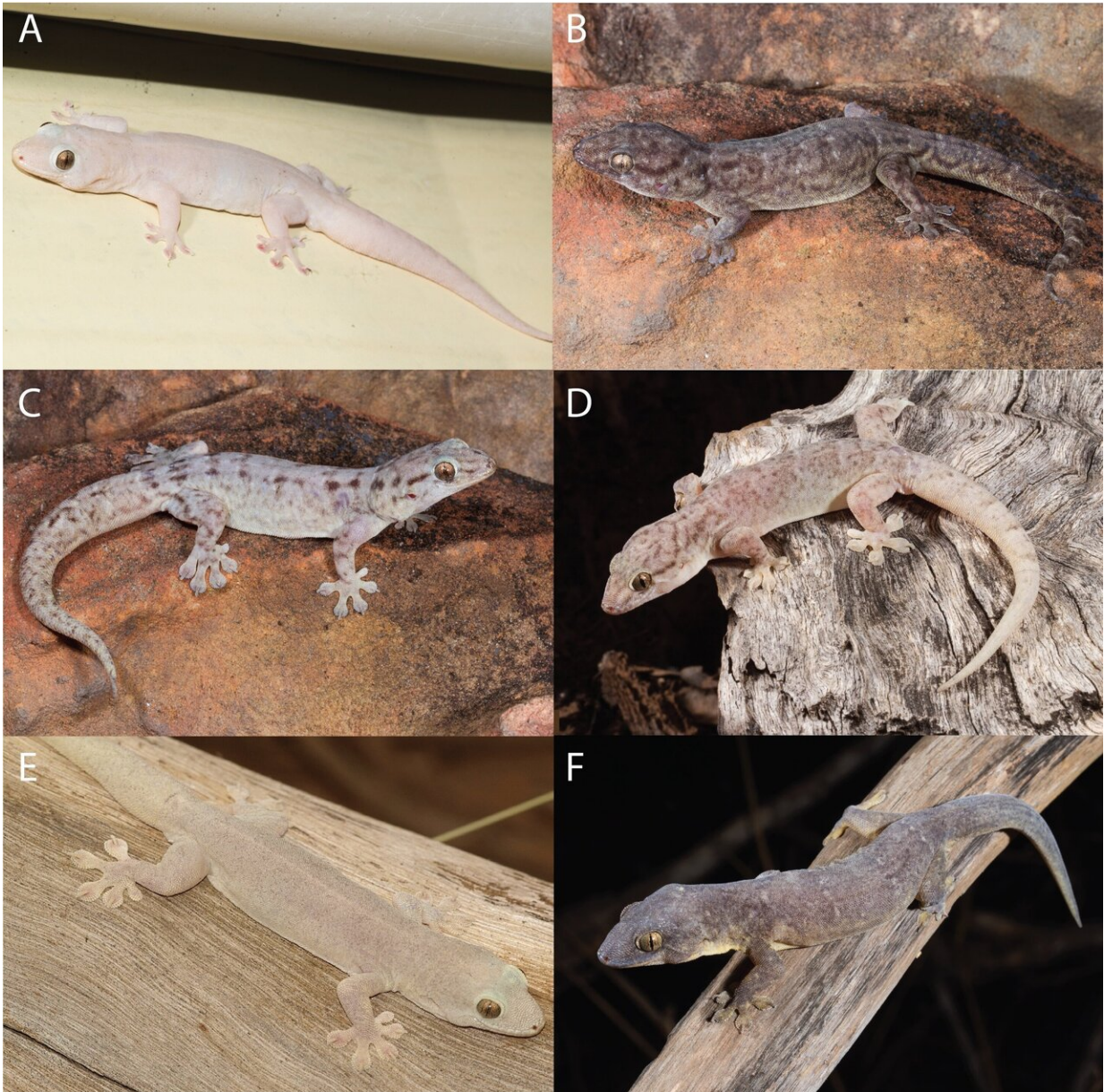


New species of gecko has been hiding in plain sight

March 5 2020



Credit: Queensland Museum

Six new species of gecko that have essentially been hiding in plain sight have been described by Queensland Museum scientists.

One of the [new species](#), named the plain tree gecko *Gehyra gemina*, is common on road houses and other building from Broome to the Queensland border, yet despite being widely found across northern Australia, the [species](#) was undescribed by [science](#) until now.

Queensland Museum Senior Curator and Griffith University researcher Dr. Paul Oliver said that this species is one of six new species from the genus *Gehyra*.

"This gecko, at first glance can look a lot like a common Asian House Gecko and can sometimes be dismissed as such, but in actual fact it's an Australian gecko and a new species," Dr. Oliver said.

"It has been hiding in [plain sight](#) this whole time and thanks to genetics we have been able to formally describe this species, along with five others."

Not all the species are hanging out in buildings along northern Australia's highways, three can be found in rocky outcrops, respectively in the Kimberley, south of Darwin and in the Mt Isa area.

Dr. Oliver said genetics were critical to identifying these new species.

"Genetics help us define species particularly when many really do look very similar to each other—there are some that I can't tell apart just by looking at them," Dr. Oliver said.

"New advances in genetics mean we can confidently say they really are not interbreeding, despite the fact that many look really similar.

"They may not look that different to us, but clearly they can tell each other apart."

Queensland Museum CEO Dr. Jim Thompson said that research is central to species identification.

"Research such as this highlights the importance taxonomy plays in the field of science and understanding our biodiversity," Dr. Thompson said.

"There is still much to learn about biodiversity in our country and museums play an important role in describing and conserving our natural history in Australia."

Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch said this discovery highlights the importance new technologies play in classifying new species.

"As technology advances, researchers are able to unlock information and data that allows them to increase our understanding the incredibly diverse array of species that inhabit our state," Minister Enoch said.

"Queensland Museum scientists are using the latest technology in DNA sequencing to describe six new species that were previously unknown to science.

"What I find fascinating is that people have had these [geckos](#) frequenting their homes and yards for years and not known they were living with a species unknown to science."

The paper with the new species was recently published in *PeerJ*.

More information: Paul M. Oliver et al. Crypsis and convergence: integrative taxonomic revision of the *Gehyra australis* group (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from northern Australia, *PeerJ* (2020). [DOI: 10.7717/peerj.7971](https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.7971)

Provided by Queensland Museum

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