

Two new species of Pygopodid Legless Lizard from New South Wales, Australia and irrefutable confirmation that “*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022” is a junior synonym of “*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985”.

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ABSTRACT

Hoser (2017) confirmed the previously underestimated diversity of Australian Pygopodids by formally naming six new genera, two new subgenera and 13 new species. This was followed up with three more species in Hoser (2018) and another in Hoser (2022).

This paper formally names as new species, a taxon until now treated as a geographically and morphologically divergent population of *Delma* (*Honlamopus*) *inornata*, from north-west New South Wales as well as nearby south Queensland and a taxon until now treated as a geographically and morphologically divergent population of *Pseudodelma plebeia*, from New South Wales, divergent from the type form of *P. plebeia* from south-east Queensland.

Significantly, an audit was conducted with respect of “*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022”, more correctly placed in *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1882 as published in the PRINO (peer reviewed in name only) online “journal” *Zootaxa*.

It is conspecific with “*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985”, also more correctly placed in *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1882, which was recognised as a distinct taxonomic entity in Hoser (2017).

“*Delma vescolineata*” is therefore a synonym and the name should not be used for this taxon, except by way of synonymy.

Significantly, in justifying the renaming of “*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985”, several acts of scientific fraud were perpetrated.

This included a repeatedly published lie that the Wells and Wellington (1985) name was a *nomen nudem*, being a claim peddled as far back as 1999 by Shea and Sadler (1999).

More seriously, it is also clearly apparent that the alleged holotype specimen of “*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985” published on the internet as of 7 Aug 2024 and as described and cited by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) is not the original holotype specimen lodged by Wells and Wellington or even of the same species.

This fact is established several ways, including directly from the Wells and Wellington (1985) description of the holotype itself, the same animal also appearing in life in an image in Cogger (1983) in plate 491. The more recently alleged holotype specimen simply does not match it!

In light of the earlier historical fact of the false *nomen nudem* claims, against “*Delma wollemi*” going back to at least 1999, it is an inescapable conclusion that someone with access to the collection at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Australia has engaged in the criminal act of tampering with significant biological and indigenous heritage in breach of Section 86 of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 as well as other State and Federal laws.

Keywords: Herpetology; taxonomy; nomenclature; Australia; Queensland; New South Wales; *Delma*; *Honlamopus*; *Pseudodelma*; *inornata*; *plebeia*; *wollemi*; *vescolineata*; holotype; new species; *abomination*; *whoa*; scientific fraud; taxonomic vandalism; Jodi Rowley; Aaron Bauer; Stephen Mahony; Timothy Cutajar; *Zootaxa*; PRINO; Australian Museum.

INTRODUCTION

Following a major review of the Australian legless lizards (Pygopodidae), Hoser (2017) confirmed the previously underestimated diversity of Australian Pygopodids by formally naming six new genera, two new subgenera and 13 new species. This was followed up with three more species in Hoser (2018) and another in Hoser (2022) giving an Australia-wide total in excess of 50 species.

The Hoser papers also followed a number of major revisions of the group as cited by Hoser (2017) and again cited in this paper.

Two divergent populations in New South Wales flagged as potential new species were inspected and found to be sufficiently divergent both morphologically and genetically to warrant being recognized as separate allopatric species.

These were a morphologically divergent population of *Delma* (*Honlamopus*) *inornata*, from north-west New South Wales as well as nearby south Queensland and also a taxon until now treated as a geographically and morphologically divergent population of *Pseudodelma plebeia*, from New South Wales, divergent from the type form of *P. plebeia* from south-east Queensland.

Significantly, an audit was conducted with respect of "*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022", more correctly placed in *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1882 as published in the PRINO (peer reviewed in name only) online "journal" *Zootaxa*.

Because of various claims in that paper to the effect that their species was new to science and that "*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985" as recognized by Hoser (2017) was assignable to "*Delma plebeia*" of the same region, both Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) and the description of "*Delma wollemi*" in Wells and Wellington (1985) were audited to establish if the claims of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) were supported by the evidence available.

In summary and as mentioned in the abstract, "*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022" is conspecific with "*Delma wollemi*" Wells and Wellington, 1985".

The audit process is described in more detail later in this paper.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Live and dead specimens of putative *Delma* (*Honlamopus*) *inornata* Kluge, 1974 from across the known range of the putative species (Qld, NSW, ACT and SA) were inspected over some decades in field trips across this region (in all states and territories of relevance), as were relevant museum holdings in Australia.

Literature as cited by Hoser (2017, 2018) was also reviewed, including literature specifically relevant to *Delma inornata*, to confirm that the north-west New South Wales / south Queensland *D. inornata* should be given taxonomic recognition as either a species or subspecies.

The same process was engaged in with regards to putative "*Delma plebeia*" across their known range in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.

References relevant to the taxonomy of *Delma* (*Honlamopus*) *inornata* Kluge, 1974 and *Pseudodelma plebeia* (De Vis, 1888) *sensu lato* included Boulenger (1885, 1903), Brennan (2014), Brennan *et al.* (2015), Brown (2023), Cogger (1983, 2014), Cogger *et al.* (1983), Duméril and Bibron (1839), Fischer (1882), Glauert (1956), Gray (1831, 1867), Günther (1873), Hoser (2017, 2018), Kinghorn (1926), Kluge (1974, 1976), Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022), Ride *et al.* (1999), Shea (1987a, 1987b, 1991), Wells (2007), Wells and Wellington (1984, 1985), Wilson and Knowles (1988), Wilson and Swan (2017, 2021) and sources cited therein.

In terms of "*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022" and "*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985", each of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) and Wells and Wellington (1985) were audited and cross referenced with other relevant publications.

These were versions 2, 3 and 4 of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* as published by the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), being the documents that govern scientific nomenclature, Cogger (1983), which is explicitly cited in the description of "*Delma Wollemi*" by Wells and Wellington, (1985), Shea and Sadlier (1999), as

explicitly cited in Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) in terms of "*Delma wollemi*" and the name allegedly being a *nomen nudem*, as well as Shea (1987a, 1987b) which were the first publications to make the *nomen nudem* claim against "*Delma wollemi*". This was to ensure that the relevant publications both stood and fell on their own merits and all allegations against the Wells and Wellington (1985) purported taxon, name and paper could be properly put (as a hypothesis or series of them) and tested accordingly.

