

FIG. 1



### Art in Herpetology: Four Historical Views of a Large Australian Skink (Genus *Egernia*)

AMONGST THE REPTILES WAS A VARIETY OF LIZARDS; ONE OF WHICH, OF THE LARGER SIZE, WAS MET WITH BY [CAPTAIN WILLIAM] DAMPIER ON THE WEST COAST, AND DESCRIBED BY HIM "AS SORT OF GUANO [LIZARD]. BUT DIFFERING FROM OTHERS IN THREE REMARKABLE PARTICULARS: FOR THESE HAD A LARGER AND MORE UGLIER HEAD, AND HAD NO TAIL: AND AT THE RUMP, INSTEAD OF THE TAIL THERE, THEY HAD A STUMP OF A TAIL, WHICH APPEARED LIKE ANOTHER HEAD; BUT NOT REALLY SUCH, BEING WITHOUT MOUTH OR EYES. YET THIS CREATURE SEEMED BY THIS MEANS TO HAVE A HEAD AT EACH END; AND, WHICH MAY BE RECKONED A FOURTH DIFFERENCE, THE LEGS, ALSO, SEEMED ALL FOUR OF THEM TO BE FORELEGS, BEING ALL ALIKE IN SHAPE AND LENGTH, AND SEEMING BY THE JOINTS AND BENDINGS TO BE MADE AS IF THEY WERE TO GO INDIFFERENTLY EITHER HEAD OR TAIL FOREMOST [THIS DESCRIPTION LIKELY IDENTIFIES THE SHINGLEBACK SKINK *TILIQUA RUGOSA* = *TRACHYDOSAUROS RUGOSUS*]...THE GUANO'S I HAVE OBSERVED TO BE VERY GOOD MEAT; AND I HAVE OFTEN EATEN OF THEM WITH PLEASURE; BUT THOUGH I HAVE EATEN OF SNAKES, CROCODILES, AND ALLIGATORS AND MANY CREATURES THAT LOOK FRIGHTFULLY ENOUGH, AND THERE ARE BUT FEW I SHOULD HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO EAT OF, IF PRESSED BY HUNGER, YET I THINK MY STOMACH WOULD SCARCE HAVE SERVED TO VENTURE UPON THESE NEW HOLLAND GUANO'S, BOTH THE LOOKS AND THE SMELL OF THEM BEING SO OFFENSIVE.

MATTHEW FLINDERS, 1814.

*A VOYAGE TO TERRA AUSTRALIS...* VOLUME 1:64–65.

King's Skink (now *Egernia kingii*) was described as *Tiliqua kingii* by John Edward Gray from the British Museum in 1838. The lizard was named after Captain and Admiral Philip Parker King (1791–1856), Australian-born British marine surveyor and collector. This saurian is found on offshore islands, coastal dunes, and rocky outcrops of south-western Western Australia. On the islands it is common, lives in seabird burrows, and preys on their eggs and young. Observations over a ten-year period by Masters and Shine (2002. *Australian Zoologist* 32:377–380) revealed a very stable adult pair-bond within this species based on a single family of lizards (a pair of adults plus six successive litters of their offspring) near Perth. Synonymy follows Cogger (1983. *Zoological Catalogue of Australia*. Vol. 1. Amphibia and Reptilia. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, ACT. 313 pp.; 2014. *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria. 1064 pp.) and Uetz et

al. (2016. The Reptile Database. <http://www.reptile-database.org/> accessed March 2016).

The colored image of the King's Skink shown here (Fig. 1) is actually a reproduction of a watercolor drawing by Ferdinand Bauer from an expedition in Australia by Matthew Flinders, and was based on a specimen killed at King Island, King George Sound in Western Australia on 22 Dec 1801. Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis* was published in 1814 (G. and W. Nicol, London. 2 vols and atlas). The drawing is in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Judith Magee at the Museum (Bauer Zoological Number 29).

In 1839, the taxon was listed in Duméril and Bibron's *Erpétologie Générale ou Histoire Naturelle Complète des Reptiles* as *Tropidolepisma Dumerilii* (Le Tropidolepisme de Duméril) in the synonymy in volume 5 on p. 745 (part). The image is plate # 50 from the Atlas in *Erpétologie Générale*, listed under the name *Scincus Dumerilii* (Fig. 2). Tracing a Duméril and Bibron scientific name can sometimes be difficult—*Scincus aterrimus* Duméril and Bibron 1839: 745 (nomen nudum); *Scincus nuittensis* Duméril and Bibron 1839: 745 (nomen nudum); *Scincus trifasciatus* Duméril and Bibron 1839: 745 (nomen nudum).

