Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile

Dragons

Language names

Antekakarle, Jiningka, Jirrkala, Kapalya, Kweleparr, Mutukalya, Nyarl, Pampirta, Rjimpilka, Tjimpilyka, Wiji

Dragon detections

The maps in this profile are based on data shared by data providers with the AZM project. Each blue dot shows a survey site where dragon species were recorded. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where dragon species were not recorded. These records were made by Indigenous Ranger groups, land councils, NGOs, government agencies and university researchers. In each map, the information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from the IUCN[1].

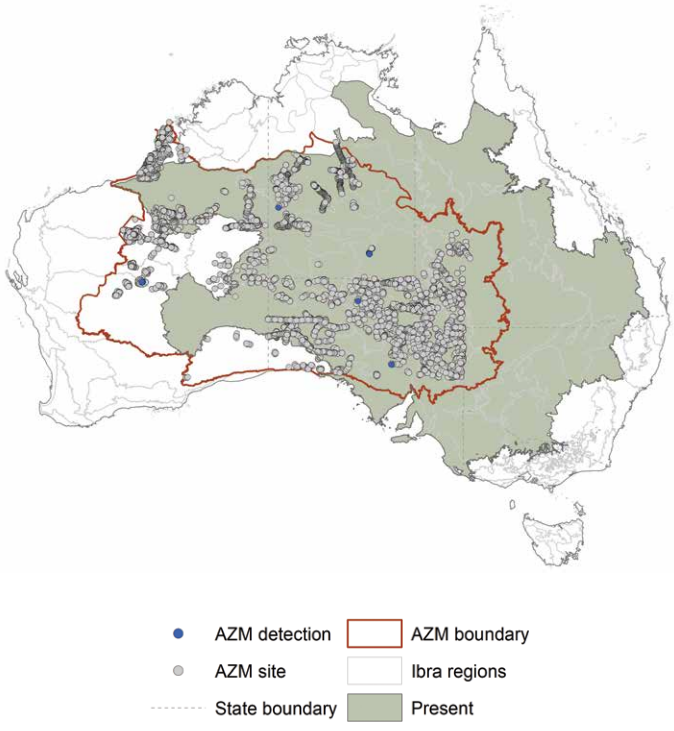
The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified. It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out over the past 40 years that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, please let us know.

Central bearded dragon

Pogona vitticeps

The central bearded dragon has a wide head, and a round "beard" of a row of spines on the throat and along the side of the body and back of the head. It can vary in colour and pattern from grey to rich orange, with light coloured blotches between the neck and hips. The species is found mostly in woodlands in arid and semi-arid habitats.

Central bearded dragon.

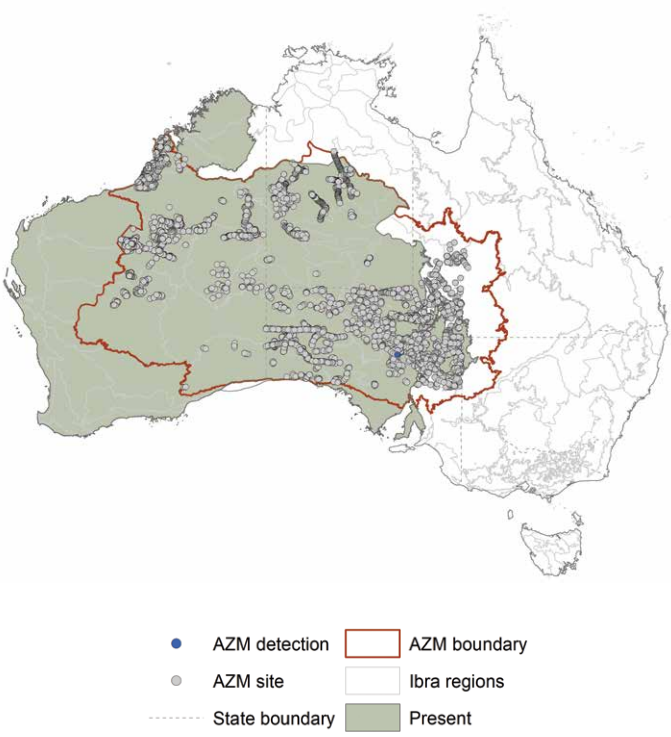


Western bearded dragon, dwarf bearded dragon

Pogona minor

A medium sized dragon up to about 38 cm long, usually dark brown to grey, with a spiny 'beard' of scales. It lives in woodlands, heathlands, dunes and desert country.

