

***Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980, *Varanus minor* Weigel, 1985, a damaging case of taxonomic vandalism by John Weigel and *Worrellisaurus bigmoreum* sp. nov., a new species of small monitor lizard, from the East Kimberley division of Western Australia.**

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ABSTRACT

A long-term review of the species most widely known as *Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980 showed that two morphologically divergent taxa have been treated as belonging to this species by all herpetologists since the date of original description.

Varanus kingorum Storr, 1980, was transferred to the genus *Worrellisaurus* Wells and Wellington, 1984 and while the generic placement made sense on the basis of evidence provided by Hoser (2013b), the genus level designation remains as of 2018 rarely if ever used.

In 1985, John Weigel, published "A preliminary description of a new dwarf rock goanna *Varanus minor* sp. nov." comparing Northern Territory specimens of *V. kingorum* (which he erroneously claimed was his new species) against West Australian specimens of *V. kingorum*, which both Weigel and most other herpetologists since 1985, erroneously believed was the type form for the species.

In fact Storr's holotype was the NT form. His paratypes were from a disjunct Western Australian population. Weigel's self published "paper" in his not peer reviewed "*Reptile Keepers Association of NSW Newsletter*", Issue 7, failed to designate a holotype and provided clearly erroneous comparative data between the two forms. No copies of the publication were sent to responsible repositories (e.g. *Zoological Review*) and because only a handful of copies of his paper were ever printed, his paper was effectively "lost" to herpetology until this author (Hoser) tracked down a copy at the Australian National Library, in Canberra, Australia.

Because "*Varanus minor* sp. nov." (Weigel, 1985) is in effect an objective junior synonym for *V. kingorum*, even though it is questionable if the name "*minor*" is available under the rules of the ICZN, the West Australian lizards previously assigned to *V. kingorum* have until now been an unnamed taxon, with a divergence from *V. kingorum* of an estimated 2 MYA.

The species is therefore formally named for the first time according to the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999), as *Worrellisaurus bigmoreum* sp. nov.

Keywords: Taxonomy; nomenclature; taxonomic vandalism; *Varanus minor*; John Weigel; Goanna; Monitor lizard; Varanidae; *Varanus*; *Worrellisaurus*; Kimberley; Western Australia; Australia; new species; *bigmoreum*.

INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with putative "*Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980", the name this taxon is best known as was in 1983, when I found an adult specimen under a slab of rock on a hot January day near Lake Argyle in Western Australia. That specimen was later depicted in Hoser (1989) as "*Varanus kingorum*".

Hoser (1989) gives an accurate description of that putative species as known at the time. Cogger (2014) provides a description of the same putative taxon and by way of a dichotomous key, a means to separate it from all other varanid taxa in Australia. There is no need to repeat all this information within this paper.

For more than 30 years I have inspected specimens in private collections and in museums both in Australia and outside Australia. In terms of outside Australia this was most notably in the United States in 1993.

Since 1993, I have been well aware of the presence of two distinctive forms of the putative species "*V. kingorum*",

A long-term review of the species most widely known as *Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980 by myself showed that two morphologically divergent taxa have been treated as belonging to this species by all herpetologists since the date of the original description.

While I was able to obtain the original description of the taxon from the Western Australian Museum, investigations yielded that in 1985, John Weigel also published a description of a lizard taxon he called *Varanus minor*, in a not peer reviewed self-published "newsletter".

Due to a series of major events including an illegal police armed raid in 1994 that saw most of my research files being stolen at the time (and never replaced), followed by the publishing of a series of 6 major best-selling corruption books (being 6 of 7, with one published earlier in 1993), see Hoser (1993, 1994, 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b), revisiting the concept of there being two species of putative "*Varanus kingorum*" was not possible until

about 2001.

An attempt to locate a copy of Weigel's description of "*Varanus minor*" failed, with no one having a copy of the said "newsletter" the publication appeared in.

Even John Weigel, the alleged author of the alleged paper, apparently had no copies as they had allegedly been destroyed in the fire that destroyed a section of his privately owned zoo at Somersby in 2000 (Hoser 2003a).

