

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract

Element Code: ARACK01050

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CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Xantusia arizonae*
COMMON NAME: Arizona Night Lizard
SYNONYMS: *Xantusia vigilis arizonae*
FAMILY: Xantusiidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: *Xantusia arizonae* Klauber, Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. 7(1): 1-16, 1931.

TYPE LOCALITY: One mile south of Yarnell, 4940 ft, Yavapai County, Arizona.

TYPE SPECIMEN: Holotype: San Diego Natural History Museum 5433.

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: The Arizona Night Lizard is 1 of 23 species in the family Xantusiidae, and 1 of 8 species in the genus *Xantusia*. *X. arizonae* is 1 of 3 species of night lizards that occurs in Arizona. The others include *X. bezyi* (Bezy's Night Lizard) and *X. vigilis* (Desert Night Lizard).

DESCRIPTION: The species grows to a maximum size of about 10 cm (4.25 in). The head is covered with large, smooth symmetrical plates. Body scales are small and granular, while belly scales are rectangular, and in regular rows. The dorsal side is covered with many small dark spots tending to form rows. The tail is cylindrical, scales forming annuli. The tail is about 1.5 times snout-vent length. The eyes are large and round with vertical pupils. The moveable eyelids are absent and the eyes are covered with a clear round spectacle. Ear openings are distinct and the gular fold is present. The gular scales are very tiny. Limbs are strong, each with 5-clawed digits; the adhesive pads are absent.

Xantusia arizonae is the largest species in Arizona, and is yellow or gray above. Measurements are as follows: Dorsal scales 38-49 mm, 4th toe lamellae 21-29 mm, gulars 32-42 mm, femoral pores 9-13 mm (absent to poorly developed in females), ventrals 30-32 mm, 7th supralabial not as high as 6th. The maximum snout-vent length 60 mm. Head and body somewhat flattened.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: *Xantusia arizonae* is yellow or gray above and the spots are not netted together.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Color photo (Behler and King, 1979: Pl. 403)
Color drawing (Stebbins 2003: Pl. 35)

Color photo (Stebbins 2003: P. 308)
Black and white photo (Sprackland: 1)
Color photo (Bezy and Bolles *in*
<http://www.arts.arizona.edu/herp/lizards39>)

TOTAL RANGE: Central Arizona along the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau and in the Grand Canyon (Mohave, Pinal and Yavapai counties).

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: See “**Total Range.**”

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: The species is a secretive and reclusive lizard. It feeds, reproduces and lives most of its life under cover. Populations of night lizards at low elevations become active in early April and remain so until late summer, while higher elevation populations may not become active until May. Daily activity patterns are difficult to determine due to their secretive behavior. Laboratory studies have demonstrated that the desert night lizard is diurnal. Their home range is restricted to the cover site and the area immediately adjacent to it. Some of the night lizard’s predators include larger lizards (*Crotphytus*, *Gambelina*), many snakes and predatory birds.

REPRODUCTION: Breeding occurs from May to June, and the gestation period is about 3 months. The female gives birth to 1-3 live young from August to October. The mother attends to the young for a short time after birth. The young measure about 5 cm (2 in) in total length. Both males and females are territorial during the breeding season.

FOOD HABITS: The species is an invertivore, consuming termites, ants, beetles, flies, spiders, moths, caterpillars and ticks. It waits for prey items to wander into the cover area and seldom searches actively.

HABITAT: The habitat is arid and semi-arid granite outcroppings and rocky areas, among fallen leaves, trunks of agaves, rocks or under vegetative debris.

ELEVATION: Based on unpublished records in the HDMS (AGFD, accessed 2002), elevation ranges from 3,000 to 3,800 ft (914-1036).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Pinyon-juniper, chaparral-oak.

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: None
STATE STATUS: 2 (AZGFD, AWCS 2022)
[1B (AGFD SWAP 2012)]
OTHER STATUS: Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region
3 1999)

MANAGEMENT FACTORS:

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:

SUGGESTED PROJECTS:

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: USFS - Tonto National Forest; State Land
Department.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

- Arizona Game and Fish Department. 2012. Arizona's State Wildlife Action Plan 2012-2022. Phoenix, AZ.
- Arizona Game and Fish Department. 2022. Arizona Wildlife Conservation Strategy: 2022-2032. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, Arizona. 378 pages.
- California Fish and Game. 2000. California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System. Available: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/cwhr/R034.html>.
- McCoy, C.J. 1982. Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. P. 302.1-302.4.
- NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2001. Version 1.6. Arlington, Virginia, USA: NatureServe. Available: <https://explorer.natureserve.org/> (Accessed: March 18, 2002).
- Sprackland, R. 2002. Virtual Museum of Natural History. Available: <http://66.114.152.132/curator/index.htm>.
- Stebbins, R.C. 2003. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. Third edition. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston, MA. Pp. 307-309.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 1999. Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List.

MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Revised: 2002-03-18 (AMS)
2002-10-03 (SMS)
2003-12-23 (SMS)

2023-05-05 (MBL)

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