RESULTS

The two referred to populations warranted being named as separate species as they were readily diagnosable and allopatric across barriers of relatively unsuitable habitat.

The publicly available genetic data for specimens (at GENBANK) between populations also confirmed genus-level divergence, probably in the vicinity of about 1.5 MYA for each (as estimated).

The methodology for testing the sequences was as outlined in Hoser (2024a) at page 7.

As a result, each are formally named as new species below in accordance with the rules in the fourth edition of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* as published by the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) (Ride *et al.* 1999) and the relevant Code amendments of 2012 (ICZN 2012).

DELMA WOLLEMI AND DELMA VESCOLINEATA

"*Delma vescolineata* Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley, 2022" is conspecific with "*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985".

ICZN rules dictate that the earlier name is therefore the one to be used (rule of priority, Article 23).

In fact the Code (edition 4) says:

"Priority of publication is a basic principle of zoological nomenclature".

There is zero doubt about that as explained below.

The explanation is lengthy in that it covers all possible contentions and events so that there is absolutely no doubt at all in terms of the nomenclatural outcome herein in terms of the correct species nomen.

The name *Delma wollemi* is 100 per cent NOT a *nomen nudem* by any possible interpretation and that definition (of *nomen nudem*) given in each of the three most recent versions of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (versions 2-4).

Put simply, Glenn Shea, Ross Sadlier as well as Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) all appeared to have knowingly lied by pretending that "*Delma wollemi*" was a *nomen nudem*.

The same applies in terms of Peter Uetz who controls a website called "The Reptile Database", which claims to be the be all to end all with regards to herpetological names and synonymies.

Uetz had published on his site as recently as of 7 Aug 2024, "*nomen nudem*" for "*Delma wollemi*".

That is not "*probably a nomen nudem*" (as Shea and Sadlier stated in 1999), but definitely!

Nomen nudem is defined in the appendix of each of versions 2, 3, and 4 of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* as published by the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN). It is applicable only when the intended entity for the proposed scientific name cannot be identified.

Because Wells and Wellington (1985) cited both a specimen at a museum as their type (thereby immediately removing any doubt as to what they were talking about) and combined it with a description, by way of reference to an illustration of a specimen of the same species in life, no *nomen nudem* claim could possibly be made out.

To confirm whether or not "*Delma wollemi*" was or was not a *nomen nudem*, only required me to check both the original Wells and Wellington (1985) description, and line it up with the 3 relevant editions of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, and it was a simple exercise to be able to wholly reject the false claim.

The improper motive behind the *nomen nudem* claim by Shea and others after him was clearly to create a scenario where it would appear appropriate for another "scientist" to assign a name to the same taxon at a later date and claim to have discovered it.

Shea and others have long been jealous of Richard Wells and

Ross Wellington whom they see as having discovered and named an oversized share of the Australian herpetofauna.

Because the specimen depicted on plate 491 of Cogger (1983), cited by Wells and Wellington (1985), which happened to also be their holotype in life (see below), is not the same animal as that depicted as the alleged holotype of *Delma wollemi* as published online at:

<https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/taxa/c1dcd66e-f74e-4a1d-8d5b-7bc646605f62#gallery>

as downloaded on 7 August 2024, the inalienable fact is that there has been a reassignment of the museum name tag to a wrong specimen.

Were this action (wrong specimen with holotype tag) to have been made in isolation to anything else, one may assume inadvertent human error to blame.

Yes, tags sometimes fall off specimens, but it must be asked how would a precious holotype tag and specimen get mixed up with another specimen in a place like the Australian Museum?

However, in light of the importance of the specimen as a known holotype (as cited and confirmed in Shea and Sadlier, 1999) and the associated false claim that the name "*Delma wollemi*" is a *nomen nudum*, it is an inescapable conclusion that an act of fraud has been committed with the deliberate intent of renaming "*Delma wollemi*" as something else.

This is exactly as ultimately happened when more specimens of the taxon became available and as published by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022).

The case of criminal reassignment of the tag is further sealed when reconciled with similar actions against Wells and Wellington by the same cohort as outlined in Hoser (2023).

Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) are also implicated as a group because in their paper they chose to cite Wells and Wellington (1985) for the purpose of alleging their name "*Delma wollemi*" was a *nomen nudum* and that the substituted holotype was not their allegedly new species, but failed to cite in full the Wells and Wellington (1985) paper in their bibliography because they knew that the description within it referred to Fig 491 in Cogger (1983) which depicted their holotype in life, which clearly was not the same animal (or even species) as the substituted holotype specimen.

The original holotype as described by Wells and Wellington (1985) was "adult" (yes that is the entirety of their holotype description), but the alleged one depicted online was subadult.

The alleged holotype was of putative *D. plebeia*, versus the animal type identified in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983), being the full description of the species, noting a picture says 1,000 words.

Because Wells and Wellington (1985) had identified their species "*Delma wollemi*" as being that in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983), readily identifiable by the diagnosis of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) as their species, "*Delma vescolineata*", the deliberate denial of access to Wells and Wellington (1985) by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) could only have been done with the motivation of not alerting their readers to the fact that "*Delma vescolineata*" was a potential synonym of "*Delma wollemi*".

In terms of "*Delma wollemi*", the image cited in Cogger (1983) matched that of "*Delma vescolineata*", as per the diagnosis of the authors Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022), confirming that by intent, they had described the same taxon as Wells and Wellington (1985) had purported to.

In terms of the alleged holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" as depicted online at:

<https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/taxa/c1dcd66e-f74e-4a1d-8d5b-7bc646605f62#gallery>

it was described in Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) in sufficient detail to confirm it as a putative southern "*Delma plebeia*", which was all that was needed to clear the way for them to proceed to name the other species as "new" ("*Delma vescolineata*").

With the alleged type specimen online of "*Delma wollemi*" not matching the description of Wells and Wellington (1985) in being neither of the right age (subadult versus adult) or species,

matching putative southern "*Delma plebeia*" instead of the animal depicted in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983), the potential for a holotype swap or mix-up was countenanced.