Western bearded dragon, dwarf bearded dragon.

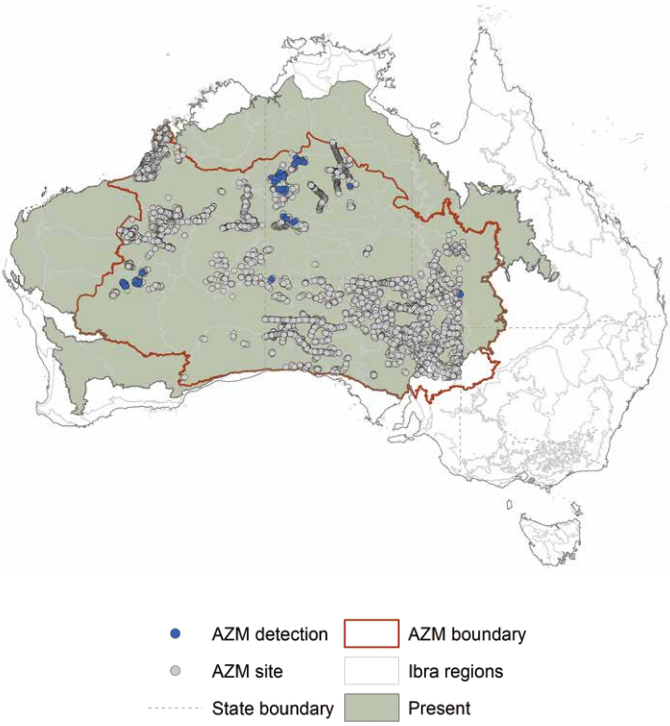


Central military dragon

Ctenophorus isolepis

This dragon is reddish brown with dark edged white spots and light stripes on the back and along the mid-body. Males have a thick stripe from the chin to the chest, throat and down the front legs. It is found in sandy deserts and loamy flats, and forages on bare ground between low open vegetation.

Central military dragon..

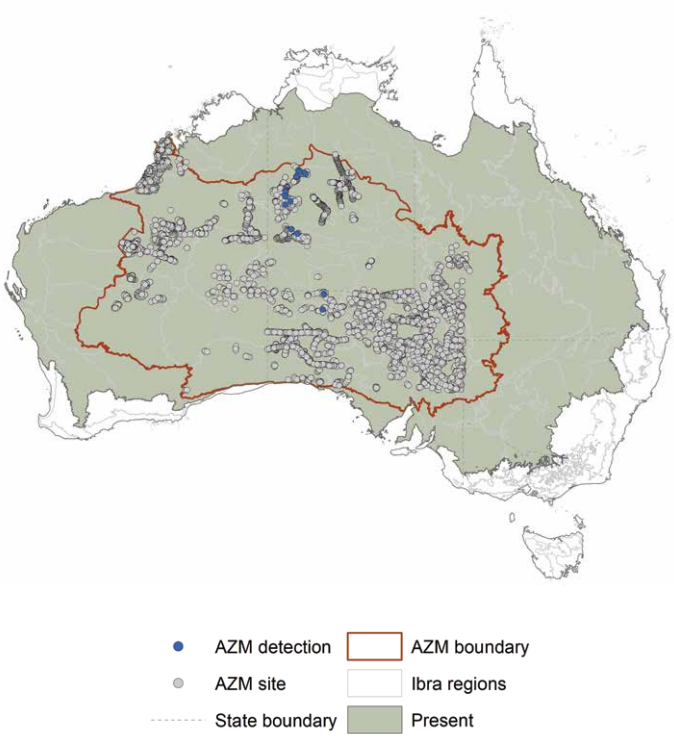


Central netted dragon

Ctenophorus nuchalis

This dragon has a round head, with a blunt snout and short limbs and tail, and small spines on the back of the head. It is pale yellowish brown with a dark netted pattern and a pale stripe on the back. It can have a bright orange head and throat during breeding season. It is often seen sunbaking up high and sheltering in burrows in the base of stumps and shrubs. The species is widespread, and common in recently burnt areas.

