

Lord Howe Island Gecko (*Christinus guentheri*)

Description

Pale olive-grey to dark brown gecko, peppered above with dark and light markings, to about 80mm length.

Conservation Significance

Endemic to the Lord Howe Island Group and Norfolk Island.

Listed as Vulnerable under the NSW TSC Act 1995.

Distribution

Rare on Lord Howe Island, more common on Blackburn and Roach Islands. Possibly present on other large offshore islets.

Ecology

Nocturnal. During the day it shelters in places such as under rocks, in weathered tunnels in calcarenite rock and in splits in trees. It is occasionally seen sheltering under upturned boats on the beach margin. This species feeds on beetles, spiders, moths, ants and other insects amongst the leaf litter. It also hunts in trees and can be seen climbing along the branches where it has been observed feeding on the nectar of the Sallywood flowers (*Lagunaria patersonia*) Lays a clutch of one to three eggs: incubation is about 80 to 90 days.

This species is larger on Ball's Pyramid than on the main island, possibly due to an increased length of survival.

Population data/health

During invertebrate surveys in December 2000 by the Australian Museum no locations were recorded for this species. This species appears to have been abundant on the main island until the mid-1930s, after which it declined dramatically, most likely due to predation by rats. It now occurs only in relatively low numbers at few localities, although remains common on Blackburn and Roach Islands and probably occurs on other vegetated islands in the Admiralty group and on some other vegetated rocky islets.

Habitat

Wide range of forest types from lowland rainforest to montane rainforest to *Poa poiformis* islet.

Threats

Rats are likely to be the main reason for the decline of this species on the main island.

In the past, Cats were reported as preying on this species. No Cats remain on Lord Howe Island.

The introduced skink *Lampropholis delicata* which arrived in the early 1990s has spread from the settlement to the northern hills and Intermediate Hill and may compete for food with this species.

Impact on other species

Unknown.

References

Cogger, H.G. 1971. The Reptiles of Lord Howe Island. *Proc. Linn. Soc. NSW* 96(1):23-38.

Cogger, H. G. 2004. *Draft Recovery Plan for the threatened lizards Christinus guentheri and Oligosoma lichenigera on the island complexes of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands*. Department of Environment and Heritage, Canberra.



Photo: Ian Hutton