Converse to this was the idea that Wells and Wellington had simply lodged a subadult specimen of putative southern "*Delma plebeia*" instead.

That idea was rejected as highly unlikely at the outset, as it implied that Wells and Wellington, who at the time were experienced herpetologists had in one move correctly identified a new species but were then so stupid as to actually lodge a specimen of the species they said their new one was not!

Furthermore, that they were both so stupid as to be unable to tell a subadult from adult lizard was simply not plausible.

In terms of the idea that the original holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" had been fraudulently switched for a putative southern "*Delma plebeia*" instead, another smoking gun was the specimen itself.

It contained not just the tag with the correct (Wells and Wellington) specimen number of R46058, but also a second cord of string from which the tag had been removed.

That showed quite clearly that the original specimen number tag had been removed and that the relevant specimen (the alleged type published online) had previously been known by another number and was therefore not the original Wells and Wellington (1985) animal.

Now just to clear the air, we know this fact three separate ways.

1/ From both the accounts of Wells and Antenor that the holotype went from Hal Cogger's home in the Sydney suburb of Turramurra to the Australian Museum, meaning no field tag was ever attached to the animal.

2/ This same fact was confirmed in the Wells and Wellington (1985) description which only lists the R-tag number and no field tag number.

See by way of example and contrast, it with *Lampropholis longleyi* Wells and Wellington, 1985 in that same publication.

3/ The preceding (1 and 2) are further confirmed by the entries from Shea and Sadlier (1999) which reports the R-tag number and makes no mention of any field tag number for "*Delma wollemi*", but in line with Wells and Wellington (1985) reports field tag numbers for other taxa, including for example the holotype of "*Lampropholis longleyi* Wells & Wellington, 1985".

Shea and Sadlier (1999) said of the holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" that:

HOLOTYPE R46058 29km S Singleton on Putty Rd, NSW (Rankin, Wells, Antenor & Cook, 12.1.1975).

That is the reptile was collected by Peter Rankin (deceased), Richard Wells (alive), Alex Antenor (alive) and Robert Cook (deceased).

Playing Devil's advocate I made a phone call to Alex Antenor, who was one of the collectors of the type specimen of "*Delma wollemi*" and with whom I had not spoken to since about 1977.

The Samsung phone I own records all phone calls.

The history of the holotype was as follows.

On the date in question only one "*Delma*" was caught.

A second was seen but got away (hot day in summer) and a skin was also found.

Rankin in particular thought he was onto something quite exciting and so they drove to Harold (Hal) Cogger's home in Turramurra in Sydney's north on the way home where Cogger photographed the lizard on a white background, before it ended up at the Australian Museum in a jar as specimen number R.46058.

As there were no other "*Delma*" caught on that date, the idea I had mooted of a potential lodgement of a different specimen was simply not possible. There were no others!

This also meant that the photo in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983) listed as being from "Singleton New South Wales", the nearest main town to where it was found, was the holotype in life of "*Delma wollemi*".

Separate to that, Richard Wells and Ross Wellington had already posted much the same information on Facebook.

End point is that "*Delma wollemi*" is a senior synonym of "*Delma*

vescolineata".

Second end point is that in my opinion the paper of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) in the online only journal *Zootaxa*, as published by the notorious grant-grabbing taxpayer-funded parasite in herpetology Aaron Bauer, who oversaw the publication of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) in its debased form is a serious case of scientific fraud with respect of the alleged discovery of a new species.

Third point is that the associated substitution of the holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" with a specimen of another species was deliberate and in my opinion it is an inescapable conclusion that someone with access to the collection at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Australia has engaged in the egregious criminal act of tampering with significant biological and indigenous heritage in breach of Section 86 of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 as well as other State and Federal laws.

In terms of Section 86 of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 the maximum penalty for an individual is 5,000 penalty units or two years in prison.

After the preceding checks, I noted Wells, Antenor and Wellington had made relevant comments on Facebook predating my enquiries and arriving at the same conclusion.

Ignoring their comments as potentially biased parties, the preceding conclusions of fact are not altered in any way. In terms of names and name authorities, my previous publishing record shows that I will happily squash any names that cannot stand and this includes at times names I myself have proposed for taxa.

It should also be noted that the correct genus-level assignment for "*Delma wollemi*" is in fact *Pseudodelma wollemi* based on the reasons given in Hoser (2017) and again confirmed by the phylogeny published in Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022).

For the record the following important and relevant information is provided from the relevant publications.

The Wells and Wellington (1985) description of "*Delma Wollemi*" is quoted in full below so that there is absolutely no doubt what they did and did not state.

"*Delma wollemi* sp. nov.

Holotype: An adult specimen in the Australian Museum R46058. Collected at Milbrodale, New South Wales, on 12 January, 1975 by Richard Wells and Peter Rankin.

Diagnosis: A close relative of *Delma plebeia*, *Delma wollemi* is largely confined to the mid-western slopes of New South Wales, from the Hunter Valley, to the southern edge of the New England Plateau. It is figured in Cogger (1983:Plate 491), specimen from Singleton, New South Wales (Milbrodale ?). Cogger (1983:211) also gives a description that appears to be mainly based on material referable to *Delma wollemi* rather than *Delma plebeia* as cited. Kluge (1974) provides an illustration and comparative data on its close relative *D. plebeia*."

The relevant parts of the fourth edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (Ride *et al.* 1999), which is similar in the previous two editions of "the Code" states the following:

"*nomen nudum* (*pl. nomina nuda*), n.

A Latin term referring to a name that, if published before 1931, fails to conform to Article 12; or, if published after 1930, fails to conform to Article 13.

A *nomen nudum* is not an available name, and therefore the same name may be made available later for the same or a different concept; in such a case it would take authorship and date [Arts. 50, 21] from that act of establishment, not from any earlier publication as a *nomen nudum*."

and

"Article 13. Names published after 1930.

13.1. Requirements. To be available, every new name published after 1930 must satisfy the provisions of Article 11 and must

13.1.1. be accompanied by a description or definition that states in words characters that are purported to differentiate the taxon, or

13.1.2. be accompanied by a bibliographic reference to such a published statement, even if the statement is contained in a work published before 1758, or in one that is not consistently binominal, or in one that has been suppressed by the Commission (unless the Commission has ruled that the work is to be treated as not having been published [Art. 8.7])."