Central netted dragon.

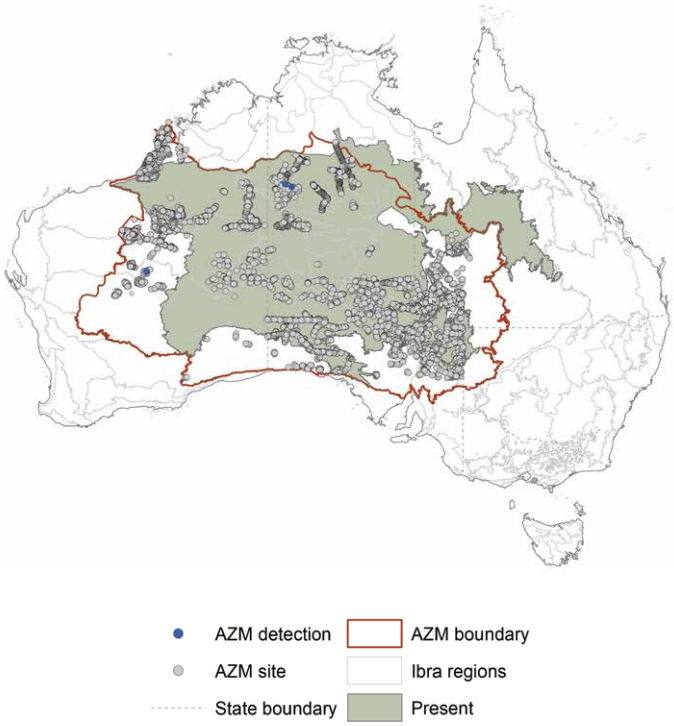


Pebble dragon (or earless dragons)

***Tympanocryptis* spp.**

Pebble dragons are greyish brown to reddish brown, redder on legs with pale lines along the back. They have a distinctive head shape, and hidden ears (no external ear structures). All arid zone species of pebble dragons are found in stony hills and plains.

Pebble dragon.

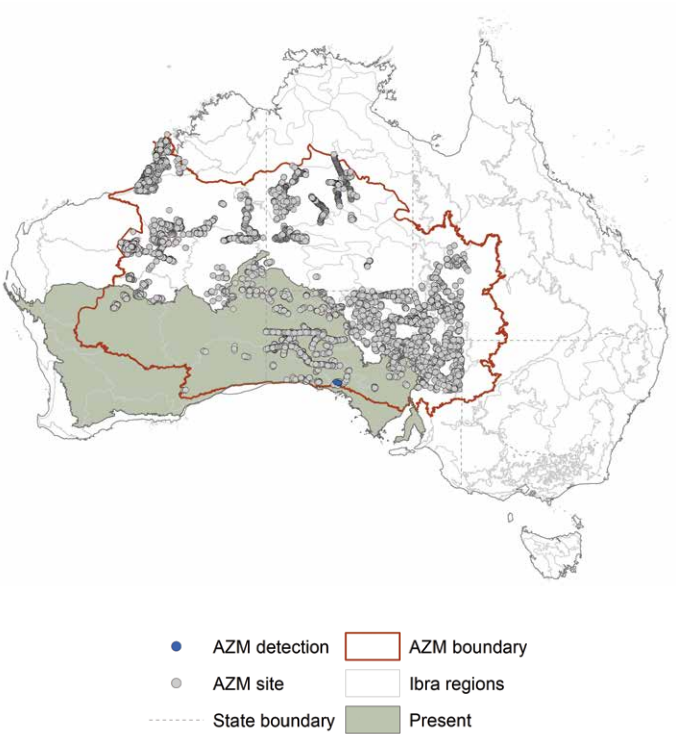


Crested dragon

Ctenophorus cristatus

Crested dragons are brown-grey brown with comb-like scales around eyes. They live in arid and semi-arid country in southern WA and SA.