That fire in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics on 17 July 2000 occurred in questionable circumstances and while a lot of material was conveniently destroyed at the time, the event was notable for what was not destroyed, including his Rough-scaled Pythons *Jackypython carinata* Smith, 1981 (Hoser 2003a).

At the time they were rare in captivity and Weigel's snakes were later offered for sale by him at \$34K a pair.

Weigel had taken his Rough-scaled Pythons away from his private zoo just prior to the "accidental" fire.

I should mention that the insurer paid the damage claim.

The inability to locate a copy of Weigel's publication ostensibly naming or describing "*Varanus minor*" was problematic as in its absence I was unable to determine if the Western Australian population assigned to "*Varanus kingorum*" had in fact been named by Weigel, or if he had merely redescribed in error or oversight Storr's nominate form.

Hence, the potential naming of a new dwarf monitor from north-west Australia was literally put on ice until I managed to find out the content of the Weigel paper.

This situation is not uncommon in terms of how herpetological projects work, with projects and research commonly being put on hold as circumstances change and blockages occur. This is also why many herpetologists, myself included, work on several major projects at a time.

By chance in 2018, I located a copy at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, which in itself was remarkable. They did not have a complete set of Weigel's newsletter. This is required by law, under the "legal deposit" law.

However Weigel's compliance with the law, has been noted as being non-compliance on other occasions as well, as detailed in Hoser (2004/5).

As already stated, it was probably by good luck and not necessarily good management (by Weigel) that the National Library of Australia had a copy of the relevant "description" and were able to send me a pdf after I paid the relevant fee of just under \$20 Australian.

Weigel's paper was to put things bluntly, abysmal and for all the critics of scientific works out there, it was in the class of papers associated with pseudo-scientists like Scott Thomson, Wulf Schleip, Hinrich Kaiser, Anders Rhodin, Van Wallach, Travis Thomas, Van Wallach, Donald Broadley and Wolfgang Wüster (Hoser 2015a-f). Like their "works" (a term I use in the absence of any other), Weigel's paper was also a hotch-potch of erroneous information and questionable data. In finality was an unmitigated act of taxonomic vandalism (defined herein as recklessly renaming an existing taxon) and a scientific disaster zone, which I will discuss again shortly.

However, Weigel's new "species" was in fact nothing more than the original "*Varanus kingorum*" as described by Storr.

"*Varanus minor sp. nov.*" (Weigel, 1985) is in effect an objective junior synonym for *V. kingorum*, even though it is questionable if the name "*minor*" is available under the rules of the ICZN.

Weigel's paper did however for the first time ever in print, advance an argument that the Western Australian animals assigned to the same putative species were in fact something quite different.

Weigel's argument was so poor and the data clearly in error (it even misquoted data from Storr 1980), that at the time he published the paper in 1985, he was lampooned by other herpetologists for merely redescribing a previously named species and badly at that!

So in 1985, after publishing his description of "*Varanus minor*" Weigel promptly gave up any aspirations of being a taxonomist (as

in finding and naming new species) and as befitted the nature and quality of his abortive self-published paper, he was quite happy to see all copies of it disappear from the face of the earth.

He did not however realise the problem he was creating by 1/ Proposing a new name for a species in a non-ICZN compliant way and then 2/ By further failing to comply with recommendations of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999), making it almost impossible for future scientists like myself from being able to conduct proper reviews of the taxonomy and nomenclature of the said taxa.

Significantly, and only after I was able to get hold of John Weigel's paper, titled "A preliminary description of a new dwarf rock goanna *Varanus minor sp. nov.*" was I able to establish that he had been comparing Northern Territory specimens of *V. kingorum* (which he erroneously claimed was his new species) against West Australian specimens of *V. kingorum*.

Clearly both Weigel and most other herpetologists since 1985, have erroneously believed the west Australian animals were the type form for the species, when they were not. Importantly Weigel's paper did establish that his species was a synonym of *V. kingorum*, and that the west Australian animals were in fact unnamed.

As I have said, Storr's holotype was the NT form. His paratypes listed in his paper were from a disjunct Western Australian population.