These black-and-white drawings are from *The Lizards of Australia and New Zealand* by John E. Gray published in 1845 (Catalogue of the Specimens of Lizards in the Collection of the British Museum. Trustees of the British Museum/Edward Newman, London. xxvii + 289 pp.). In his *Catalogue*, Gray listed two species of large skinks. The first was called *Topidolepisma Kingii* and he listed it as *Tiliqua Kingii* in his synonymy (Fig. 3). The second was The Shining Tropidolepisma (*T. nitida*), now considered *Egernia kingii* (Fig. 4). Included here are both plates from Gray (1867. *The Lizards of Australia and New Zealand* in the Collection of the British Museum / reprinted by SSAR 1995). The famous artist George Henry Ford (1809–1876) produced all but perhaps one (# 20) of the extraordinary plates in this work.

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FIG. 2

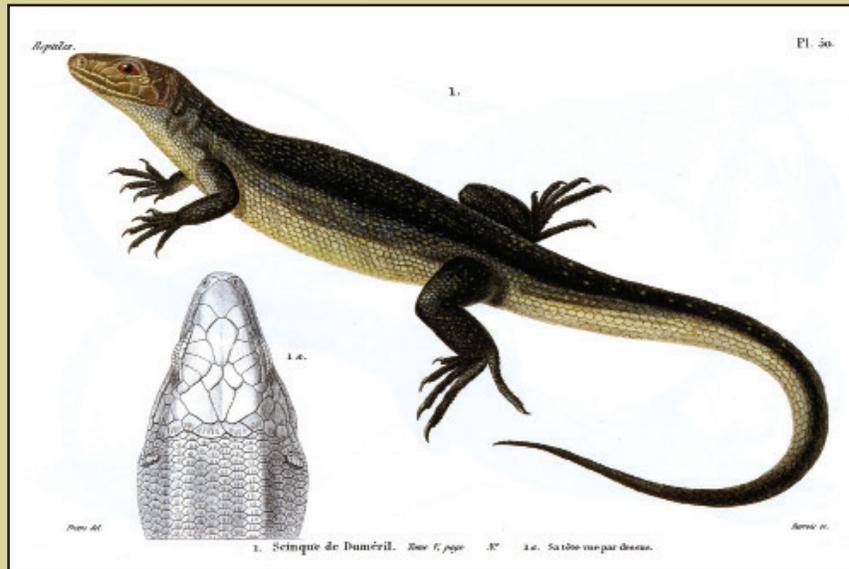


FIG. 3

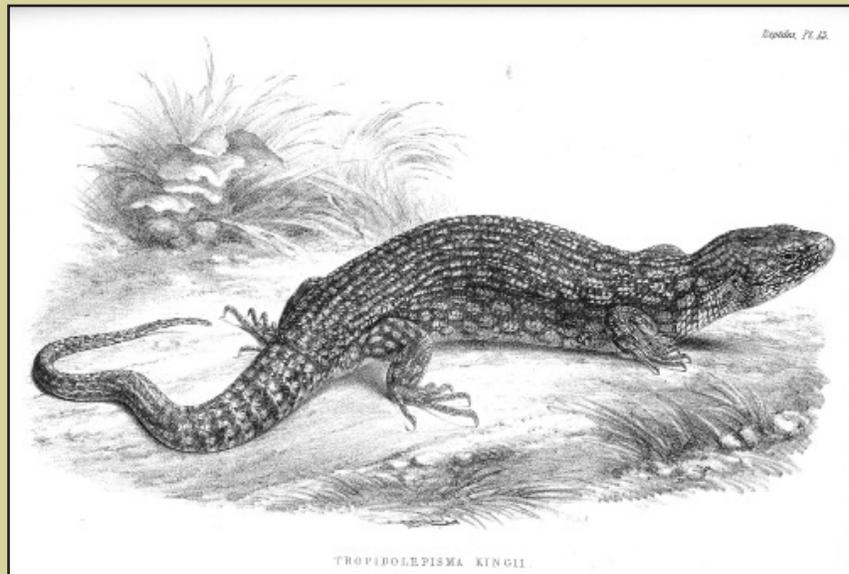


FIG. 4