Crested dragon.

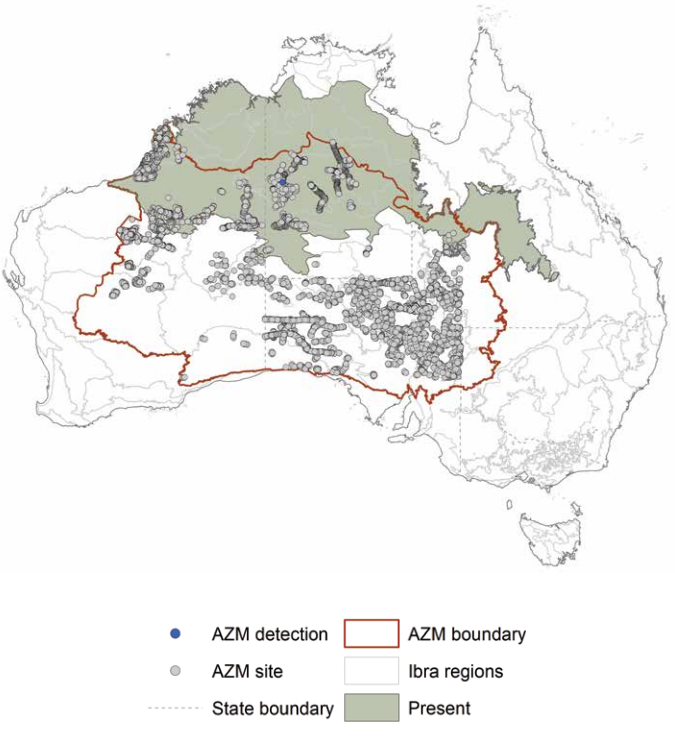


Lally's two-lined dragon

Diporiphora lalliae

These dragons are brown-grey and brown with two lines running along body, with patchy markings. They occur in the northern deserts and southern tropical savannas of the Kimberley and the Northern Territory.

Lally's two-lined dragon.

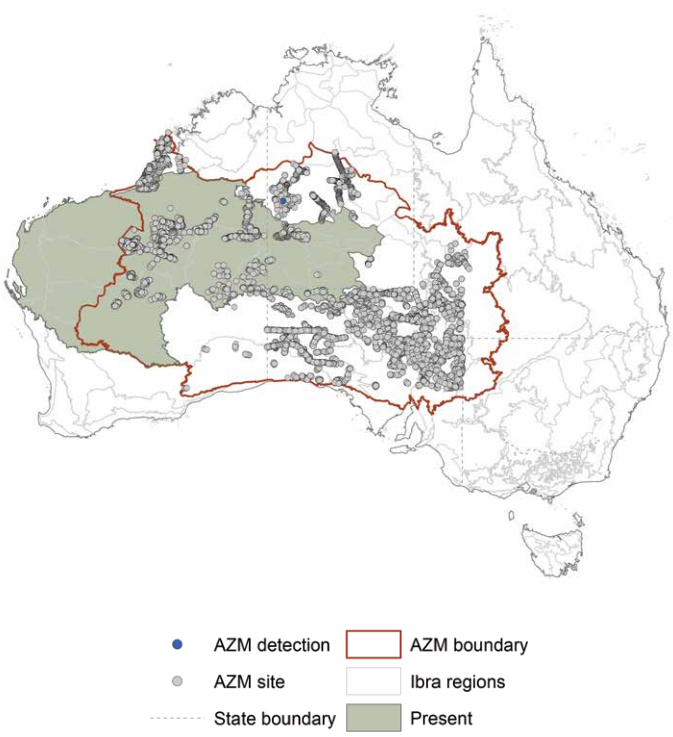


Long-nosed dragon

Gowidon longirostris

These are agile dragons with very long tails. They are pale grey-brown, with a darker patch in middle of back and a white stripe on face, pale yellow stripe on body. They live in woodlands and desert country.