Hence a simple cross match of the two publications, viz Wells and Wellington (1985) and Ride *et al.* (1999), being the only two relevant publications for the determination of whether or not "*Delma wollemi*" is or is not *nomen nudum*, confirms emphatically that it is not!

In spite of the preceding undeniable facts, Shea and Sadlier (1999) wrote:

"*Delma wollemi*

Wells & Wellington, 1985

Aust. J. Herp., Suppl. (1): 16.

HOLOTYPE R46058 29km S Singleton on Putty Rd, NSW (Rankin,

Wells, Antenor & Cook, 12.i.1975).

Remarks. Wells & Wellington gave the locality as Milbrodale, and the collectors as Wells and Rankin. The name is probably a *nomen nudum* (Shea, 1987a,c). The brief "diagnosis" (no description) mentioned only a distribution, a previously published illustration, and previously published descriptions that did not differentiate the taxon.

= *Delma plebeia* De Vis, 1888 vide Kluge (1991)."

Significantly, a close read of Shea (1987a) as cited in Shea and Sadlier (1999) at no time stated that "*Delma wollemi*" was probably a *nomen nudum* or was one.

In fact the words "*nomen nudum*" are not used at all in the long-winded rambling submission to the ICZN by Shea (1987a)!

This confirms that Shea and Sadlier (1987), were wholly incapable of correctly quoting their own earlier papers and the now invented materially relevant claim that "*Delma wollemi*" was probably a *nomen nudum*!

I should mention for completeness that in Shea's (1987c) (referenced herein as Shea 1987b) as cited in Shea and Sadlier (1999), he wrote:

"Of the three species named by Wells and Wellington (1985), '*Delma wollemi*' and '*Pygopus territorianus*' are *nomina nuda* while '*Pygopus klugei*' is of uncertain status".

So in this case the taxon went from *nomen nudum* (without a doubt) to "probably" one 12 years later.

Dishonestly maintaining the false narrative of "*Delma wollemi*" being an unavailable name (i.e. *nomen nudum*) for any taxon, most notably the newly named "*Delma vescolineata*", Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) wrote:

"Given its geographical proximity to the Hunter Valley, we examined the type specimen of *Delma wollemi* Wells & Wellington, 1985, (AMS R.46058), considered a probable *nomen nudum* (Shea & Sadlier 1999). Features of AMS R.46058 consistent with *D. plebeia* and not *D. vescolineata* sp. nov.; not fused state between the internasal and either the first labial or postnasal, 16 midbody scale rows, seven supralabial scales, and the fourth supralabial scale being below the eye. We are therefore confident R.46058 is referable to *D. plebeia* and not the herein described *D. vescolineata* sp. nov."

Besides the obvious lie about "*Delma wollemi*" being a *nomen nudum*, we also know that the alleged type specimen examined by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) was not the true holotype for "*Delma wollemi*" a fact obvious to Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) on a read of the Wells and Wellington (1985) description as published in full above.

These preceding facts, do in my opinion show an egregious case of scientific fraud and intellectual theft based on a false claim of *nomen nudum* without a shred of supporting evidence and a deliberate substitution of a type specimen of one species with a specimen of another species to effectively seal the deal.

Richard Wells, Ross Wellington and Alex Antenor, also reported in numerous posts on Facebook on 7 and 8 Aug 2024 what

Delma inornata Kluge, 1974

Delma molleri Lutken, 1863

Delma nasuta Kluge, 1974

Delma pax Kluge, 1974

Delma plebeia De Vis, 1888

Delma tinctoria De Vis, 1888

Delma torquata Kluge, 1974

Delma wollemi sp.nov.

Holotype: An adult specimen in the Australian Museum R46058. Collected at Milbrodale, New South Wales, on 12 January, 1975 by Richard Wells and Peter Rankin.

Diagnosis: A close relative of *Delma plebeia*, *Delma wollemi* is largely confined to the mid-western slopes of New South Wales, from the Hunter Valley, to the southern edge of the New England Plateau. It is figured in Cogger (1983: Plate 491), specimen from Singleton, New South Wales (Milbrodale?). Cogger (1983:211) also gives a description that appears to be mainly based on material referable to *Delma wollemi* rather than *Delma plebeia* as cited. Kluge (1974) provides an illustration and comparative data on its close relative *D. plebeia*.

Lialis Gray, 1835

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western

ology: 1

U.S.A.

