

***Tropidosaura montana* (Gray, 1831)**
COMMON MOUNTAIN LIZARD

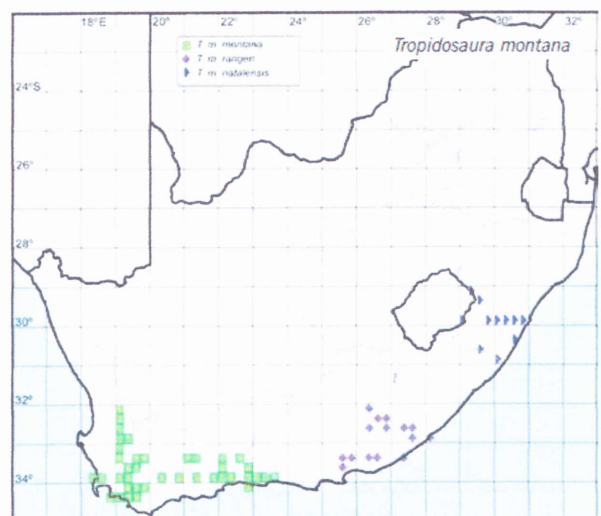
Andrew A. Turner

Global: Least Concern

Endemic

Taxonomy: There are three subspecies: *Tropidosaura montana montana*, *T. m. rangeri* and *T. m. natalensis*. The first two forms are morphologically poorly separated, based on slight differences in the development of the collar and the numbers of femoral pores in males (Branch 1998). *Tropidosaura montana natalensis* is separated from the other two subspecies by several differences in scalation (FitzSimons 1947) and is also geographically disjunct. Mitochondrial DNA sequence data support the continued recognition of the three subspecies as minor variants within *T. montana*, the sister species of *T. gularis* (M.J. Cunningham unpubl. data). This status was confirmed for *T. m. montana* and *T. m. natalensis*, which were included in the analysis of Engleder *et al.* (2013).

Distribution: *Tropidosaura m. montana* occurs in the Cape Fold Mountains from the Cederberg in the north to the Cape Peninsula and eastwards to Prince Alfred's Pass near



Knysna and the Kammanasieberg. *Tropidosaura m. rangeri* occurs along the Suurberg Range and extends along the coast to the East London area, with scattered inland populations associated with grassland and forest edge in the central part of the Eastern Cape. The northernmost

record for *T. m. rangeri* is somewhat out of range and considered questionable. The eastern subspecies, *T. m. natalensis*, is found in coastal and montane grasslands of southern KwaZulu-Natal.

Habitat: In the Western Cape it inhabits densely covered fynbos slopes, often in short restio veld and rocky areas. In the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal it occurs on dense grassy slopes, particularly around seepage areas with tall tufted grasses such as *Merxmuellera* (M.J. Cunningham pers. comm.). Specimens have been observed basking in long, dense grass at Umtamvuna Nature Reserve on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast (A.J. Armstrong pers. comm.).

Biome: Fynbos; Grassland; Indian Ocean Coastal Belt; Savanna; Albany Thicket.

Assessment rationale: Has a large range and occurs in many protected areas. Often abundant and not considered threatened. The habitat of *T. m. montana* is seldom significantly disturbed because this subspecies occurs primarily on rugged mountain slopes, but some parts of the ranges of the other two subspecies are severely overgrazed (with shrub encroachment in parts), resulting in some fragmentation of populations (M.J. Cunningham pers. comm.). Because the subspecies *T. m. rangeri* is poorly defined from typical *T. m. montana*, and since the relationship of *T. m. natalensis* to *T. essexi* must still be fully resolved, the three subspecies have not been separately assessed. The conservation status of the two eastern subspecies may need to be re-evaluated if they prove to be valid species.

Conservation measures: None recommended.



Tropidosaura montana montana—WC

W.D. Haacke



Tropidosaura montana rangeri—Asante Sana GR, EC

W. Conradie



Tropidosaura montana natalensis—Highmoor, Drakensberg, KZN

M.F. Bates