

*LACERTA AUSTRALIS* HEWITT 1926  
REDISCOVERY AND REPORT ON FRESH MATERIAL.

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INTRODUCTION

*Lacerta auetralis* was described by Hewitt in 1926 on the basis of a single female (SAM 14741) collected by R.M. Lightfoot from the Matroosberg, Cape Province, South Africa. In 1933 FitzSimons described *Lacerta rupicola* on the basis of a single female (TM 13989) from Lake Funduzi in the Soutpansberg, Transvaal. The discovery of these two lacertids in southern Africa and their assignment to the palearctic genus *Lacerta* (subgenus *Podarcis*) produced a zoogeographic and systematic dilemma which remained insoluble since no further specimens became available and for some time even the type of *L. australis* had become mislaid.

Only as recently as 1980 Niels Jacobsen, herpetologist of the Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation and his team was able to find fresh material of *L. rupicola* in the Soutpansberg (TM 53552-4, a.o.). Once the biotope, consisting of screeslopes, was recognised, this

species was found to occur over a considerable area within that mountain range.

In the meantime the hunt for *L. australis* was unsuccessfully concentrated on the alleged type locality 'Matroosberg' near Worcester in the Cape. During spring of 1982, while on a hike in the Cedarberg Wilderness Area, Clanwilliam district, this species was encountered and recognised again for the first time after 56 years and two specimens were collected.

MATERIAL

Two specimens

TM 56019 adult male, coll. just N of Crystal Pools hut  
(32° 20'45" S, 19° 08'07" E, alt. 1300 m),  
29 September 1982.

TM 56039 sub-adult male (?), coll. on top of Warmhoekkop

Pass neck on the trail from Heuningvlei to Grootkloof (32° 18'S, 19° 3'E, alt. 1000 m), 3 October 1982.

Both collecting sites are in the Cedarberg Wilderness Area, Clanwilliam district, Cape Province, R.S.A.

The only other known specimen is the holotype SAM14741 collected by R.H. Lightfoot on the Matroosberg (Not seen, compared ace. to descriptions by Hewitt, 1926 and FitzSimons, 1943).

#### DESCRIPTION

In general the two new specimens are very similar to and match the description of the holotype (Hewitt and FitzSimons, op. cit.) apart from being larger. In the type the nostril is surrounded by a large nasal and a single post-nasal on the right and two on the left side with the first upper labial 'scarcely separated' according to Hewitt (op.cit.) but forming part of it according to FitzSimons. In the new specimens the nostrils are surrounded by a large nasal, two post-nasals and the first upper labial, which has a narrow edge. In TM56019 a posterior extension of the rostral just rouches the ring of the right nostril. The nasals are in median contact and form a suture in all specimens. The frontonasal is wider than long and in touch with the loreal on either side. Both, Hewitt and FitzSimons, refer to an anterior and posterior loreal, of which the latter could also be called a pre-ocular while the anterior loreal would then be termed the loreal. The prefrontals are in touch, forming a median suture in the type and in TM 56019 while in TM 56039 a small median azygous shield separates them. The frontal is subequal to slightly shorter than its own distance from the tip of the snout. In contrast to the situation as described for the type, a parietal foramen is clearly visible in both of the new specimens. Otherwise, allowing for slight individual variation the new specimens match the type description quite closely (cf. Table 1).

#### COLOUR

The adult male TM 56019 was relatively dull as it was about to shed its skin. The basic colour was dark brown to black with many spots arranged in rows anteriorly but becoming diffuse posteriorly. Laterally on head and body the pale marks were whitish while dorsally from snout to tail the light colour is a pale yellowish. A dorsolateral row of orange spots starts on either side just above and behind the ear opening and continues backwards fading just in front of the hind leg.

TM 56039. Being a sub-adult the pattern is much more

TABLE I

	SAM 14741		TH 56019		TM 56039	
HB lenth	41 mm		77 mm		49 mm	
Tail length	dam		133 mm		92 mm	
Sex	female		male		S.ad. male ?	
Femoral pores	16	19	17	18	19	19
Upper labials	4	4	4	4	5	3
Scales u. 4th toe	23	25	26	26	26	28
Nasals	3 ul	2 ul	3r, ul	3 ul	3 ul	3 ui
Supra-oculars	4	4	4	4	4	4
Supra-ciliaries	6	6	7	6	6	7
Supra-oc. granules	9	9	9	10	12	13
Collar	8		12		9	
Long. ventr. rows	6		6		6	
Transv. ventr. rows	28		28		31	
Dorsal rows	68		67		67	

contrasting with more clearly defined spots on a black background. Laterally and on the legs the spots are white to off-white, the dorsolateral line of spots is orangey from the side of the back to the middle of the body. The marks on the head are yellowish, the dorsal spots are pale pinkish turning pale yellowish towards the base of the tail, while the tail becomes slightly greenish before ending in a bluish tinge.

#### FIELD NOTES

During the time spent in the Cedarberg Wilderness Area apart from the two *Lacerta auatralis* which were collected possibly four further individuals were seen. The first individual (TM 56019) was collected just north of Crystal Pool hut (1300 m), then two were seen at Skerpioenpoort neck (1400 m), another one was seen on top of the pass from Heuningvlei to Jan Oissels' River valley (1350 m) and on the following morning a sub-adult (TM 56039) was collected on top of Warmhoekkop Pass (1000 m). All these individuals were encountered on large quartzitic boulders or cliff-faces and when disturbed they ascended these rocks or dived into the crevices.

A juvenile lizard was seen running over a low rocky area at a site where the contourpath to Algeria Forestry Station is joined by the trail from Middelberg hut just above Grootkloof (600 m). It had a powder-blue tail and a finely speckled dark body. It could have been a juvenile *Lacerta auatralis*. If that was the case, it means that this species, although being rupicolous, is

not necessarily confined to the rock faces right on top of the Cedarberg, but may be encountered lower down as well.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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