Long-nosed dragon.

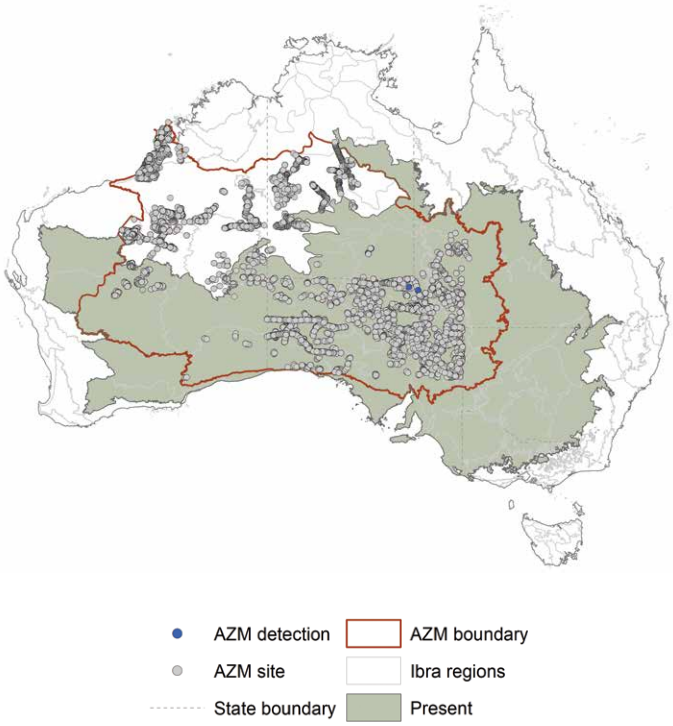


Painted dragon

Ctenophorus pictus

Painted dragons are brown to yellowish brown to orange, with dark-edged pale bars, blotches or spots on top of a stripe that runs down their back. Males have blue on their lips, throats and front limbs. The top of the chest and shoulders in bright yellow and orange. Painted dragons live in areas with stony soils and open-acacia- dominated woodlands or shrublands in parts of southern and central Australia. They can often be seen sunbaking on top of stones and stumps.

Painted dragon.



Dragon tracks

Dragon tracks can be hard to see, but their long tail leaves a distinctive line.

Dragon tracks.

Scats

Reptile scats contain uric acid and usually have a small white hard section.

Dragon scat.

Dragon burrow

Central bearded dragon burrow.

Dragon detection rates

Dragon species detection rates in AZM data.
The rank columns tells us how commonly the species was detected compared with other reptile species that were recorded during almost 15,000 sandplot surveys. Detections of dragons are very low, mostly because the tracks are hard to identify to species level, and most trackers therefore don't record them at all. If you want to monitor dragons, other survey methods might be work better than track-based monitoring.

Species name	No. of detections	% surveys in which species was detected	Rank
Unidentified Dragon species	168	1.12%	8
Central military dragon	86	0.57%	11
Central netted dragon	14	0.10%	19
Central bearded dragon	9	Less than 0.1%	22
Crested dragon	5	Less than 0.1%	25
Central pebble dragon	3	Less than 0.1%	26
Lally's two-lined dragon	1	Less than 0.1%	33
Long-nosed dragon	1	Less than 0.1%	34
Painted dragon	2	Less than 0.1%	37
Western bearded dragon	1	0.01	41

Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:
https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones

References

[1] ABRS. Australian Faunal Directory. 2021; https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/home. Accessed June, 2021

Threatened Species Recovery Hub
National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

Cite this publication as NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub, 2021. Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile: Dragons, Project 3.2.5 findings factsheet.