

Systematics

Ctenotus ehmanni sp. nov.

Figure 1

Holotype

R83444 in Western Australian Museum, collected by Harry Ehmann and Greg Johnston on 25 November 1982 at 10 km WNW of Mt Elizabeth HS (Old), Western Australia, at 16°16'S, 126°08'E.

Paratypes

Kimberley Division (W.A.)

10 km WNW Mt Elizabeth HS (Old) (83445-6).

Diagnosis

A small brown-tailed member of the *Ctenotus colletti* group, agreeing with *C. colletti* in having the upper of two ear lobules very large and obtuse, but differing in having an upper lateral series of white spots, more numerous midbody scale rows (28-32, v. 22-27) and shorter tail (124-146% of SVL, v. 162-244).

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 37-41. Length of appendages (%SVL): foreleg 22-27, hindleg 41-46, tail 124-146.

Nasals in contact. Prefrontals separated. Supraoculars 4, first three in contact with frontal, first widest. Supracliarials 6 or 7, fourth to penultimate much smaller than others. Presuboculars 2. Upper labials 7. Ear lobules 2, upper semicircular and much the larger.

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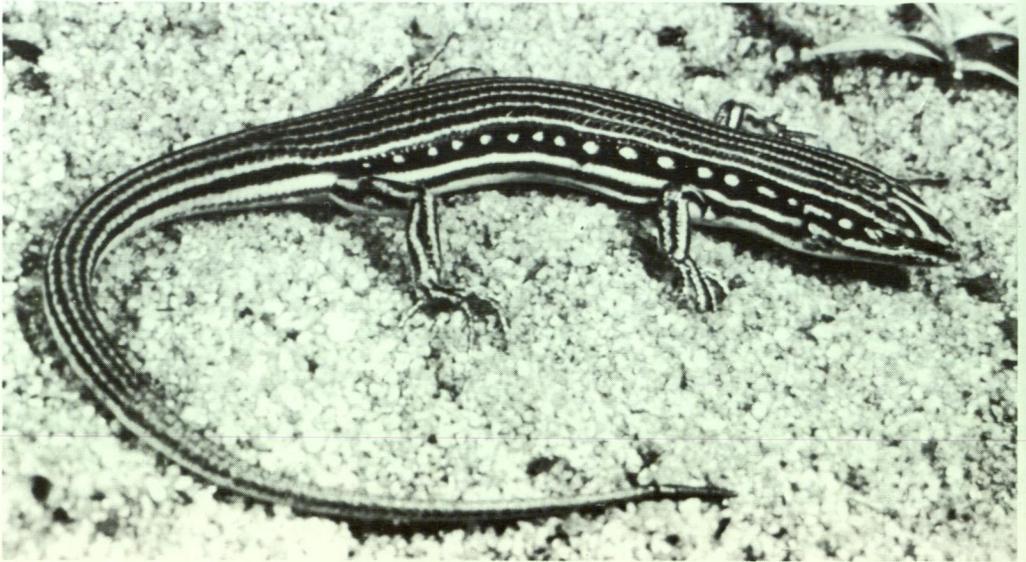


Figure 1 Holotype of *Ctenotus ehmanni*, photographed in life by Harry Ehmann.

Nuchals 2-6. Midbody scale rows 28-32. Toes compressed; 21-24 lamellae under fourth, each with a fine or narrow, dark-brown keel sometimes ending in a mucron.

Back blackish brown with 6 narrow brownish-white stripes (on each side a paravertebral, dorsal and dorsolateral), the dorsal and paravertebral stripes merging and becoming darker (i.e. pale brown) on tail. Anterior extensions of paravertebral stripes diverging as they follow edge of frontal and converging at tip of snout; dorsal stripe joining dorsolateral at second supraciliary, a little anterior of which dorsolateral stripe joins paravertebral. Side of body blackish brown, marked with an upper lateral series of white spots, a moderately broad, white midlateral stripe (extending forward through top of ear aperture and below eye to lore) and anteriorly a moderately broad, white ventrolateral stripe.

Distribution

Only known from one locality in the subhumid north-western interior of the Kimberley Division.

Remarks

These skinks were found on slightly elevated ground near the Hann River. The soil was sandy with outcropping and embedded quartzite and sandstone boulders. The vegetation was eucalypt woodland with sparse ground cover.

For descriptions of the closely related *C. colletti nasutus*, *C. c. colletti*, *C. c. rufescens* and *C. striaticeps*, see Storr (1969, 1975, 1979 and 1978 respectively).

Derivation of Name

After Mr Harry Ehmann of Sydney Technical College in appreciation of the splendid collection of Kimberley reptiles and frogs he donated to the Western Australian Museum.

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Lerista stictopleura sp. nov.

Figure 2

Holotype

R84198 in Western Australian Museum, collected by G. Harold and C. Winton on 20 August 1983 at 10 km WNW of Mt Augustus HS, Western Australia, in 24°17'S, 116°48'E.

Paratypes

North-West Division (W.A.)

10 km WNW Mt Augustus HS (84193-7, 84199-208); 22 km S Mt Augustus HS (84189-92).