The species *Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980, was transferred to the genus *Worrellisaurus* Wells and Wellington, 1984 and the generic placement made sense on the basis of evidence provided by Hoser (2013b) and was therefore used by Hoser (2013b) as a result.

However, the genus level designation of *Worrellisaurus* remains as of 2018 rarely if ever used, save for Wells and Wellington (1984, 1985 and Hoser 2013b).

This is largely due to the anti-science tactics of a group known as the Wüster gang as detailed by Hoser (2007) or more recently Hoser (2015a-f) and the sources cited therein.

Because the Western Australian population is not named, the main basis of this paper is simply to formally describe and name this taxon as a new species as is done below.

MATERIALS, METHODS AND RESULTS

As already mentioned, inspection of numerous specimens, live, in jars in museums and via photos with accurate locality data, as well as a perusal of the limited published literature on putative "*Varanus kingorum*" has confirmed two taxa are involved. I have also collected the relevant region in Australia, including caught *in situ* the species formally described herein.

This is all mentioned here, even though it could be described as trite. This is because there is no doubt that a well-known bunch of law-breaking haters and online trolls, known as the Wüster gang will emerge to allege I have no experience at all with the said taxa and that all my evidence is either "non-existent", "fabricated" or "stolen", (see for example Kaiser (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014a, 2014b) and Kaiser *et al.* (2013), the latter "paper" perhaps should be better known as "Wüster and others he can "add" to his authors list, even though he wrote it all by himself".

However none of the inevitable claims by the haters are in fact the case.

Obviously I should note that morphological divergence on its own is not regarded by myself as sufficient grounds to assign the West Australian population to a new species.

However there are other important grounds. Both populations are separated by a straight line distance in excess of 100 km and by clearly unsuitable and mainly flat habitat. Both populations are strictly saxicoline (rock dwelling) in habits.

Geckos separated by the same barrier have been shown to have diverged from one another some 2 MYA (Hoser 2017, Neilsen *et al.* 2016) which clearly forms a basis to separate the two clades of lizards and have each treated as full species.

Critically important is that each population is also reproductively isolated and evolving as separate evolutionary units, with zero likely prospect of interbreeding or introgression and so must be

regarded as fully separate species.

Hence the formal scientific description below.

In terms of the description, the spelling of the name should not be altered in any way unless mandatory under the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.*, 1999) or any other relevant ICZN code in force.

While there are numerous bibliographic references to putative "*Varanus kingorum*" in the literature and in various scientific papers, they are not as a rule relevant to this paper, save for the images depicted that show one or other of the two species referred to that taxon to date.

For simplicity's sake it is easiest to note that generally, "*Varanus kingorum*" from the Northern Territory, invariably near Timber Creek are of the nominate type form. Those from the area of Kununurra / Lake Argyle and south to Turkey Creek in Western Australia's East Kimberley division are of the newly described form.

As noted in Hoser (2013b), the appropriate genus for both "*Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980" and the newly described taxon is *Worrellisaurus* Wells and Wellington, 1984.

The original authors, Wells and Wellington clearly relied on morphological divergence to separate this group of small monitors from the better known and widely used genus "*Varanus* Merrem, 1820".

Molecular data published by Pyron *et al.* (2013) and others has confirmed the action by Wells and Wellington, 1984 as being correct and so I adopt that genus name as being correct for both relevant taxa in this paper.

WORRELLISAURUS BIGMOREUM SP. NOV.

Holotype: A preserved specimen at the Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia, specimen number: R63341, (formerly held at the Northern Territory Museum, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, specimen number R6955), collected at Kununurra, Western Australia,

Latitude 15.46 S., Longitude 128.44 E.

The, Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia is a government-owned facility that allows access to its holdings.

Paratypes: 1/ A preserved specimen at the Northern Territory Museum, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, specimen number R6681, collected at Turkey Creek, Western Australia, Latitude -16.90 S., Longitude 128.32 E.

2/ A preserved specimen at the Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia, specimen number: R63340, (formerly held at the Northern Territory Museum, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, specimen number R6681), collected at Turkey Creek, Western Australia, Latitude -16.90 S., Longitude 128.32 E.

