

New lizard named after Sir David Attenborough

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Platysaurus attenboroughi. Credit: M. Whiting

A research team led by Dr Martin Whiting from the Department of Biological Sciences recently discovered a beautifully coloured new species of flat lizard, which they have named *Platysaurus attenboroughi*,

after Sir David Attenborough.

Flat lizards belong to a lizard family, the Cordylidae, which is found only in Africa. While the majority of species in this family are live-bearing and most are brown or black (with some exceptions), the flat lizards stand out: they lay eggs and all are colourful. In fact, many of them are spectacularly coloured.

This species is appropriately named *Platysaurus* (flat lizard) because they are incredibly flat – designed to fit into the narrowest of crevices where they refuge from predators and hot or cold weather.

"We thought it fitting the lizard be named after the world-famous naturalist after he made famous a closely related flat lizard species in the BBC series *Life in Cold Blood*," said Dr Whiting.

Dr Whiting along with colleagues at the Australian National University spent time with Sir Attenborough in the field at Augrabies Falls National Park in South Africa where the BBC filmed Augrabies flat lizards in action.

"Flat lizards attracted my attention some years ago, and since then we have been working on understanding their social system, how colour functions in communication, and how the various species are related."

"It was during this process that we realised there were more [species](#) than currently described and there was a real need to uncover or build a 'family tree' for flat lizards. This is something our team is currently working on," said Dr Whiting.

More information: Whiting, Martin; Branch, William; Pepper, Mitzy; Keogh, Scott. A new species of spectacularly coloured flat lizard *Platysaurus* (Squamata: Cordylidae: Platysaurinae) from southern Africa.

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