Diagnosis

A medium-sized, moderately stout *Lerista* with relatively short snout, immovable eyelids, 1+2 digits, and conspicuously spotted sides.

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 42-58 (N 20, mean 50.4). Length of appendages etc (%SVL): foreleg 4-7 (N 20, mean 5.4), hindleg 18-24 (N 20, mean 21.2), tail 88-99 (N 10, mean 93.4), snout to foreleg 23-28 (N 20, mean 25.5).

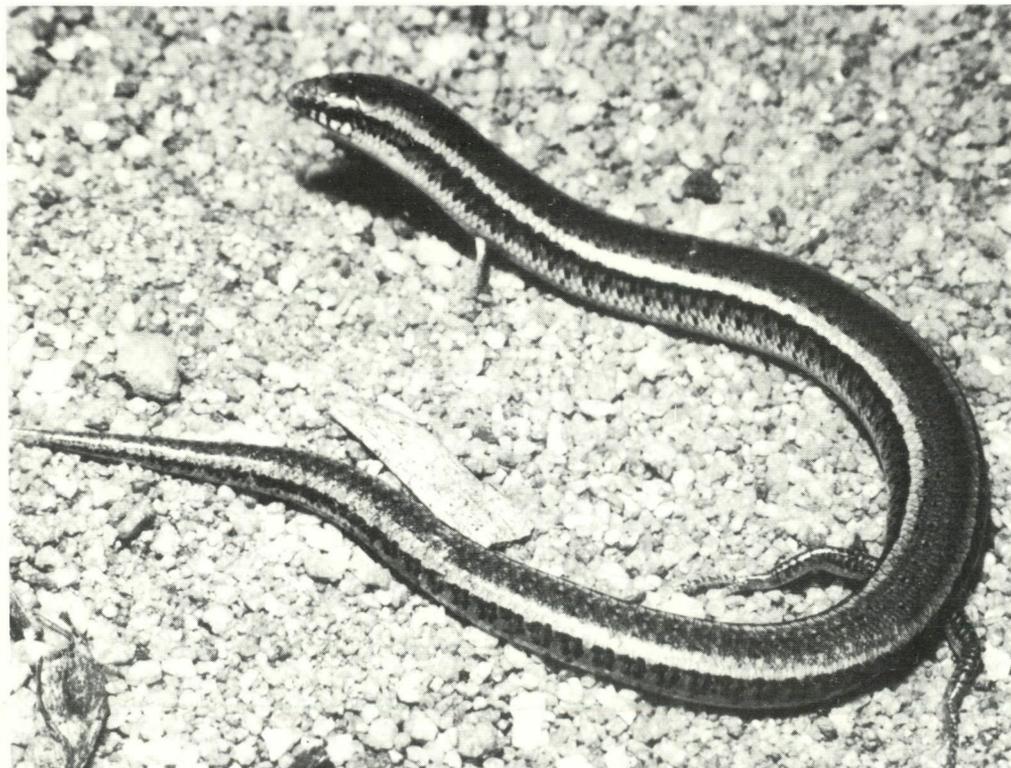


Figure 2

Holotype of *Lerista stictopleura*, photographed in life by G. Harold.

Nasals narrowly separated (N 15) or in point contact (5). Prefrontals widely separated. Frontoparietals in moderate to long contact (N 19) or very narrowly separated (1), as large as or smaller than interparietal. Nuchals 1-3 (N 20, mean 2.0). Supraoculars 3, first two in contact with frontal. Supraciliaries 4, last much the smallest. Loreals 2. Presubocular 1. Upper labials 6 (N 19) or 5(1). Temporals 2 + 2 (N 19; upper secondary > lower primary > upper primary > lower secondary) or 1 + 2 (1).

Upper surfaces orange-brown, except for narrow, pale orange-buff laterodorsal stripe; back with 4 series of short blackish-brown dashes, becoming paler on tail, where outer series soon disappears. Narrow black upper lateral stripe on body, represented on head by a loreo-temporal line of spots. Side of body orange-brown (upper half darker than lower), marked with 3-5 series of angular black spots, their longer axis vertical; uppermost spots largest and contiguous to upper lateral stripe. Upper labials pale except for dark posterior edge. Lower surfaces pale except for small blackish-brown spots on labials and adjacent scales.

Distribution

Only known from one small area in arid interior of North-West Division.

Remarks

All specimens were collected in litter or in soil beneath logs and stumps under sparse acacia shrubland growing on red sandy loams.

This is a very distinct species and cannot be allotted to any of the groups proposed by Storr (1972). In the reduction of the digits, *L. stictopleura* exceeds most members of the *macropisthopus* group, but in two other respects it is less adapted for a fossorial way of life: the snout is relatively blunt and non-protrusive in profile, and the body (as indicated by the relative length of foreleg to vent) is less elongate. The degree of fusion of head shields (judging from its three supraoculars, four supraciliaries, six upper labials and free frontoparietals and interparietal) is much the same as in the *macropisthopus* group, but its ablepharine eye and unique coloration set it well apart from all members of that group.

Derivation of Name

From Greek *stictos* (spotted) and *pleura* (side).

References

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