3/ A preserved specimen at the Northern Territory Museum, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, specimen number R6954, collected at Turkey Creek, Western Australia, Latitude -16.90 S., Longitude 128.32 E.

Diagnosis: Until now the species *Worrellisaurus bigmoreum sp. nov.* has been regarded as a population of *W. kingorum* (Storr, 1980). Both would key as the same species using the dichotomous key in Cogger (2014).

W. bigmoreum sp. nov. is however separated from *W. kingorum* by the following suite of characters: The dorsal colouration of adult *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* is a reddish-orange-yellow, versus greyish with a slight red tinge on the flanks in *W. kingorum*, making it appear purplish. This is consistent between the two taxa.

W. bigmoreum sp. nov. is further separated from *W. kingorum* by the presence of an obvious white line running from just behind the nostril, through the lower eye and just past it towards the ear. There is no such marking in *W. kingorum*.

Dorsally the body pattern in *W. kingorum* consists of a series of parallel moderately large spots in rows running down the body and onto the tail, on which they are sparse and irregular on the dorsal surface of the front half.

By contrast the dorsal colour pattern of *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* is of a series of smallish dark bars and spots configured in a way to give a reticulated pattern, when viewed on the body as a whole, which at about the rear limbs becomes a dense series of

numerous squarish spots running down the dorsal surface of the first half of the tail.

In *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* the rear half of the tail is noticeably striped, whereas in *W. kingorum* striping is indistinct on the second half of the tail.

Some *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* have a dorsal pattern characterised by white spots, this not being seen in *W. kingorum*, which instead has a dorsal pattern of scattered dark spots on a grey background. Numerous white spots dorsally is a common configuration in hatchling *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.*, which is not the case in *W. kingorum*, which may sometimes be spotted with some white, but not in the dense configuration seen in neonate *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.*

Another obvious difference between *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* and *W. kingorum* is the colour of the iris. In *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* it is orange in colour, whereas in *W. kingorum* it is a rich deep red in colour.

Side by side, *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* is noticeably more thick-set, especially in terms of the head and neck, this comparison in size and robustness being for typical healthy adult specimens of either sex.

As a suite of characters given above, all of which are consistent on dozens of specimens I have seen of each taxon, distinguishing random specimens of either, in the absence of locality information is not difficult. I have been able to do so consistently on "blind tests" when shown an image of one or other in the absence of locality data (later given) on ten such tests involving five specimens of each taxon.

Because of the reckless actions surrounding the publication of Weigel (1985) and John Weigel's actions post-dating that publication, there has for more than 30 years been a state of 1/ Ignorance as to the presence of more than one species within the putative taxon "*Varanus kingorum*", or 2/ If a person had a belief that there were in fact two species being labelled as one, an apparently not easily solved confusion became as to which of the two species in fact had been assigned names according to the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.*, 1999).

This was in particular as to whether or not Weigel's name "*Varanus minor*" was merely a junior synonym of "*Varanus kingorum*" or in fact something else.

Weigel's abject failure to rectify the problem he created, has created an unfavourable situation whereby all published literature in the last 30 years has without question, simply referred both species *W. kingorum* and *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* to the one taxonomic entity, because any other alternative, was simply too hazardous to contemplate in the absence of knowing what Weigel's apparently "lost" paper contained.

So to partially rectify the mess created by Weigel, I hereby provide details of the identity of the two relevant species, based on specimens depicted in the published literature, all of which have been labelled by the authors as "*Varanus kingorum*".

Because a number of depicted specimens have either no locality data, or clearly erroneous data, the following is particularly important for people who may have cause to work on either species.

A photo of a *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* in life caught by this author (with a government issued license) in 1983 is depicted on page 118 (top photo) in Hoser (1989) as well as in De Lisle 1996, which also happens to have a photo taken by this author of the habitat of the type locality for *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* in the vicinity of Kununurra, Western Australia.