Pygopod

Pygopod

Pygopod

Pygopod

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Holotype

Creek

Described

Pygopod

by Cogger

Plate

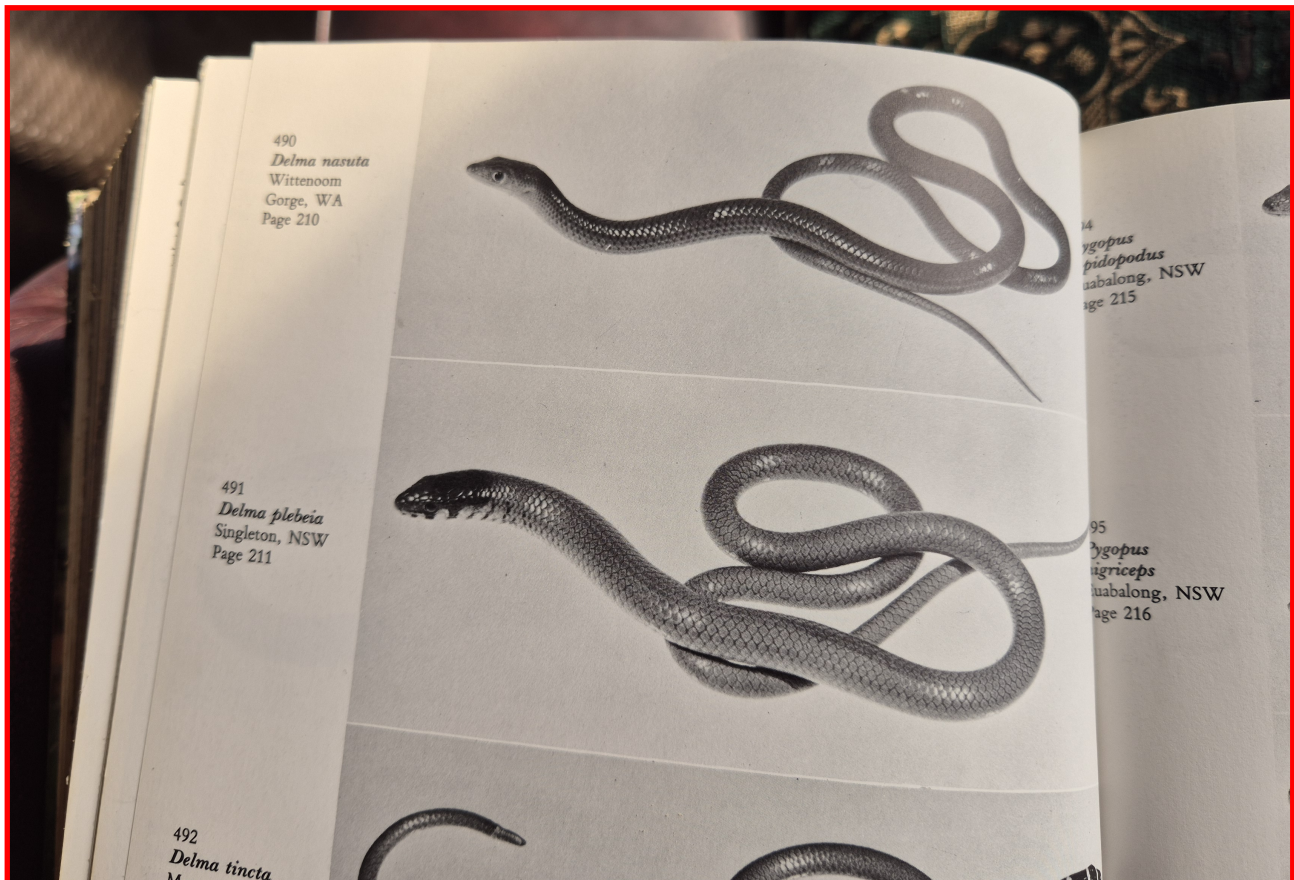
from

keeled

pattern

Plate

From Wells and Wellington (1985) above and below is from Cogger (1983) below, depicting the holotype of "*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985" in life.



Hoser 2025 - Australasian Journal of Herpetology 72:40-50.

happened on the day their holotype was caught. To recap, they went via Cogger's place, Cogger photographed the specimen that ended up in his 1983 book and the following edition, with the specimen lodged at the Museum in Sydney (Australian Museum) after the photo was taken.

Wells summed it all up in a post on 7 August 2024 when he wrote: **"Also, I have just examined the photo of our supposed Holotype provided by the Australian Museum, and good grief ! They do appear to be of different animals. Your suggestion that someone may have switched our Type Specimen of Delma wollemi for another species of Delma is worthy of an investigation alright...We definitely provided the live specimen (later our Holotype) to Cogger and that was illustrated in his 1983 Edition. That photograph in Cogger (1983) has been identified as Delma vescolineata - but the authors obviously didn't know that it was actually the Type specimen (in life) of Delma wollemi ! So what the hell has gone on here?"**

On the basis of the preceding inalienable facts, and without any need to rely on the 2024 statements of Wells, Wellington or even Antenor, there is no reasonable alternative to not fully recognising "*Delma wollemi*" and "*Delma vescolineata*" as being of the same taxon.

Based on the ICZN rule of priority and with a priority of more than 3 decades, the correct name for the taxon must be "*Delma wollemi*", herein placed in the genus *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1888 as detailed in Hoser (2017).

Finally, there is a "who-done-it" question as to who unlawfully swapped the original name-bearing holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" with another specimen of a different species.

Nothing in the preceding should be taken to suggest it was in fact Mahony, Cutajar or Rowley. This act may have taken place at any time in the previous period post-dating lodgement at the Australian Museum and it may well be impossible to track down who was the culprit.

What is however certain is that by the time Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) was published, those authors must have been aware of this fact and chose to cover it up.

The cover up by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) is shown by the following facts either singly and/or in combination:

- 1/ Refusal to explicitly cite Wells and Wellington (1985) in the references list at the end of the paper, so as to make it difficult to locate by interested parties (even though it was by far the most important reference relevant to the allegedly "new" species).
- 2/ No reference to the fact that Wells and Wellington (1985) had otherwise correctly identified "*Delma wollemi*" being an apparent senior synonym of "*Delma vescolineata*" in their formal description, in all materially relevant ways, except for the apparent discrepancy of the alleged holotype not matching, based on the statements of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) to that effect.
- 3/ After diagnosing the purported holotype as not being "*Delma vescolineata*", while the image in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983) clearly was that taxon (based on their diagnosis), a deliberate failure to note to the discrepancy in any way by Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) can only indicate cover-up.
- 4/ Nonpublication of the photo in Fig. 491 of Cogger (1983) or Fig. 438 in Cogger (1975) as the earliest published record of the allegedly new species "*Delma vescolineata*" is a serious omission in an otherwise detailed paper.
- 5/ Non-publication of a photo of the alleged holotype of "*Delma wollemi*" is the most egregious example of the cover-up because the image is shown not to be the true holotype as it does not match the Wells and Wellington description of it in that:
 - A/ It was of the wrong age. It was not "adult" as stated by Wells and Wellington (1985).
 - B/ It was the wrong species. The specimen was of putative "*Delma plebeia*" which Wells and Wellington (1985) had expressly stated it was not, and,
 - C/ The specimen had an unaccounted for extra label tag on it, which went against the statements in both Wells and Wellington (1985) as well as Shea and Sadlier (1999).
- 6/ Then there is another important statement in Mahony, Cutajar

and Rowley (2022) confirming that Wells and Wellington could only have named the taxon "*Delma vescolineata*" earlier as "*Delma wollemi*" decades earlier and that Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) knew this all along.

