

***Nucras taeniolata* (A. Smith, 1838)**

**ALBANY SANDVELD LIZARD;
STRIPED SANDVELD LIZARD**

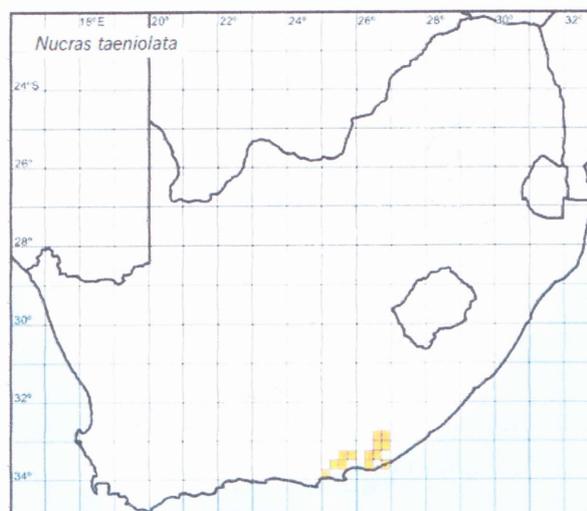
Marius Burger

Global: Near Threatened

Endemic

Taxonomy: Taxonomy within the *Nucras tessellata* complex is unresolved. *Nucras taeniolata* is regarded as a monotypic species following the elevation of *N. ornata* and *N. holubi* to full species status (Jacobsen 1989; Bates 1996a). A molecular phylogeny of the genus *Nucras* confirmed the species status of *N. taeniolata*, which is the sister species of *N. tessellata* (Edwards et al. 2013b).

Distribution: An Eastern Cape endemic restricted to the Algoa Bay region. Distribution extends from the Double Drift Game Reserve in the north, southwards through the Albany district to just north of Port Elizabeth, and westwards through Addo Elephant National Park to Groendal



Wilderness Area (Branch & Burger 2009) and the Gamtoos Valley near Thornhill (Conradie 2012).

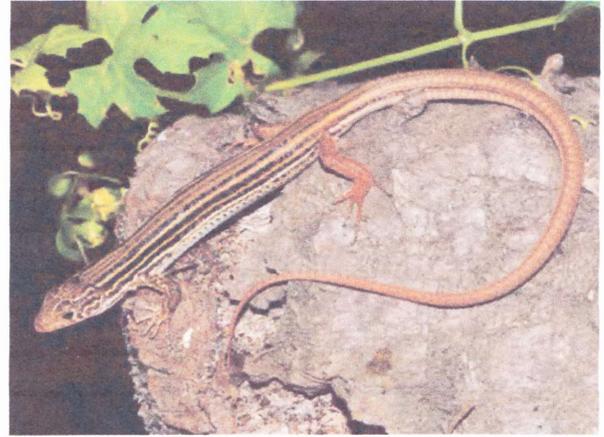
EOO: 9 602 km² (confidence: high); AOO: 3 987 km² (confidence: medium).

Habitat: Very little is known about the ecology of this seemingly rare lizard, with only 40 specimens known from museum collections (Branch & Burger 2009; Conradie 2012). It is terrestrial and has been observed on soft and hard soils and shale in mesic to arid environments, where it may burrow in at the base of bushes or shelter under rock slabs (Branch & Braack 1987; Fabricius *et al.* 2002). Altitude ranges from about 50 m near Port Alfred and Bushmans River to about 500 m in the Groendal and Zuurberg regions.

Vegetation type: AT 8 Kowie Thicket; AT 6 Sundays Thicket; SVs 7 Bhisho Thornveld; AT 11 Great Fish Thicket; AT 10 Great Fish Noorsveld; AT 7 Coega Bontveld; AT 9 Albany Coastal Belt.

Assessment rationale: Almost qualifies as Vulnerable based on EOO <20 000 km² [B1] and a continuing decline in AOO, extent/quality of habitat and number of mature individuals [B1b(ii,iii,v)]. The disconcerting current and predicted future extent of habitat transformation, degradation and fragmentation result primarily from agricultural, urban and industrial sprawl and may result in this species becoming more threatened. It is therefore of conservation concern and classified as Near Threatened.

Threats: Generally restricted to the Albany Thicket Biome, of which 7.3% is completely transformed and much of the remainder degraded. Only 11% of the untransformed area is still in pristine condition and 60% is severely degraded. The main causes of habitat transformation are bush clear-



Nucras taeniolata—Amanzi, EC

W.R. Branch

ing for livestock and crop cultivation, herbivory by livestock, urban residential and industrial developments, afforestation and alien plant infestations. These threats are on the increase, particularly the extent of coastal urbanisation and industrial development in the Coega region (Lloyd *et al.* 2002).

Conservation measures: *Nucras taeniolata* is well represented in several existing protected areas and a number of mega-conservancy networks, and park expansions are earmarked for the region in which it occurs (Hoare *et al.* 2006). The species is thus likely to maintain a viable long-term presence in spite of habitat transformation, but it should nevertheless be considered in the Environmental Impact Assessments of forthcoming development projects in the area.