

VOLUME 49

PART 2

# MEMOIRS

OF THE

# QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

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National Library of Australia card number

ISSN 0079-8835

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**A Queensland Government Project**

Typeset at the Queensland Museum

**SOUTHERLY RANGE EXTENSION FOR THE AMETHYSTINE PYTHON *MORELIA KINGHORNII* (SQUAMATA: BOIDAE) IN QUEENSLAND.** *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 49(2): 602. 2004:- The Queensland endemic Amethystine Python, *Morelia kinghorni* (Harvey, et al., 2000), occurs along the east coast, north of Townsville (Cogger, 2000; Wilson & Swan, 2003). It is largely confined to rainforests and their margins, and other closed forest habitats, but is occasionally found in eucalypt dominated forests and woodlands (Wilson & Swan, 2003). The Environmental Protection Agency's fauna database 'WildNet' contains a record from the Alligator Creek area (19°23'24" S, 146°56'49"E) and a site further south on the upper reaches of Saltwater Creek in Clemant State Forest (19°6'31" S, 146°24'56"E) (EPA, 2003). Specimen records held by the Queensland Museum indicate that the species is found north of Alligator Creek 19°15'59"S, 146°48'59"E (Western Australian Museum, 2003). The Queensland Museum also holds an old record collected around Nebo (21°41'00"S, 148°41'59"E). This record is based on an incomplete skin that was destroyed in 1948 (Andrew Amey, Queensland Museum, pers. comm.). No records have been received for south of Townsville since that time which suggests that the species has either become locally extinct or that the Nebo animal was an escapee rather than being native to the area.

In May 2002, a systematic fauna survey was conducted at Conway State Forest. Vertebrate fauna were surveyed using a combination of Elliott and pit fall traps, harp traps, spotlighting, active searching and bird censuses over a period of 10 days. A total of 134 species were recorded during the survey including a sighting of the *M. kinghorni*. The snake was observed crossing the old logging road close to the Brandy Creek entrance (20°20'19"S, 148°41'24"E). The area was dominated by tall notophyll rainforest species including *Argyrodendron actinophyllum* subsp. *diversifolium*, *Trema orientalis*, *Melicope bonwickii*, *Cryptocarya bidwillii*, *Endiandra muelleri*, *Terminalia sericocarpa*, *Cryptocarya hypospodia* and *Alstonia scholaris*. The species was readily distinguished from other pythons found in the Conway area by the presence of large, regular scales on the top of its head. This Conway record is significant in that it not only confirms local anecdotal reports regarding the species presence in the area but it also extends the southern limit of the species accepted range by 300km. Since the survey there have been several *M. kinghorni* sightings from the Conway area (20°20'30"S, 148°42'06"E, 4 March 2004, B. Nolan; 20°17'29"S, 148°42'30"E, 9 January 2004, B. Nolan; 20°17'31"S, 148°41'28"E, 21 May 2003, B. Nolan; 20°17'16"S, 148°41'25"E, 17 January 2004, B. Crossman; 20°17'12"S, 148°43'30"E, 8 December 2003, B. Crossman; 20°20'25"S, 148°41'06"E, 23 November 2003, B. Crossman; 20°16'51"S, 148°42'06"E, 13 October 2003, B. Crossman; 20°17'31"S, 148°41'28"E, 24 October 2003, B. Crossman; 20°16'51"S, 148°42'06"E, 26 October 2003, B. Crossman)

(Barry Nolan, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, pers comm.).

The discovery of *M. kinghorni* in the Conway ranges is an example of how the fauna in the region are influenced by elements of both the Wet tropics and the Central Queensland Coast Bioregions. For at least twelve species, the Conway Range area represents or is close to the limit of their geographical range. Species that are close to their northern limit and are more typically associated with the Central Queensland Coast Bioregion include *Litoria chloris*, *Saproscincus hannahae*, *Lampropholis adonis*, *Phyllurus ossa* and *Eulamprus amplus*. Species which are known from the wet tropics or which are close to their southern limit include *Litoria infrafrenata*, *Megapodius reinwardt* (orange-footed scrubfowl), *Ducula bicolor* (pied imperial-pigeon), *Alcedo pusilla* (little kingfisher), *Tanysiptera sylvia* (buff-breasted paradise-kingfisher), *Aplonis metallica* (metallic starling) and *M. kinghorni*. The presence of *M. kinghorni* and other typically Torresian fauna is also further evidence of an ancient rainforested past extending down along the Queensland coast (Holmes, 1986, Shodde & Tidemann, 1997).

#### Acknowledgements

The following people are thanked for their assistance with fieldwork: Barry Nolan, Bill McDonald, Claire Davison, Dan Schaper, Emma Martin, Irene Champion, Jo Hardy, Rob Squires, and Steve Pearson. Thanks also to Barry Nolan for organising the field trip and personnel and for providing sightings information; to Andrew Amey for providing information about the Queensland Museum records; to the Queensland Museum for their assistance with specimen identification; and to Rhonda Melzer and Barry Nolan for their comments on drafts.

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