

A NEW SPECIES OF *MORETHIA* (LACERTILIA: SCINCIDAE) FROM NORTHERN AUSTRALIA, WITH COMMENTS ON THE BIOLOGY AND RELATIONSHIPS OF THE GENUS

ALLEN E. GREER

The Australian Museum, Sydney

ABSTRACT

Morethia is a genus of lygosomine skinks endemic to Australia. This paper provides a description of a new species of *Morethia* from northern Australia, a diagnosis of the genus, and a discussion of its intra and intergeneric relationships. It also includes a key to the eight currently recognized species of *Morethia* and notes on their colour pattern, reproduction, behaviour, habitat and distribution.

A NEW SPECIES OF *MORETHIA*

In his revision of the Western Australian species of the endemic Australian genus *Morethia*, Storr (1972) noted that the form *ruficauda* was "replaced by an undescribed race" in the far north of the Northern Territory. A few years later while reviewing the genus, I "rediscovered" this undescribed form and interpreted it as a distinct species. Dr Storr has graciously allowed me to describe this species, and in appreciation of his original contribution to the taxonomy of the genus (Storr 1972), I take pleasure in naming it

Morethia storri New Species Figs 1, 2 (top), and 9

HOLOTYPE: Northern Territory Museum R 1815 — 4.5 km. S. of Noonamah, Northern Territory (12°40' S., 131°04' E.). Collected by Messrs G. F. Gow and R. W. Wells on 10 November 1975.

PARATYPES: Unless specifically mentioned otherwise, all localities are in the extreme northern part of the Northern Territory.

Australian Museum: R 12384 — Yirrkala; R 17411 — Port Keats Mission; R 37225 — Koongarra, Mt. Brockman Range; R 41960 — Maningrida Settlement; R 71991 — Yirrkala; R 72862 — approx. 16 km. S.E. of Daly River Police Station (by road); R 88631, 88791, 88850 and 88988 — Jabiluka Project Area (12°33' — 12°35'S., 132°55' — 132°57'E.).

Australian National Wildlife Collection: R 695 — Leanyer Swamp, RAAF Bombing Range, Darwin; R 1826 — Berrimah, Darwin.

South Australian Museum: R 1117 — Groote Eylandt; R 1130 A-B — Roper River (it is uncertain whether the township or the river is meant, *vide* Dr T. Houston in letter of 29 March 1977); R 13535 — Bing Bong Station near Boorroloola.

Northern Territory Museum: R 2715 — Berry Springs Reserve; R 2731-2732 — 32.5 km. S.E. of Noonamah; R 2864 — Millner, Darwin.

United States National Museum: 128635 — Yirrkala.

Western Australian Museum: R 23481 — Nightcliff, Darwin; R 23517 — Rapid Creek, Darwin; R 58498 — Lombadina Creek, Western Australia (16°34'S., 122°48'E.).

DIAGNOSIS: *Morethia storri* differs from all other *Morethia* in the following combination of characters: supranasal scale fused to nasal without trace of suture; lower Records of The Australian Museum, 1980, Vol. 33 No. 2 89-122 Figures 1-12