On page 550 of their paper, Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) noted the exclusive "*species occurrence at Bulga*" of their "*Delma vescolineata*" to the exclusion of any other "*Delma*" species. Bulga and Milbrodale, or alternatively "**29km S Singleton on Putty Rd, NSW**" are all effectively the same EXACT location.

Readers may try the simple exercise of looking up the three preceding places, 1/ Bulga, 2/ Milbrodale and 3/ "**29km S Singleton on Putty Rd, NSW**" on Google maps and see exactly where the pins land and then see how far it is between them!

That means, regardless of what Wells, Wellington, Cogger or any of their allies say in year 2022 or later, and playing devil's advocate against them and treating them as complete and utter idiots, liars and to be wholly disregarded in all ways, including disregarding the image in Cogger's books of 1975, 1979 or 1983, noting it was identified explicitly in Cogger (1983) by Wells and Wellington (1985), by confirming that the ONLY "*Delma*" species that occurs in Milbrodale, AKA Bulga, AKA "**29km S Singleton on Putty Rd, NSW**" Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) have also confirmed that they knew at all times that "*Delma wollemi*" had to be one and the same taxon as their allegedly newly discovered "*Delma vescolineata*".

Combined with other nefarious acts involving type specimens and taxonomic vandalism at the Australian Museum as documented in Hoser (2021b), Hoser (2023), Hoser (2024a) and sources cited therein, a proper inquiry into corrupt practices at the Australian Museum in Sydney is warranted.

Engaging in fraudulent acts with holotype material is the most egregious criminal act possible with regard to biological collections as the entire science of zoology depends on zoological nomenclature and the integrity of the global holotype system.

It does pain me to make such a recommendation for a corruption inquiry at the Australian Museum, as I have worked with staff at the Museum over many decades and generally hold them in high regard.

DELMA (HONLAMOPUS) WHOA SP. NOV.

LSIDurn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:135EBBCB-9C0D-45EA-BC41-71EB15DCBEF6

Holotype: A preserved specimen at the Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, specimen number R.141999 collected from between Nevertire and Nyngan, New South Wales, Australia, Latitude -31.633 S., Longitude 147.333 E. by Gerry Swan, Peter Jones and Brian Champion.

This government-owned facility allows access to its holdings.

Paratype: A preserved specimen at the Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, specimen number R.146250 collected from between Nevertire and Nyngan, New South Wales, Australia, Latitude -31.766 S., Longitude 147.55 E. by Gerry Swan.

DIAGNOSIS

Until now *Delma* (*Honlamopus*) *whoa* sp. nov. has been treated as a northern population of *D. inornata* Kluge, 1974 including in Hoser (2022).

However, Hoser (2022) referred to the fact that specimens from north-west New South Wales and south-east Queensland have a bold black tip or similar at the posterior edge of each dorsal scale. In many specimens, this leads to a black striped appearance.

The distinctiveness of these specimens as opposed to those of the nominate form of *D. inornata* (not bold tipping of scales) and *D. megleesae* Hoser, 2017 (lacking any obvious dark tips of scales) further south in NSW and Victoria was not at issue.

However, with published distribution maps showing a near continuous range for putative *D. inornata* stretching from West Victoria, through New South Wales into Queensland, it was presumed that the more distinctly coloured specimens from further north were of clinal, rather than specific divergence.

Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) inadvertently provided a molecular basis for separation of the north-west New South Wales specimens from those further south in New South Wales in their



Above: The “new” alleged holotype for “*Delma wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985”, being a different species and age (subadult versus adult) to the originally identified and lodged holotype.

Below: Wuster gang censorship of scientific reality and their ongoing taxonomic vandalism via their controlled “The Reptile Database” ostensibly managed by their lackey Peter Uetz.

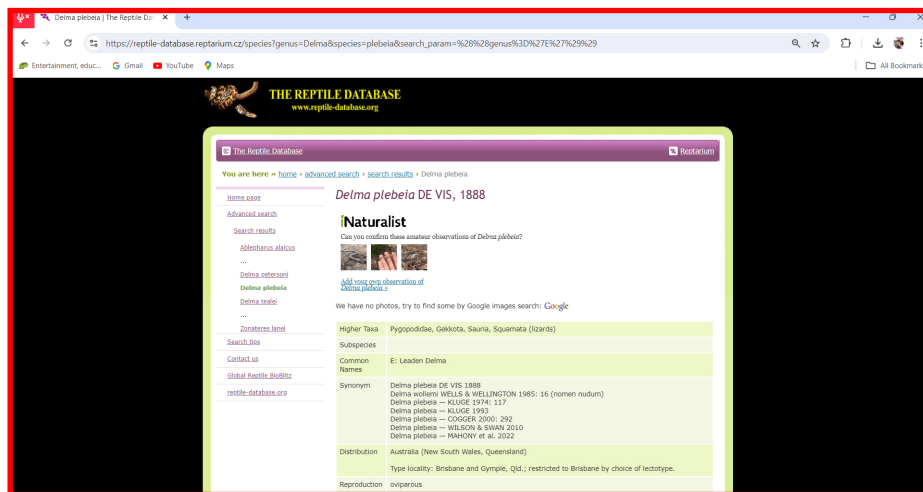


Fig. 1. phylogeny.

Those sequences were reassessed and appear to show a divergence of about 1.5 MYA between the populations, being species-level divergence and most certainly not merely a function of geographical distance divergence or a cline.

The following and previous description refers to adult specimens in normal health and condition.

Other species in the *D. inornata* complex, are *D. inornata* Kluge, 1974 (of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, excluding the region near and immediately west of the ACT), *D. megleesae* Hoser, 2017 (of the basaltic and granite plains of the ACT and nearby parts of Southern New South Wales, in association with the drier plateaux and near western slopes of the southern Great Dividing Range) and the divergent *D. honlami* Hoser, 2018 (from a restricted part of south-east South Australia, being west of the Murray River near its mouth in coastal south-east, South Australia, generally south of Murray Bridge and Adelaide and including drier parts of the Fleurieu Peninsula).

D. whoa sp. nov. are most easily separated from these other species in the *D. inornata* complex by the presence of a distinct black tip on the posterior end of each dorsal scale giving the adult a semi-distinct appearance of having dark longitudinal bands.

