A New Species of Legless Skink *Anomalopus pluto* from Cape York Peninsula, Queensland

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Arnold (1966) noted that the group *Saiphos* had undergone a bewildering array of changes in status and definition and traced these through to Mittleman (1952). Cogger (1973, 1975) adjusted the latter's groupings by separating off *Saiphos* as a monotypic genus containing only *equalis*, and resurrecting *Anomalopus* to include only the Australian species of Mittleman's *Saiphos* and *Ophioscincus*. This proposed classification is a pragmatic exercise and no methodology for the decisions is given. So beyond mentioning that this new species keys out to *Anomalopus* in Cogger (1975: 242) and appears related to some of the included species, no justification can be offered for my generic placement. Greer and Cogger (pers. comm.) are, however, investigating generic classification in this group.

The only specimen of this new species available was collected from a small patch of monsoon forest 115 km south of Bamaga, Cape York, on Cockatoo Creek in July, 1975. Intensive searching to obtain other specimens was unsuccessful and because of the remoteness of the area, and shortage of time and finance, return to the area to obtain other specimens is not foreseeable in the near future. Thus the species description is based only on the holotype. This work was supported by a grant from the Australian Biological Resources Survey to study ecology and biogeography in Cape York (Chief Investigator, J. Kikkawa).

Anomalopus pluto sp. nov.

Holotype: Queensland Museum Number J26261, McDonald Crossing, Cockatoo Creek, 115 km S. of Bamaga, Cape York, 11° 33′ S, 142° 26′ E, collected by L. Webb, G. Monteith and G. Ingram, 14 July, 1975.

Diagnosis: A limbless skink with parietals contacting behind interparietal, no supranasals, lower eyelid scaly and moveable. Distinguished from *A. frontalis* by lower midbody scale rows (20 *vs* usually greater than 28), absence of prefrontals, and from *A. ophioscincus* by the penetration of the second supraocular to the upper ciliaries separating the last two supraciliaries, and from both of these species by a lower number of supraoculars (2 *vs* 3), paired and separated frontoparietals, and large nasal inserting between rostral and first upper labial.

Description: Snout-vent length 7.6 cm. Tail (regenerated) 3.9 cm. No supranasals. Nasal large, apparently fused with an upper labial such that it inserts between the rostral and the first upper labial. Rostral large, separating nasals and contacting frontonasals. Frontonasal about twice as broad as wide and contacts broadly the frontal, and narrowly the first loreal. Prefrontals absent, or greatly reduced such that they may be the first supra-

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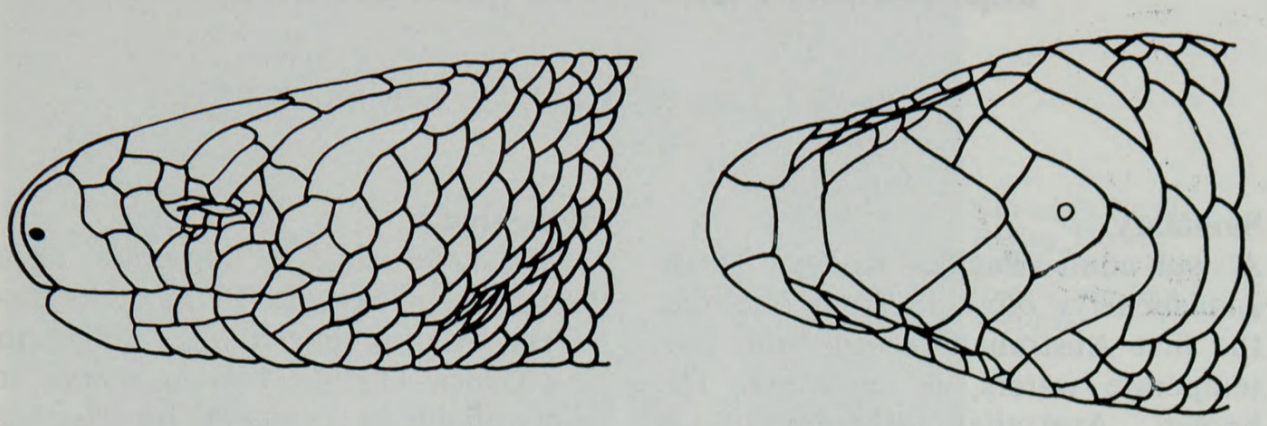

Fig. 1. Head of the holotype of *Anomalopus pluto* (QM J26261). A. Lateral view. B. Dorsal

ciliaries. Anterior and posterior loreals large. Frontal very large and bounded by the frontonasal, the first and second supraciliaries, the first supraoculars, the frontoparietals and the interparietal. Frontoparietals paired, separated and reduced. Interparietal large. Parietals large and contacting on midline. Nuchals enlarged, two symmetrical pairs. Temporals small. Two supraoculars, the second inserting between and separating the last two supraciliaries. Four supraciliaries, the first are the largest and may be reduced prefrontals. Three lower ciliaries, lower eyelid moveable and opaque, eyes much reduced. Four upper labials, no enlarged subocular, three lower labials. Two enlarged preanals.

Ear not abvious and covered by scales. No external limbs. Midbody scale rows 20, dorsals not enlarged, lateral and dorsal scales smooth. Colour in preservative, brown with a darker tail. The nasals, rostral and mental are covered with a milky dermis.

Remarks: The holotype was uncovered under leaf litter in a small patch of monsoon forest by Len Webb while he was looking for charcoal on the floor of the forest. *A.pluto* is apparently a very specialized burrowing skink as indicated by the loss, reduction and fusion of head shields, absence of limbs, and the small, reduced eyes.

The large frontal and nasals and the separated frontoparietals are not shared with the other legless *Anomalopus*, but the absent prefrontals are similar to the condition found in *A.ophioscincus*, while the penetration of the second supraocular to the upper ciliaries, displacing (or fusing with) a supraciliary is similar to *A.frontalis*.

This species is named after the god of the underworld, Pluto.

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