

DISCOVERY OF THE LANCELIN ISLAND SKINK (*CTENOTUS LANCELINI*) ON THE MAINLAND.

By BRAD MARYAN

169 Egina Street Mount Hawthorn WA 6016,

and ROBERT BROWNE-COOPER

24 Wotan Street Innaloo WA 6018

The Lancelin Island skink (*Ctenotus lancelini*) was discovered on Lancelin Island during a biological survey of several islands off the coast of Western Australia (Ford 1963). Ford subsequently described it as a subspecies of the Red-legged Skink (*Ctenotus labillardieri*) (Ford 1969). It was later elevated to a full species by Storr (1974). This skink was until recently, thought to be restricted to Lancelin Island, having an approximate area of only 9 hectares and was appropriately noted by Wilson and Knowles (1988) as having one of the most restricted ranges of any Australian reptile.

In 1992 we visited Lancelin Island with the aim of photographing *C. lancelini*, and it was after this unsuccessful attempt at finding a single animal that we informed the Department of Conservation and Land Management of our concern that this species may have declined in numbers. This suspected decline was based on skink numbers recorded on previous visits to the island (Browne-Cooper and Maryan 1992). After further investigation, CALM appointed Barb Jones, a zoologist, to the task of an extensive survey of the island to determine the skink's abundance and ecology.

A mainland biological survey was also implemented as a joint WASAH (Western Australian Society of Amateur Herpetologists) – CALM project funded by ANCA (Australian Nature Conservation Agency) and CALM to determine whether *C. lancelini* occurs on the mainland, and if so, the extent of its distribution. On 3 October 1994 at about 08:30 am, the mainland survey team were searching an isolated patch of coastal dune vegetation at Lancelin when they discovered an adult male *C. lancelini* inactive beneath *Spinifex longifolius* in the swale of this dune community.

This is the first record of *C. lancelini* from the mainland and it represents not only a significant extension of range, but also an improvement of the lizard's conservation status. The limestone on Lancelin Island was thought to be a critical microhabitat due to the number of earlier records of skinks sheltering beneath these rocks. The absence of limestone at the mainland locality suggests a broader habitat range than previously thought. This coastal mainland vegetation, although isolated around Lancelin, is extensive to the north and south and holds potential for the discovery of further mainland populations.

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