

A new member of the *Lerista bipes* group (Lacertilia: Scincidae) from the Kimberley

G.M. Storr*

Abstract

The new species, *L. robusta*, is superficially similar to *L. ips* which is redescribed.

Introduction

The Kimberley is the stronghold of the *Lerista bipes* group (*sensu* Greer 1986). Seven species are known from the region, viz. *L. bipes*, *L. greeri*, *L. simillima*, *L. labialis*, *L. griffini*, *L. praefrontalis* and the one about to be described; and another two, *L. vermicularis* and *L. ips*, occur in its southern desert fringes.

On a recent trip to the Kimberley, two young naturalists decided to investigate the previously unworked arid grasslands south of the St George Ranges. They were rewarded with the discovery of a new *Lerista* differing in its stout habit from all other members of the *bipes* group except *L. ips*.

A good number of *L. ips* has been collected in the last few years, permitting its redescription. All the specimens cited in this paper are lodged in the Western Australian Museum.

Lerista robusta sp. nov.

Figure 1

Holotype

100992 in Western Australian Museum, collected by B. Maryan and D. Robinson on 9 July 1989 at Egans Bore, 50 km W Cherrabun, Western Australia, in 18°56'S, 125°04'E.

Paratypes

Kimberley Division (WA): Egans Bore (100993-4).

Diagnosis

A large stout member of the *L. bipes* group with no fingers (no trace of forelimb or groove), two toes and lower eyelid apparently immovable. Similar in habit to *L. ips* but snout not quite so low or sharp in profile; eye larger (at least half as large as subocular labial, v. one-third or less), two loreals (v. one), one or two supraciliaries (v. none) and darker with stronger colour pattern.

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 60-63.5 (N 3). Length of appendages (% SVL): hindleg 13.7-14.9; tail 74-101.

* C/O Western Australian Museum, Francis Street, Perth, Western Australia, 6000.

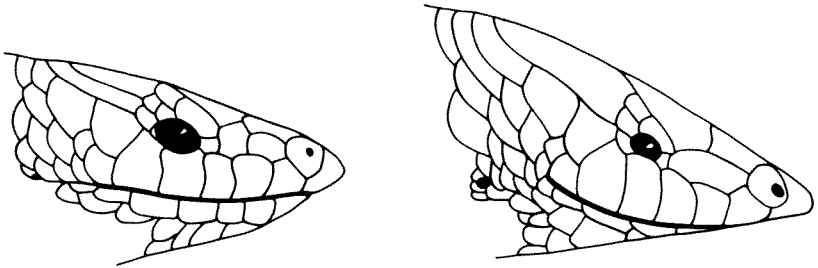


Figure 1. Side of head in *Lerista robusta* (left) and *L. ips* (right), showing differences in loreal and supraciliary regions.

Nasals narrowly separated. No prefrontals (apparently fused to second loreal). Frontoparietals and parietal fused into large triangular shield. Nuchals 0-2. Supraoculars 3, first two in contact with frontal. Supraciliaries 0 + 1 or 0 + 2. Loreals 2. Preocular 1. Upper labials 6 (5 on one side of one specimen, owing to fusion of second and third). Temporals 3, upper secondary largest or subequal to primary, lower secondary much the smallest. Ear aperture very small (smaller than nostril). Midbody scale rows 20. Lamellae under longer toe 8-10.

Dorsal and upper lateral surfaces pale greyish brown, indistinctly marked with blackish brown: four series of dorsal dots or short dashes, each series passing through centre of a scale; and loreotemporal streak, continuing on to body as a hollow stripe (actually two series of triangular spots). Pattern on tail similar to that on back but more diffuse. Lower surfaces whitish.

Distribution

Only known from one locality in arid southern interior of Kimberley. See map Figure 2.

***Lerista ips* Storr**

Figure 1

Lerista ips Storr 1980: 441.

Diagnosis

A large stout short-tailed member of the *L. bipes* group with long low snout extending well beyond mouth and very sharp in profile, no fingers (no trace of foreleg or groove), two toes and lower eyelid apparently immovable. Most like *L. robusta* but having little or no colour pattern, very small eye (at most one-third size of subocular labial), single loreal and no supraciliaries.