Additionally, *D. whoa* sp. nov. is separated from the other species by the presence of dark black coloured interstitial skin on the upper surface of the dorsum that is generally also reduced or absent on the flanks. The mid to lower flanks are brown, yellow or yellowish in contrast to the orangeish colour or orange flush seen in *D. megleesae*.

The other species in the complex are separated from one another as follows:

D. honlami sp. nov. is readily separated from *D. inornata*, *D. whoa* sp. nov. and the similar *D. megleesae* Hoser, 2017 by having a single pair of internasals, versus an obvious two pairs in *D. inornata*, *D. whoa* sp. nov. and *D. megleesae*, as well as a greyish upper surface of the head, versus brownish in the other three species.

In rare cases, one or other relevant character may not be present in *D. honlami* sp. nov., but so far none have been seen without both.

Upper labials of *D. honlami* sp. nov. are greyish brown, versus whitish, cream or yellow in *D. inornata*, *D. whoa* sp. nov. and *D. megleesae*.

The ear opening of *D. honlami* sp. nov. and *D. whoa* sp. nov. is obviously larger than the immediately surrounding scales in the second row above it, versus only slightly so in *D. inornata* and *D. megleesae*.

In *D. honlami* sp. nov. the posterior end of each dorsal scale (or any), does not have any black tip or similar. That feature is diagnostic of *D. whoa* sp. nov. from north-west New South Wales and south-east Queensland.

D. megleesae Hoser, 2017 is readily separated from *D. inornata*, *D. whoa* sp. nov. and *D. honlami* by a strongly yellow chin, snout and upper labials, versus cream or at best light yellow in *D. inornata* and *D. whoa* sp. nov. and while sometimes yellow under the chin in *D. honlami*, this does not extend to the upper labials. *D. megleesae* is also readily separated from *D. inornata* by the absence of obviously dark etched scales on the top and sides of the head and neck, which is seen in *D. inornata*.

In *D. whoa* sp. nov. the dark etched scales are formed by the rear of each scale having a dark etching, giving the entirety of each brownish scale a dark etched appearance.

In *D. inornata* the posterior pair of internasals are either the same size as or larger than the anterior pair. By contrast in *D. megleesae* the posterior pair of internasals are very reduced in size to be smaller than or much smaller than the anterior pair.

The subgenus *Honlamopus* Hoser, 2017 which includes the species *D. inornata*, *D. honlami*, *D. megleesae* and *D. whoa* sp. nov. are separated from the other subgenus *Delma* Gray, 1831 by the following suite of characters:

Conspicuous dorsal cross-bands are not present on the head and nape in adults; ventral scales lack dark edges; there are usually fewer than 16 scales along a line across the top of the head and

fewer than 17 scales along a line across the throat, each line extending from the angle of the mouth on each side; no dark dorso-lateral stripe extending from the posterior third of the body to the tail, no conspicuous lip pattern and flesh coloured ventral surfaces (in life).

Brennan (2014) at page 52 in Fig.III.5, found the species within *Honlamopus* Hoser, 2017 to have diverged from other *Delma* species more than 20 MYA, confirming that the genus or subgenus level designation is correct and appropriate.

The genus *Delma* Gray, 1831 is readily separated from the genera *Aclys* Kluge, 1974, *Crottyopus* Hoser, 2017, *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1882, *Sloppopus* Hoser, 2017, *Wellingtonopus* Hoser, 2017 and *Wellsopus* Hoser, 2017 by the following suite of characters:

Anterior nasals in contact, or fewer than 20 mid-body rows, and smooth dorsal scales; no pale stripes on the body or tail; nasal and first supralabial are not fused anterior to the nostril; one or no dark transverse bands posterior either to the parietal scales or to any dark transverse band fully or partly enclosing the parietal scales; usually fewer than 18 mid-body scale rows; usually seven scales on top of the snout between the rostral and frontal; usually three pre-anal scales; lateral lip pattern and dorsal head bands may be present or absent; fourth or fifth supralabial is usually below the eye; dark pigment on the throat or venter may be present or absent; and one or other of the following two sets of characters:

1/ Conspicuous dorsal cross-bands are present on the head and nape; there is rarely a conspicuous dark lateral stripe present posteriorly; rostral noticeably projecting between the anterior pair of supranasals; strong dark bars or reticulations on the throat; usually more than five infralabials and three hindlimb scales (*D. fraseri* and *D. petersoni*), or:

2/ Conspicuous dorsal cross-bands are not present on the head and nape in adults; ventral scales lack dark edges; there are usually fewer than 16 scales along a line across the top of the head and fewer than 17 scales along a line across the throat, each line extending from the angle of the mouth on each side; no dark dorso-lateral stripe extending from the posterior third of the body to the tail (*D. grayi*, *D. inornata*, *D. whoa* sp. nov., *D. megleesae* or *D. honlami* sp. nov.).

The genus *Delma* Gray, 1831, and the six genera *Aclys* Kluge, 1974, *Crottyopus* Hoser, 2017, *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1882, *Sloppopus* Hoser, 2017, *Wellingtonopus* Hoser, 2017 and *Wellsopus* Hoser, 2017 (all until recently treated as being within *Delma*) are separated from all other Australasian Pygopodids by the following suite of characters: The head is covered with enlarged symmetrical shields; the ventral scales are smooth; there are no pre-anal pores; parietal scales are present; the external ear opening is present and obvious; there are more than 8 scales along a line across the top of the head joining the angle of the mouth on each side.

D. whoa sp. nov. is depicted in life in Wilson and Swan (2021) on page 191 bottom right and online at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/188487172@N03/52496098543/> and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/191262872> and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/201080202>

D. honlami sp. nov. in life is depicted online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/84128409> and

and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/105537457> and

and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/66288250> and

and

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/128497936@N03/52039313989/>

D. inornata in life is depicted online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/37549164> and

and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/108425006>

D. megleesae in life is depicted online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/78279474> and

and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/6491957>
and
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/171250498@N08/53858041184/>
and
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/171250498@N08/51408275885/>
and
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/171250498@N08/51394014293/>
and
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/189037423@N06/51375190376/>
and
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/189037423@N06/50935343492/>
All the preceding urls were most recently checked as correct and showing as indicated above on 7 August 2024.

