

# The lizard of consistency: New iguana species which sticks to its colors found in Chile

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The new iguanian lizard species *Liolaemus uniformis*. Credit: Jaime Troncoso-Palacios

During a field trip at 3000 metres above sea level, a group of scientists, led by Jaime Troncoso-Palacios, Universidad de Chile, discovered a new endemic iguana species, in the mountains of central Chile, scientists. Noticeably different in size and scalation, compared to the rest of the local lizards, what initially grabbed the biologists' attention was its colouration. Not only was it unlike the already described ones, but also appeared surprisingly consistent within the collected individuals, even

regardless of their sex. Eventually, it was this peculiar uniformity that determined the lizard's name *L. uniformis*. The study is published in the open-access journal *ZooKeys*.

The researchers found the [lizards](#) quite abundant in the area, which facilitated their observations and estimations. Apart from a thorough description of the new iguana along with its comparisons to its related species, the present paper also provides an in-depth discussion about the placement of the new taxon, which had been confused with other species in the past.

While most of the other lizards from the area and its surroundings often vary greatly in colouration and pattern between populations and sexes, such thing is not present in the new species. Both males and females from the observed collection have their bodies' upper side in brown, varying from dark on the head, through coppery on the back and light brown on the tail. The down side of the body is mainly yellowish, while the belly - whitish. The only variables the scientists have noticed in their specimens are slight differences in the shade with two females demonstrating unusual olive hues on their snouts. These differences in morphology were also strongly supported by the molecular phylogeny through the analysis of mitochondrial DNA, which was performed by Dr. Alvaro A. Elorza, from Universidad Andres Bello.



A lizard of the *Liolaemus bellii* species that has likely been confused with the new species in the past. Credit: Jaime Troncoso-Palacios

Accustomed to life in highland rocky habitats with scarce greenery, these lizards spend their active hours, estimated to take place between 09:00 h and 18:00 h hidden under stones. However, they might not be too hard to find due to their size of about 8.5 cm for the males and their abundance in the studied area. The females are more slender and measure 7 cm in length on average.

Having caught one of their specimens while holding a yellow flower in its mouth, the scientists conducted further examination of the stomach

contents of the studied individuals and concluded that the species is omnivorous, feeding mainly on plants as well as insects and roundworms.

In conclusion, the researchers showed that there is still a huge gap in the knowledge of the close relatives of the newly described [species](#) and their "challenging taxonomy".

**More information:** Troncoso-Palacios J, Elorza AA, Puas GI, Alfaro-Pardo E (2016) A new species of *Liolaemus* related to *L. nigroviridis* from the Andean highlands of Central Chile (Iguania, Liolaemidae). *ZooKeys* 555: 91-114. [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.555.6011](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.555.6011)

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