Further images of this taxon in life are depicted in Cogger (2014) page 776; in Wilson and Swan (2017) on page 467, third image down on the left; Patanant (2012) at page 75 in Fig. 1; Eidenmüller (2007) at page 81; Pianka, King and King (2004) at Fig. 7.28, and in Storr, Smith and Johnstone (1983), plate 13, image 4.

Bennett (1995) also provides images of an adult and juvenile *W. bigmoreum sp. nov.* in his unnumbered colour plates at the rear of the book.

Bennett (1998) at page 127 provides images of both *W.*

bigmoreum sp. nov. and *W. kingorum* with 4 of the three specimens depicted being *W. bigmoreum* sp. nov.. The third image down on the page, labelled “*Varanus kingorum* Photo: John Weigel” is in fact the only *W. kingorum* on the page and significantly also happens to be a specimen of his synonym taxon “*Varanus minor* sp. nov.” (Weigel, 1985).

A photo of *W. kingorum* in life is depicted on page 854 of Brown (2014), photo on top left of page.

Two live specimens in the same book on pages 853 and 854 listed as “*Varanus kingorum*” with a given locality of Turkey Creek, both photos by “G. Schmida”, appear to be typical Northern Territory, “*Varanus kingorum*” and of that species, being (*Worrellisaurus kingorum* (Storr, 1980)) as defined in this description.

I therefore assume that either an error in location attribution for those two images occurred or there is yet another potentially unnamed taxon. It is easy to see how as both “Timber Creek” and “Turkey Creek” can be easily mixed up as each location is the from where each of the two species are most commonly collected and both sound the same, noting that the photographer may not have been the collector and in any event that publisher and author of the book were both separately removed from the other party/ies as well.

While noting such a potential error in a book such as Brown's may be taken as adverse comment in terms of the book, I make a point here of emphasising the overall quality and usefulness of this and all other reptile-related works by Queensland vet surgeon Danny Brown and cannot recommend Brown (2014) highly enough and as one of the best relevant texts ever published.

Brown (2014) also has a close up image of male and female heads of *W. bigmoreum* sp. nov. shown side by side, on page 842, line two of images, the relevant image being on the right.

Brown (2014) at page 850 has a photo of hatchling *W. bigmoreum* sp. nov., including leucistic specimens. Larger specimens are depicted on page 852 (top two images) of Brown (2014).

Schmida (2017) also provides three images of what seems to be the NT (type form) *W. kingorum* at pages 200, 202 and 203, ostensibly supplied by Gavin Bedford from Turkey Creek in WA.

As for Brown (2014) this may be in error as the specimens seem to conform to the NT species and not that from Turkey Creek in Western Australia. Schmida's (2017) book did not have any photos of *W. bigmoreum* sp. nov. as defined herein.

This is understandable on the basis that this paper post-dates his book, and like all other herpetologists in Australia in 2017, except myself, Schmida was of the view that the two putative taxa were one and the same.

In passing, I also note that while Gunther Schmida's book claims to be a complete treatment of Australia's monitor lizards and does have excellent photos of most taxa, numerous described and widely recognized species and subspecies are omitted from the coverage, while others are erroneously labelled as being “undescribed”. Incorrect scientific names are given for several included species, the book is littered with typographical errors and factual information in the species accounts is often woefully incorrect and/or misleading.

It should also be noted that all identified images and species in the above cited books are readily assigned to each species (*W. bigmoreum* sp. nov. and *W. kingorum*) based on the preceding diagnosis, further confirming that the traits separating each are consistent.

Distribution: *Worrellisaurus bigmoreum* sp. nov. is known generally from the Kununurra / Lake Argyle area in the north, along the associated ranges south to about Halls Creek, all in far north-east Western Australia, Australia. *Worrellisaurus kingorum* (Storr, 1980) is herein confined to the immediate vicinity of Timber Creek (within 25 km east or west) in the north-west Northern Territory, about 100 km east of the Western Australia border.

Etymology: Named in honour of Stuart and James Bigmore, of Lara (near Geelong), Victoria, Australia, who along with the now deceased Neil Davie, also of Lara and Geelong, have provided critically important and lasting services to herpetology in Australia spanning many decades.

