

MEMOIRS OF THE QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

BRISBANE

© Queensland Museum
PO Box 3300, South Brisbane 4101, Australia
Phone 06 7 3840 7555
Fax 06 7 3846 1226
Email qmlib@qm.qld.gov.au
Website www.qm.qld.gov.au

National Library of Australia card number
ISSN 0079-8835

NOTE

Papers published in this volume and in all previous volumes of the *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* may be reproduced for scientific research, individual study or other educational purposes. Properly acknowledged quotations may be made but queries regarding the republication of any papers should be addressed to the Editor in Chief. Copies of the journal can be purchased from the Queensland Museum Shop.

A Guide to Authors is displayed at the Queensland Museum web site

A Queensland Government Project
Typeset at the Queensland Museum

A WESTERN RANGE EXTENSION FOR THE SKINK *SAIPHOS EQUALIS*. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 48(1): 92. 2002:- The fossorial skink *Saiphos equalis* occurs on the coast and adjacent ranges of southern NSW northward to extreme SE Queensland (Cogger, 2000). Wilson & Knowles (1992) defined the Queensland range as extending to Kroombit Tops and noted that the species becomes increasingly altitude-dependent in the north of its range. Specimen records from the Queensland Museum indicate that the specimens were collected at locations on the Great Dividing Range, its spurs and associated subcoastal ranges. The majority of records are from the Border Ranges and Granite Belt regions, but they extend as far north as Kroombit Tops and west to the Bunya Mountains. The Dept of Natural Resources Forestry database contains records for Diamondy State Forest, on the Great Dividing Range NW of the Bunya Mountains (M. Mathieson pers. comm.). Sorley (1997) referred to the species in the Chinchilla area, but I have been unable to find the original source of this record - the species may be present in forests on the nearby ranges.

I captured a *Saiphos equalis* on 9 March 2001 during flora and fauna surveys of a proposed nature refuge on 'Oakwells', west of Injune. 'Oakwells' is a cattle grazing property located on the Great Dividing Range, just N of Mt Hutton. The capture site was an area of basalt scree, vegetated with dry vine forest, on the steep upper slopes of Main Top at 25°45'05"S, 148°16'29"E and approximately 840m altitude. The skink was located under loose rock infilled with leaf mulch and humus. The specimen is lodged with the Queensland Museum (QMJ76305).

'Oakwells' is about 270km NW of Chinchilla and about 320km WNW of Diamondy State Forest, thus representing a considerable extension westward of the known range of this skink. The question arises whether this record represents an isolated population or whether the distribution is continuous along the Great Dividing Range. To the north of Injune, the Great Dividing Range meets the extensive uplands of the Carnarvon and Expedition Ranges. These uplands have been described as 'islands' in the mesotherm archipelago of Nix (1993). More temperate conditions here are associated with outlier or relict populations of Bassian herpetofaunal

elements more typical of SE Australia. Examples known to occur in the Carnarvon Ranges are the frog *Adelotus brevis*, the skinks *Calyptotis scutirostrum*, *Ctenotus arcanus* and *Egernia cunninghamii* and the elapid snake *Notechis scutatus* (Craig Eddie, QPWS, pers. comm.). *Saiphos equalis* could be another such relict species, but to date has not been located in fauna surveys of the national parks of the area. It would be useful to confirm *Saiphos equalis* in the Chinchilla area. Some fauna surveys have been carried out in Barakula State Forest, which straddles the Great Dividing Range to the north of Chinchilla (M. Mathieson, L. Hogan pers. comm.). To date, the species has not been found there. More surveys, perhaps targeting the more mesic habitats, are needed to define the western limits of the range of this cryptic lizard.

Acknowledgements

I thank Bruce Cosh, 'Oakwells', for allowing access to his property, for sharing his knowledge and for his good company. Andrew Amey and Michael Mathieson kindly provided distribution data from the Queensland Museum and Department of Natural Resources (Forestry) databases, respectively.

Literature Cited

- COGGER, H. 2000. Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia. 6th ed. (Reed: Sydney).
- NIX, H.A. 1993. Bird distributions in relation to imperatives for habitat conservation in Queensland. Pp. 12-21. In Catterall, C.P., Driscoll, P.V., Hulsman, K., Muir, D. & Taplin, A. Birds and their Habitats: Status and Conservation in Queensland. (Qld Ornithological Society: Brisbane).
- SORLEY, J. 1997. Reptiles of the area. Pp. 77-82. In Hando, R. & Hando, V. (eds.), Going Bush with Chinchilla Nats. 2nd ed. (Chinchilla Field Naturalists' Club: Chinchilla).
- WILSON, S.K. & KNOWLES, D.G. 1992. Australia's Reptiles. A Photographic Reference to the Terrestrial Reptiles of Australia. (Cornstalk Publishing: Pymble).
- Richard Johnson, *Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, PO Box 981, Roma 4455, Australia; 30 August 2001.*