

New species of lizard found in Australia

October 29 2012



This Australian National University (ANU) handout photo, released on October 29, shows a six-centimetre (two-inch) long "Ctenotus ora" or the coastal plains skink, sitting on rock. Scientists announced the discovery of this new species, fighting to survive among the sand dunes outside Perth in Western Australia.

Scientists announced Monday the discovery of a new species of lizard fighting to survive among the sand dunes outside Perth in Western Australia.

They fear it is only a matter of time before the six-centimetre (two-inch) long Ctenotus ora, or the coastal plains skink, will be extinct with [urban sprawl](#) rapidly closing in.

The discovery, detailed in the [journal Zootaxa](#), took place during research south of the city to determine the levels of biological diversity in southwestern Australia.

"The discovery of a new species is a momentous occasion in science," said Geoffrey Kay, an ecologist from the Australian National University who found the lizard with colleague Scott Keogh.

"To find something as yet undetected, so close to one of the country's largest cities, demonstrates how much we've still got to discover."

But he warned of the real threat to the [reptile](#).

"Although it's a fantastic discovery, it's poor cause for celebration. Our new lizard is under serious risk of being erased just as suddenly as it appeared to us," he said.

"Only a few of these [lizards](#) have ever been found in the wild, so while we know numbers are low, we are not sure of the exact size of the remaining population."

The small stretch of sand the brown and white skink calls home is steadily being concreted.

"Developments along the coastline near Perth need to consider this new lizard and potentially a large number of other species yet to be discovered in this diverse part of the world," added Kay.

Southwestern Australia is recognised as one of the top 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world, alongside places such as Madagascar, the tropical jungles of [West Africa](#), and Brazil's Cerrado.

"We've known for a long time that the southwest has an outstanding

diversity of plants, as exhibited by its stunning wildflowers," said Kay.

"But only now with this research are we seeing that the level of diversity in animals, in particular reptiles, is far deeper and more extreme than we previously imagined."

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