

= Trachylepis tschudii =

Trachylepis tschudii is an enigmatic skink , purportedly from Peru . First described in 1845 on the basis of a single specimen , it may be the same as the Noronha skink (*T. atlantica*) from Fernando de Noronha , off northeastern Brazil . *T. tschudii* represents one of two doubtful records of the otherwise African genus *Trachylepis* on mainland South America ; the other is *T. maculata* from Guyana .

The only specimen , the holotype , is mostly brownish above , with dark and light spots , and white below . The snout @-@ to @-@ vent length is 83 mm (3 @. @ 3 in) . Several features of the scales align it with *Trachylepis* over the related American genus *Mabuya* .

= = Taxonomy = =

In 1845 , Swiss zoologist Johann Jakob von Tschudi described the new species *Trachylepis* (*Xystrolepis*) *punctata* among other species he had collected in Peru . The species was recorded as being from the " forest region " (Amazonia) of Peru and was known from a single specimen , the holotype . In 1887 , G.A. Boulenger placed it at an uncertain position within the genus *Mabuia* , which included Tschudi 's *Trachylepis* . In a 1907 reappraisal of some of Tschudi 's reptiles and amphibians , J. Roux redescribed *punctata* under the name " *Mabuia punctata* " , but did not comment on its affinities . In 1935 , E.R. Dunn reviewed some American *Mabuya* and commented that he was unable to tell the identity of *punctata* , but that it probably was not a true *Mabuya* .

Writing in 1946 , H. Travassos considered Tschudi 's *punctata* to be identical to the Noronha skink (then known as *Mabuya punctata*) , a species otherwise known only from Fernando de Noronha , a small archipelago off northeastern Brazil . On the basis of its geographic origin , J. Peters and R. Donoso @-@ Barros preferred to place it with one of the *Mabuya* species of Amazonia and classified it as a junior synonym of *Mabuya mabouya* . In reviewing the nomenclature of the Noronha skink , P. Mausfeld and D. Vrcibradic noted in 2002 that Tschudi 's name was preoccupied within *Mabuya* , making it unavailable for use as a valid name . They were unable to examine the holotype and therefore did not comment on its affinities . In the same year , Mausfeld and others split the genus *Mabuya* , retaining most American species in *Mabuya* but placing the African species and the Noronha skink in a separate genus *Euprepis* ; the latter name was later corrected to *Trachylepis* .

In 2009 , A. Miralles and others reviewed Tschudi 's species and re @-@ examined the holotype . Like Mausfeld and Vrcibradic , they noted that the name *punctata* is preoccupied ; earlier uses of the name in *Trachylepis* include *Lacerta punctata* Linnaeus , 1758 , which they consider a synonym of *Trachylepis homalocephala* from South Africa , and *Tiliqua punctata* J.E. Gray , 1839 , an earlier name for the Noronha skink . (The former was assigned to *Lygosoma punctatum* , a member of another skink genus , by Bauer in 2003 .) Miralles and coworkers proposed a new name , *Trachylepis tschudii* , to replace Tschudi 's name *punctata* ; the new name honors Tschudi , who first described the animal . They assigned it to the genus *Trachylepis* , rather than *Mabuya* , on the basis of several characters of the external anatomy which it shares with the former , but were unable to resolve its placement within *Trachylepis* . It is distinct from *T. maculata* , a species recorded from Guyana that represents another doubtful mainland South American record of *Trachylepis* . They considered three hypotheses : (1) *T. tschudii* is a real , but very rare species from Amazonia ; (2) *T. tschudii* is actually from somewhere in the Old World , but its origin was wrongly recorded ; and (3) *T. tschudii* represents the same species as the Noronha skink , and it either represents an otherwise unknown Amazonian population of that species or actually comes from Fernando de Noronha and was mislabeled . Considering the close similarity between *T. tschudii* and the Noronha skink , they considered the third hypothesis to be most likely .

= = Description = =

The holotype and only known specimen , which is in very poor condition , is preserved in the

Museum d 'Histoire Naturel de Neuchâtel as specimen MHNN 91 @.@ 2426 . It has five auricular lobules in front of the ears on each side of the head , 39 rows of scales around the midbody , keels on its dorsal scales , and the third supraocular scale in contact with the frontal scale , all characters which align it with *Trachylepis* rather than *Mabuia* . The other putative mainland South American *Trachylepis* , *T. maculata* , has five instead of three keels , 32 to 34 midbody scales , and separated parietal scales . *T. tschudii* agrees with the Noronha skink in size , coloration , numbers of scales , and discrete characters , such as having the supranasal , parietal , and prefrontal scales all in contact .

The muzzle is narrow and long . The lower eyelid contains a large , transparent disk . The head is olive @-@ brown . There are black scales with a white border between the eyes and the ears . The body is somewhat darker than the head and covered with irregular black and white spots above and is bluish white below . The limbs are yellowish white below . The tail is light brown above , but has two rows of darker spots , and yellowish white below . Snout @-@ to @-@ vent length is 83 mm (3 @.@ 3 in) , head length 10 mm (0 @.@ 39 in) , head width 6 @.@ 5 mm (0 @.@ 26 in) , length of the body 33 mm (1 @.@ 3 in) , length of the forelimb 15 mm (0 @.@ 59 in) , length of the hindlimb 23 mm (0 @.@ 91 in) , and length of the (incomplete) tail 40 mm (1 @.@ 6 in) .