



## A rare alpine skink *Oligosoma pikitanga* n. sp. (Reptilia: Scincidae) from Llawrenny Peaks, Fiordland, New Zealand

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### Abstract

A new species of alpine skink, *Oligosoma pikitanga*, is described from the Llawrenny Peaks, Fiordland, New Zealand. This species is diagnosed on the basis of strong morphological, ecological, and genetic differentiation from the following relatives *O. acrinatum*, *O. infrapunctatum*, *O. ottagense*, *O. taumakae* and *O. waimatense*. The species is characterized by a shiny black base colour with bright green dorsal blotches, lateral pinkish spots and a vivid orange belly. It appears this new taxon is extremely rare, and at enhanced risk from introduced mammalian predators.

**Key words:** *Oligosoma pikitanga* n. sp.; Sinbad skink; Scincidae; Reptilia; taxonomy; morphology; genetics; *O. acrinatum*, Llawrenny Peaks, Milford; Fiordland, New Zealand

### Introduction

The described skink fauna of New Zealand currently comprises 33 species in two genera, *Oligosoma* (24 species) and *Cyclodina* (9 species) (Gill and Whitaker 2001; Chapple & Patterson 2007; Chapple *et al.* 2008). However, a number of undescribed species are known and current phylogenetic research is likely to result in recognition of a greater generic- and specific-level diversity (Hickson *et al.* 2000; Hitchmough *et al.* 2007; D. Chapple pers. comm.). In this paper, we describe a new and clearly distinct skink species from Fiordland in the south-western South Island, New Zealand.

This species was first discovered in March 2004 by T. Jewell, in the Sinbad Gully, Llawrenny Peaks, at 1100m above sea level (ASL), and assigned the tag name *Oligosoma* sp 'Sinbad Gully' in reference to the type locality (Jewell and Tocher 2004, Hitchmough *et al.* 2007, Figs 1–3). A juvenile specimen was captured at the time (Fig. 4), however only five other individuals have since been located (Bell *et al.* in press, and Bell & Patterson (in prep)). These additional animals are live adults and juveniles examined in March 2007 and February 2008 during two field expeditions funded by the New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC) Terrestrial Conservation Unit and led by T. Bell, Landcare Research (Bell *et al.* in press and Bell & Patterson (in prep)).

### Material and methods

The description is based on these specimens encountered from the Sinbad Gully, Llawrenny Peaks, Fiordland National Park, of which one medium-sized juvenile was collected and assigned as holotype material, and five