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 31-72 (N 27, mean 60.3). Length of appendages (% SVL): hindleg 14.2-19.4 (N 18, mean 16.5); tail 52-74 (N 11, mean 66.5).

Nasals separated, widely to moderately widely (N 26) or narrowly (2). No prefrontals. Frontoparietals and interparietal fused into a large triangular shield. Nuchals 0-3 (N 28, mostly 2, mean 1.8). Supraoculars 3 (2 in two specimens owing to fusion of second with frontoparietal), first two in contact with frontal, first and third in short contact. No supraciliaries (third supraocular mistaken for a supraciliary in original description). Loreals fused into a long low scale. Preocular 1. Upper labials 6. Temporals 3, upper secondary usually largest (sometimes subequal to primary), lower secondary much the smallest. Ear aperture small (a little larger or little smaller than nostril). Midbody scale rows 20 (N 16) or 21 (1). Lamellae under longer toe 8-10 (N 17, mean 9.8).

Dorsal and upper lateral surfaces pale brownish pink, dorsals usually flecked with brown (flecks largest and darkest on outermost scales). Faint brown loreotemporal streak. Lower surfaces white.

Distribution

Great Sandy and Gibson Deserts of Western Australia and adjacent desert of Northern Territory. See map Figure 2.

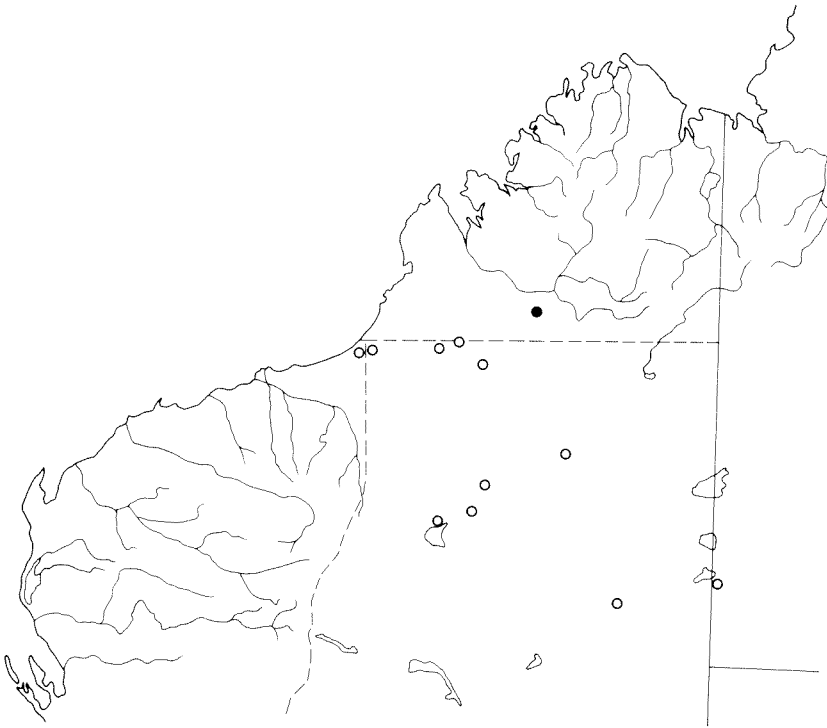


Figure 2. Map of northern Western Australia, showing location of specimens of *Lerista robusta* (spot) and *L. ips* (circles).

Material

Eastern Division (WA): McLarty Hills (75811); Dragon Tree Soak (75804, 81651-2, 81655-6); 55 km S Anna Plains (88876-9, 88882-4, 96883-5); 19 km NE Sandfire Flat (87360) and 7 km E (87008); Joanna Spring (75779); Well 39, Canning Stock Route (94899, 94932-3); near Lake Auld (63562); Well 26, Canning Stock Route (83757, 83775); 6 km SE Well 21, Canning Stock Route (97242); 55 km W Lake Farnham (73867).

References

- Greer, A.E. (1986). Diagnosis of the *Lerista bipes* species group (Lacertilia: Scincidae) with a description of a new species and an updated diagnosis of the genus. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* **13**: 121-127.
- Storr, G.M. (1980). A new *Lerista* and two new *Ctenotus* (Lacertilia: Scincidae) from Western Australia. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* **8**: 441-447.