

The Scincid Lizard *Lioscincus tillieri* (Reptilia: Scincidae) from New Caledonia in the Southwest Pacific: New Information on the Species' Biology, Distribution and Morphology

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ABSTRACT. *Lioscincus tillieri* was originally described in 1991 from a single juvenile specimen. Field observations on the species at several localities and the acquisition of a further fifteen specimens collected between 1995 and 1998 have provided new data on its biology, distribution, and morphology. Most notably *L. tillieri* is now known to have a live-bearing mode of reproduction, only the second occurrence of viviparity in the endemic New Caledonian skink fauna.

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The New Caledonian scincid lizard *Leiolopisma tillieri* was described by Ineich & Sadlier (1991) from a single specimen collected by entomologists in a malais trap set in Parc Rivière Bleue in the Plaine des Lacs region in the south of the island. The specimen was small (snout to vent length 29.5 mm) and presumed to be a juvenile.

At the time of description it was not possible to unambiguously assign the species to any existing monophyletic genus in the *Eugongylus* group of skinks (Greer, 1979). For this reason it was placed in “*Leiolopisma*” which comprised an essentially primitive assemblage of species from Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, and Mauritius (where the type species *Leiolopisma telfairi*

occurs on Round Island). In the past 10 years there has been a progressive dismantling of the polyphyletic genus *Leiolopisma* (see Hutchinson *et al.*, 1990). The New Caledonian species placed in *Leiolopisma* by Sadlier (1986) have subsequently been reallocated to *Lioscincus* (Bauer & Sadlier, 1993), the next available generic name to accommodate these taxa. As it currently stands *Lioscincus* includes: *L. greeri*, *L. maruia*, *L. nigrofasciolatum*, *L. novaecaledoniae*, *L. steindachneri* (type species), and *L. tillieri*, but still remains an assemblage of generally primitive *Eugongylus* group species.

In overall morphology *L. tillieri* is most similar to the recently described New Caledonian species *Lioscincus*