Distribution: *Delma (Honlamopus) whoa* sp. nov. is a taxon found generally north and northeast of Nevertire and Nyngan in central New South Wales, across a broad area extending to the western slopes and nearby plains of south-east Queensland.

Etymology: When startled by car headlights at night, this species will rapidly bounce across the road using its tail as a kind of spring. The first time I saw this action, was when driving near Nyngan in New South Wales in 1982.

When passenger Charles Acheson and realised it was in fact a legless lizard he exclaimed “whoa”, which is a slang term that is “used to express surprise, interest, or alarm, or to command attention.” (from Google on 7 Aug 2024).

Thus, the etymology fits this lizard as it flees at high speed in the dark.

Conservation: The relevant comments of Hawkeswood (2021), Hoser (1989, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2007, 2009, 2012a-c, 2013, 2015a-f, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021a-b, 2022, 2023, 2024b) apply to this taxon.

PSEUDELMA ABOMINATION SP. NOV.

LSIDurn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:A819CB06-0D11-4F88-9CC6-291B4B6C453D

Holotype: A preserved adult female specimen at the Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, specimen number R.186064 collected from Brushy Hill Lookout, Lake Glenbawn State Park, New South Wales, Australia, Latitude -32.09748 S., Longitude 150.98648 E., collected by Stephen Mahony.

This government-owned facility allows access to its holdings.

Paratypes: Two preserved adult female specimens at the Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, specimen numbers R.186065 and R.186066 both collected from Brushy Hill Lookout, Lake Glenbawn State Park, New South Wales, Australia, Latitude -32.09748 S., Longitude 150.98648 E., collected by Stephen Mahony.

Diagnosis: Having inspected hundreds of specimens of putative “*Delma plebeia* De Vis, 1888”, herein placed in the genus *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1888 over a period exceeding 50 years and including almost the entire known distribution of the species, I have long known that specimens from south-east Queensland are morphologically quite divergent from those from the Hunter Valley and further north in New South Wales.

I was not alone here as Wilson and Knowles (1988) also wrote:

“Northern and southern populations may constitute distinct taxa.”

Based on the molecular evidence of Mahony, Cutajar and Rowley (2022) in their Fig. 1, the two populations are sufficiently divergent to warrant being recognized as separate species.

They are fairly well separated by the NSW and Queensland state border, with the southern population only entering Queensland in the immediate vicinity of Texas, Queensland.

The type locality for *D. plebeia* is Brisbane and Gympie, Queensland, restricted to Brisbane by choice of lectotype by Kluge (1974), making the southern (New South Wales) population the taxon without an available name.

Hence it is formally named herein as *Pseudodelma abomination* sp. nov..

P. abomination sp. nov. is separated from *P. plebeia* by having an ear hole smaller in diameter than the scale in front of it, versus

larger in *P. plebeia* as well as the presence of 3-4 dull but obvious black bars on the rear jaw and side of the neck (posterior to the eye), generally formed from larger blotches above, each clearly angled forward at the lower (narrow end), the first two also coming from a dark blackish region on the back of the head, versus just two (rarely three) large circle-shaped blotches, not connected to any thin striping below, these usually being one between eye and ear and one above and on ear.

P. abomination sp. nov. has a black or blackish bar below the eye, joining a better defined black bar on the lower labial. This is slightly anterior to the center of the eye. The same marking is generally dead centre below the eye in *P. plebeia*.

P. abomination sp. nov. has a dorsum that is brown or slightly reddish-brown versus strongly yellowish in *P. plebeia*.

P. abomination sp. nov. and *P. plebeia* are separated from all other members of the genus *Pseudodelma* Fischer, 1888 by the following character suite:

Dark markings scattered on at least some of the labials, particularly the infralabials and with a dark smudge or spot on the supralabial immediately below the eye; scattered dark flecks on the lateral forebody and around the ear; usually the fourth supralabial is below the eye; 16 midbody scale rows, (versus 15 in *P. impar* Fischer, 1888 and *P. cummingae* Hoser, 2017 and 14 in *P. Wollemi* (Wells and Wellington, 1985)).

The obvious head markings, at least on labials in aged specimens and/or well-defined broad longitudinal stripes on the body (not being formed from just etching or scale tips), separate these preceding species from the species within the morphologically similar *Delma (Honlamopus) inornata* Kluge, 1974 complex.

P. abomination sp. nov. is depicted in life online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/58598086>
and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/155295460>

P. plebeia is depicted in life in Wilson and Knowles (1988) on page 248 middle right, Cogger (2014) on page 397 at top right, Brown (2023) on page 341 top, Wilson and Swan (2021) on page 195 middle left and online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/194073653>
and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/192035291>
and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/103620556>

Distribution: *P. plebeia* sp. nov. is found in south-east Queensland generally including near the coast and extending to flatter western downs areas to the west, but all well south of the tropic of Capricorn. Not found in the immediate proximity of the New South Wales border either.

P. abomination is found in the Hunter Valley and the drier western edges of the New England region, extending to the NSW/Queensland border.

Etymology: The dishonest switching of the holotype for *P. wollemi* Wells and Wellington, 1985 with a specimen of this taxon, treated by relevant authors as *P. plebeia* (De Vis, 1888) was an abominable act. The word “abominable” means “very bad” or “terrible”.

In retrospect the act was an “*abomination*” which is therefore taken as the name for this newly identified species-level taxon.

Conservation: The relevant comments of Hawkeswood (2021), Hoser (1989, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2007, 2009, 2012a-c, 2013, 2015a-f, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021a, 2024a-b) apply to this taxon.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

Below: A faked narrative!

A New South Wales first! New species of legless lizard discovered in the Hunter Valley

Author(s) Stephen Mahony Category AMRI Published 11 July 2022 Read time 2 minutes

Found just two hours out of Sydney, a team of Australian Museum scientists have described the Hunter Valley *Delma* – the first legless lizard species endemic to NSW.

A team of scientists from the Australian Museum has just officially confirmed that a legless lizard from the Hunter Valley represents a new species to science, now named the Hunter Valley *Delma* (*Delma vescolineata*). Previously confused with a very similar species, the new species is named in honour of the late Dr. Ross Wellington.

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