

## A New Species of *Nannoscincus* Günther (Squamata: Scincidae) from High Elevation Forest in Southern New Caledonia

ROSS A. SADLIER<sup>1\*</sup>, AARON M. BAUER<sup>2</sup>, AND SARAH A. SMITH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Australian Museum, 6 College Street, Sydney NSW 2010, Australia  
rosss@austmus.gov.au

<sup>2</sup> Department of Biology, Villanova University,  
800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, Pennsylvania 19085, United States of America  
aaron.bauer@villanova.edu · sarah.a.smith@villanova.edu

**ABSTRACT.** A new species of *Nannoscincus* from relictual high elevation closed forest is described from southern New Caledonia. This species is most similar in appearance to *Nannoscincus gracilis*, but can be distinguished by its large size and a suite of distinctive scalation characters. Further, it is the only species of *Nannoscincus* recorded as being able to vocalise. The species is known only from closed forest patches on Pic Ningua and adjacent Mt Çidoa at around 1000 m in altitude. The overall extent of this habitat is small, fragmented, and in an area that is actively mined. As such the species is regarded as at risk, and the level of threat as Vulnerable.

Une nouvelle espèce de *Nannoscincus* provenant d'une forêt relique fermée d'altitude est décrite du sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Cette espèce est d'apparence similaire à *Nannoscincus gracilis*, mais peut s'en différencier par sa grande taille et une série de caractères d'écaillage distinctifs. De plus, c'est la seule espèce de *Nannoscincus* capable de vocaliser. Cette espèce n'est connue que des lambeaux de forêt fermée du Pic Ningua et du Mt Çidoa voisin, à environ 1000 m d'altitude. La répartition actuelle de ce type d'habitat est limitée, fragmentée, et localisée dans une zone fortement soumise à l'impact minier. Pour toutes ces raisons, cette espèce est considérée comme sensible et placée à un niveau de menace «vulnérable».

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Recent studies on the endemic lizard fauna of New Caledonia have revealed the presence of species endemic to high elevation forests on various peaks along the length of the island. In the central and northeast ranges two species appear to be found only at elevations greater than 900 m, the diminutive scincid *Nannoscincus rankini* from Mont Aoupinié (Sadlier *et al.*, 2002), and the gecko *Bavayia*

*madjo* from Mont Panié and Mont Ignambi in the Panié Range (Bauer *et al.*, 2000). The forest at both Mont Aoupinié and the Panié Range is more or less continuously distributed from mid elevation (400 m) to the summits.

By contrast, high elevation forest on the ultramafic peaks in the south and northwest of the island generally are present as isolated patches, separated from lowland forest by

\* author for correspondence