



A new species of *Liolaemus* (Reptilia: Squamata) from southwestern Rio Negro province, northern Patagonia, Argentina

LUCIANO JAVIER AVILA¹, CRISTIAN HERNAN FULVIO PEREZ¹, MARIANA MORANDO¹,
& JACK WALTER SITES, JR.²

¹Centro Nacional Patagónico-Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Boulevard Almirante Guillermo Brown 2915, U9120ACD, Puerto Madryn, Chubut, Argentina. ²Department of Biology and M. L. Bean Life Science Museum, Brigham Young University, 401 WIDB, 84602, Provo, Utah, United States of America. E-mail: jack_sites@byu.edu
Corresponding author E-mail: avila@cenpat.edu.ar

Abstract

A new species of lizard of the genus *Liolaemus* from southwestern Rio Negro Province, central Patagonia is described. The new species is a member of the *Liolaemus fitzingerii* group, and molecular data show it as sister taxon of *L. martorii*, but it differs in size, squamation, coloration, and sexual dimorphism. *Liolaemus casamiquelai* **sp. nov.** is terrestrial, dwelling on loose sandy soil in a shrubby landscape, and seems to be oviparous and insectivorous.

Key words: Iguanidae; Liolaemini; *melanops* complex; *Liolaemus casamiquelai* **sp. nov.**; new species

Resumen

Se describe una nueva especie de lagartija del género *Liolaemus* del suroeste de la Provincia de Río Negro, Patagonia Central. La nueva especie es un miembro del grupo *Liolaemus fitzingerii*, y datos moleculares la muestran como el taxón hermano de *L. martorii*, diferenciándose en tamaño, escamación, coloración y dimorfismo sexual. *Liolaemus casamiquelai* **sp. nov.** es terrestre, vive en suelo arenoso suelto en un ambiente arbustivo, y parece ser ovípara e insectívora.

Palabras claves: Iguanidae; Liolaemini; complejo *melanops*; *Liolaemus casamiquelai* **sp. nov.**; nueva especie

Introduction

The liolaemid lizard fauna of central Patagonia is very rich but still inadequately known despite extensive field work over the last four decades. In the 1970's and 1980's several new species were described, all endemic to this region (e.g. *Liolaemus petrophilus* Donoso Barros & Cei 1971; *L. somuncurae* Cei & Scolaro 1981). In the last ten years new field surveys in central Chubut and Rio Negro provinces revealed several new species of *Liolaemus* (e.g. *L. sagei* Etheridge & Christie, *L. tehuelche* Abdala, *L. inacayali* Abdala, *L. uptoni* Scolaro & Cei, *L. chehuachekenk* Avila *et al.*). Further, other species of this liolaemid lizard genera was re-validated (*Liolaemus goetschi* Cei and Scolaro 2003), and new surveys in poorly known areas, coupled with the application of molecular techniques, revealed that several probably new species of *Liolaemus* remain undescribed (Avila *et al.* 2006a; Morando *et al.* 2003, 2004, 2007). *Liolaemus* predominates in the lizard fauna of austral South America, and ranges from coastal central Perú southward through Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, and Argentina, and up to the Atlantic coast of Uruguay and southeastern Brazil (Etheridge & Espinoza 2000). About 220 species are known, of which 60 have been described in the last ten years, and new species descriptions are published at a rate of five or six per year (Abdala *et al.* 2008). One detailed study of a single species complex suggested that the total number of actual species might be approximately triple the number known at that time (Morando *et al.* 2003).