

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTIONS

LACERTIDAE

Tropidosaura cottrelli (Hewitt, 1925)

Cottrell's Mountain Lizard

Three localities: i) Lesotho, Phofung district, Mothae River, Mothae (28°56'30"S, 28°47'30"E; 2828DD; 2900-3000 m. a.s.l.). An adult *Tropidosaura cottrelli* (SVL 72.3 mm, tail length 75.9 mm, mass 7.8 g) was collected in the period 28 January to 2 February 1991 by C.D. Lynch, S. Lamprecht & J. Senoge. The specimen was deposited in the collection of the National Museum, Bloemfontein (NMB R6422). It exceeds the size (SVL 66 mm) of the holotype and longest recorded specimen of this species (Hewitt 1925; FitzSimons 1943; Branch 1998). Four specimens of *Pseudocordylus melanotus subviridis* (NMB R6418-6421) were also collected at this locality at the same time. ii) South Africa, Free State Province, Harrismith district, 200 m south of Vemvane (River) Falls (28°44'59"S, 28°52'42"E; 2828DB; 3020 m a.s.l.). An adult (SVL 63.8 mm, measured after fixation and preservation) was collected by the author on 7 May 2005 under a rock in a rocky outcrop on the grassy summit above the Chain Ladders more-or-less on the border between Free State and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The specimen was deposited in the collection of the National Museum, Bloemfontein (NMB R8564). A specimen of *Pseudocordylus langi* (NMB R8553) was also collected at this locality on the same day. iii) South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal, Bergville district, top of Organ Pipes Pass (29°00'40"S, 29°11'00"E; 2929AA; 3000 m a.s.l.). On 9 December 1998 an adult was collected on the summit of the Drakensberg by P. le F.N. Mouton where it was sympatric with *Pseudocordylus langi* (NMB R8445-8449); it was photographed and released after being examined by the author.

Colouration: NMB R6422 was mostly dark brown dorsally with the venter marbled dark and pale bluish; NMB R8564 (in life) was black dorsally with scattered but vivid orange scales mid-dorsally, extending onto the base of the tail, and yellowish-cream scales forming a more-or-less continuous lateral stripe on either side of the body, from the upper labials, along the neck and body to the tail base (Fig. 1), and the ventral surfaces were mottled black and pale blue (cream-white under head and on throat) (Fig. 2). The Organ Pipes Pass specimen was dark brown dorsally, with yellowish spots.

Morphological characteristics of NMB R6422 and NMB R8564: the first two specimens: Mid-dorsal scales medially keeled, pointed at ends and overlapping, but laterals smooth; dorsal scales across middle of body 29 (NMB R6422) or 30 (NMB R8564); ventrals in six longitudinal rows (outer ventrals similar to adjacent lateral scales, but mostly wider than long); transverse rows of ventrals (from anterior part of forelimb insertion to groin) 28 (NMB R6422) or 24 (NMB R8564); femoral pores 10 per thigh, but 9 on left thigh in NMB R6422; two enlarged pre-anal scales present, the anterior one much smaller; scales on sides of neck distinctly reduced in size, smooth and granular; gular fold well-marked across throat; a preocular, loreal and large postnasal present on either side of head; nostril pierced near the posterior edge of the nasal; rostral

and frontonasal in narrow contact, but very nearly separated by the nasals in NMB R6422; first supralabial well separated from the nostril; anterior supraocular elongate and much reduced in size compared to other supraoculars.

At the time of FitzSimons' (1943) monograph, *T. cottrelli* was known only from the holotype collected at Nemahadi (= Namahadi or Namahali) Camp (a police post at the top of Namahali Pass - see Ambrose 2006) in the Free State (not in Lesotho as indicated by Hewitt, 1925). Bourquin & Channing (1980) recorded this species from a few localities in the Drakensberg of KwaZulu-Natal, and it was subsequently recorded from the Eastern Cape (at Naude's Nek, 2650 m a.s.l.) for the first time by Branch (1985). For Lesotho it is known from a specimen collected by Angelo Lambiris at Kotisephola Pass (29°31'49"S, 29°11'27"E, 2929CA, 3257 m a.s.l.; see Ambrose 2006) and 8 km WNW of Sani Pass Border Post (2929CB; Lambiris 2001). *Tropidosaura cottrelli* is now known to be a high elevation Maloti-Drakensberg endemic found in a narrow zone along the summit at the escarpment edge (Bates 2005; Cunningham *et al. in press.* – see http://vmus.edu.org.za/vm_sp_summary.php). This note documents three new localities of a poorly-known species, including only the third locality for, and first record in the north of, Lesotho; and only the second specimen for, and second locality in, the Free State.

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Figure 1: Dorsal view of *Tropidosaura cottrelli* (NMB R8564) from near Vemvane Falls, Drakensberg, Free State.



Figure 2: Ventral view of *Tropidosaura cottrelli* (NMB R8564) from near Vemvane Falls, Drakensberg, Free State.