ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract **Element Code:** ARACJ02011
Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Aspidoscelis stictogrammus*
COMMON NAME: Giant Spotted Whiptail; Canyon Spotted Whiptail
SYNONYMS: *Aspidoscelis stictogramma; Aspidoscelis burti stictogrammus*; *Cnemidophorus sacki stictogrammus; Cnemidophorus burti stictogrammus*
FAMILY: Sauria: Teidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: W.L. Burger (1950), Chicago Acad. Sci., Nat. Hist. Misc. (65):1-9.

TYPE LOCALITY: Yank's Spring, 6 miles southeast of Ruby, Santa Cruz County, Arizona.

TYPE SPECIMEN: The holotype, USNM 132456, is a female collected on August 17, 1948 by M.M. Hensley and W.L. Burger.

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: Some 25 species in the genus *Cnemidophorus*. Reeder et al. (2002) examined phylogenetic relationships of the whiptail lizards of the genus *Cnemidophorus* based on a combined analysis of mitochonrial DNA, morphology, and allozymes. They determined that *Cnemidophorus* in the traditional sense is paraphyletic and thus in need of nomenclatural revision. Rather than subsume all cnemidophorine species (including *Kentropyx*) in a single large genus (*Ameiva*), they proposed a split that placed the North American "*Cnemidophorus*" clade in the monophyletic genus *Aspidoscelis*. Under this arrangement, South American taxa remain in the genus *Cnemidopho*dor*us*. The taxonomy of whiptail lizards has been confused and remains problematic (Wright 1993, 1996; Duellman and Zweifel 1962).

Based on differences in body size, scutellation, and color patterns, Walker and Cordes (2011) inferred that *A. stictogrammus* is a separate species from *A. burti* (de Quieroz and Reeder in Crother 2012). *A. burti* is now restricted to Mexico.

DESCRIPTION: At the species level, this is a long slender lizard with total lengths averaging between 27.0-45.1 cm (11-17.75 in), while lengths from snout to vent are 8.9-14.0 cm (3.5 - 5.5 in). Back scales are small and granular; 85-115 dorsal granules. Eight lengthwise rows of large, smooth rectangular scales, can be found on a uniform gray to white belly. Dorsum is blue-gray to gray-green with profuse pale spotting. Six to 7 light stripes are found on adults and juveniles, except large adult males, where they are faded or absent. Vertebral (middorsal) stripe may be present or absent. Head and neck are reddish, sometimes over entire back. Supraorbital semicircles are normal, extending toward the snout, to or near

the front end of the frontoparietal. Abruptly enlarged postantebrachials and scales on gular fold. Tail is brown in adults, and orange in young.

In the subspecies *C. b. stictogrammus*, "the adults reach a much larger size than the Red-backed Whiptail (*C. b. xanthonotus*). Large light spots, red usually confined to head and neck. Young have a bright orange to reddish tail. Dorsal granules number 100 or more, while granules around the midbody range from 98-115" (Stebbins 1985).

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: The Giant Spotted Whiptail (*A. stictogrammus*) is larger than the Redback Whiptail, and has large light spots, and red on head and neck only. The Giant Spotted Whiptail has 100 or more dorsal granules. The Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail (*C. exsanguis*) is smaller at 4.4-20.0 cm (1.75-4.0 in), with brown or reddish brown dark fields, and cream to pale yellow spotting. The Sonoran Spotted Whiptail (*C. sonorae*) has dark fields of blackish, brown to reddish, with spots of white, pale tan, or dull yellow. They also have a tail that is usually dull orange-tan, often grading to an olive color toward the tip.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Color photo (Behler and King 1979: plate 416)
Color photos (Degenhardt, Painter and Price 1996: plates 60A and 60B)
Color drawing (Stebbins 1966: plate 29)
Color drawing (Stebbins 1985: plate 34)

TOTAL RANGE: Southeastern Arizona including Santa Catalina, Santa Rita, Baboquivari, and Pajarito Mountains; vicinity of Oracle, Pinal County, and Mineral Hot Springs, Cochise County. Guadalupe Canyon in extreme southwest New Mexico; and northern Sonora, Mexico (Stebbins 1985).

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: Southeastern Arizona including Mineral Hot Springs, Cochise County, and Santa Catalina, Santa Rita, Baboquivari, and Pajarito Mountains, vicinity of Oracle, Pinal County (Stebbins 1985).

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: This lizard is diurnal, and extremely wary and difficult to approach. They emerge from hibernation in April or May depending on climatic conditions (Goldberg 1987b). They undergo a distinct ontogenetic change in color pattern as it matures. Longitudinal strips change to light colored spots (Degenhardt et al. 1996).

REPRODUCTION: *A. stictogrammus* has bisexual reproduction (Goldberg 1987a; Moritz et al. 1989; Degenhardt et al. 1996). A clutch of 1-4 eggs is laid in the summer; females may produce more than one clutch in a reproductive season (Goldberg 1987a; Degenhardt et al. 1996).

FOOD HABITS: Diet consists mainly of insects and arachnids (spiders) (Paulissen and Walker 1996).

HABITAT: Inhabits mountain canyons, arroyos, and mesas in arid and semi-arid regions, entering lowland desert along stream courses. Found in dense shrubby vegetation, often among rocks near permanent and intermittent streams (Stebbins 1985). Open areas of bunch grass within these riparian habitats are also occupied (Degenhardt et. al. 1996).

ELEVATION: Near sea level to around 1370 m (4,500 ft) (Stebbins 1985).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Occurs in riparian habitat dominated by sycamore, cottonwood, ash, and various grasses and forbs (Degenhardt et al. 1996).

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown but thought to be stable. Can be locally abundant.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: SC (USDI, FWS 1996)
[C2 USDI, FWS 1994]

STATE STATUS: 2 (AZGFD, AWCS 2022)
[1B (AGFD SWAP 2012)]

OTHER STATUS: Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1999, 2013)
[Bureau of Land Management Sensitive (USDI, BLM AZ 2000, 2005)]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: Limited distribution.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN: The Arizona Game and Fish Department limits collection of species to 20 per day (AGFD 2001).

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Distribution, population, habitat and life history studies.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: Forest Service (Coronado National Forest), Bureau of Land Management, State, and Private.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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