



***Lerista karlschmidti* (Marx and Hosmer, 1959) (Sauria: Scincidae): re-examination of the type series, reassignment of a paratype and distribution notes**

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Abstract

Lerista karlschmidti was described from three specimens collected in the Woodstock area of north-eastern Queensland in the early 1950s but has not been recorded from Queensland since. A widely disjunct population occurs in the Northern Territory. Consequently, there has been some doubt as to whether the type series is actually from Queensland or whether these specimens had originated from the Northern Territory. The type series was re-examined and only two of the three specimens were found to be conspecific; these were morphologically consistent with material from the Northern Territory. The third specimen can be assigned to a narrowly endemic north-east Queensland population of *Lerista* cf. *storri*. Information provided by the collector's son supports a Queensland origin for the type material, as does the inclusion of a narrowly endemic north-east Queensland taxon in the type series. Given the narrow endemicity that characterises north Queensland *Lerista* spp., it is unlikely that the Queensland and Northern Territory *L. karlschmidti* populations are conspecific. *Lerista karlschmidti* was last collected in Queensland 57 years ago and the Woodstock area has been substantially modified during this time. The conservation status of *L. karlschmidti* in Queensland warrants further investigation, particularly in light of conservation concerns for the congeneric *Lerista allanae*.

Key words: *Lerista karlschmidti*, Queensland, type series, narrow endemicity, conservation status

Introduction

Lerista karlschmidti (= *Rhodona karlschmidti* Marx and Hosmer 1959) is a small, reduce-limbed skink, with no forelimbs and monodactyl, clawed hindlimbs. The type description for this species was based on three specimens collected from Woodstock (19° 36' S, 146° 50' E; near Townsville), north-eastern Queensland during the early 1950s. Whilst specimens matching the type description have since been collected from the Northern Territory (specimens in the Australian Museum and the Northern Territory Museum collected between 1973 and 2005; specimens in the Queensland Museum collected 2005–2006), no further material has been obtained from Queensland. The dramatically disjunct distribution of *L. karlschmidti* has been largely overlooked because of the broad-brush approach to distribution maps in many of the standard reptile guides (for example, Cogger 2000; Wilson and Knowles 1988). However, some guides do depict the distribution more accurately (Fig 1; Ehmann 1992; Wilson 2005; Wilson and Swan 2003; Wilson and Swan 2008). While appearing anomalous, this broken, Northern Territory / Queensland distribution is not without precedent. Similar distribution patterns are seen in *Glaphyromorphus nigricaudis* (Macleay, 1877) and *Carlia macfarlani* Günther, 1877 (both Scincidae), although a taxonomic assessment of these widely disjunct populations using genetic analyses has yet to be performed. The distribution of *L. karlschmidti*, combined with the lack of additional Queensland specimens, warrants further investigation and prompts the following questions: Are the