TAXONOMIC VANDALISM AND THE JOHN WEIGEL PROBLEM

John Weigel is one of those individuals whose destructive role in Australian herpetology and his anti-conservation actions over some decades has been so negative that it has become well-known (Hoser 2003b, 2003c, 2004/2005). In fact his damage rivals that of the late Steve Irwin (Hoser 2013a). However none of this is relevant to this paper although some of his permanent damage to wildlife conservation and herpetology is dealt with in detail in Hoser (2003b, 2003c, 2004/2005).

What is relevant here is his act of taxonomic vandalism in terms of his original description of the taxon he called “*Varanus minor*” in his non-peer reviewed “paper”, that he published in his own newsletter. In breach of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999), his paper was not widely disseminated in any sense of the word and also in breach of the same code, a copy was not even sent to *Zoological Record*. This later course of action was in fact far more destructive than the physical act of recklessly publishing his “paper” in the first place.

Weigel's self published “paper” in his “Reptile Keepers Association of NSW Newsletter”, Issue 7, also failed to designate a holotype.

In terms of taxonomy and nomenclature, this is a so-called “hanging offence” and usually renders any such description and name “unavailable” in the sense of the code.

As his name “*Varanus minor*” is an objective junior synonym (in the broader sense) for the species “*Varanus kingorum* Storr, 1980”, even if Weigel's name were “legal” according to the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (any of the four published editions) it would not be available for use for the taxon described within this paper from Western Australia.

However, as it could be argued that Weigel did in fact describe holotypes in his paper, even though assignment was vague and the rest of his “preliminary description” was vague, imprecise and failed to properly separate his putative taxon from any other, one could then argue that his name was in fact “available” in the sense of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*.

Taking this arguable view on face value, as it must be, thereby makes “*Varanus minor*” an available name in terms of the relevant taxon, even if it will never be used due to it being an (effective) objective synonym.

However, where Weigel has been particularly destructive has been in effectively trying to hide and destroy any permanent evidence of his paper for later researchers to view and read.

His paper was effectively “lost” to herpetology until this author (Hoser) tracked down a copy at the Australian National Library, in Canberra, Australia and has now made widely available the details of that paper's contents.

Had Weigel's paper been made widely available when published and in the years between 1985 and 2018, it would have been likely myself or another scientist would have formally named *W. bigmoreum* sp. nov. decades earlier.

This would have allowed proper research and conservation on both potentially threatened taxa to have progressed.

Instead and as a direct result of Weigel's reckless actions, both by way of taxonomic vandalism in his publication and then by effectively hiding it from others after the fact, numerous herpetologists have published papers elsewhere about “*Varanus kingorum*” blissfully ignorant as to whether they were dealing with the nominate form or the other species described herein. As a result a lot of the valuable time spent collating breeding and other data has now become redundant and of little practical use in the ignorance as to which species was actually involved.

Put simply, Weigel's reckless actions have put this area of herpetology backward by up to three decades!

None of the preceding is being presented to attack John Weigel or attack his reputation in herpetology, as he has had a poor reputation for years and so nothing written here will change much in that regard. It is however presented so that others can ensure that such forms of taxonomic vandalism and abuse of the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (whether intended or otherwise as may be the case for Weigel) do not occur again, or at least can be avoided by as many people as possible.

For science to progress, the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* need to be adhered to by all, and in the absence of so-called creative interpretations as employed by the likes of Wolfgang Wüster, Wulf Schleich, Van Wallach, Travis Thomas and Don Broadley, because without a robust nomenclature, scientific communication on any given taxon becomes distorted, potentially misleading and in terms of venomous species perhaps even dangerous!

What is disturbing in the context of the date of this paper (2018) is a plot by serial taxonomic vandal Wolfgang Wüster and his gang of thieves to attempt to have many hundreds of publications, including major scientific papers carrying descriptions of new taxa and numerous standard texts in herpetology which carry those ICZN compliant scientific names, completely destroyed, as in the publications pulped, and then to have them completely expunged from the scientific record, solely to enable them to steal the works of others and them to claim the "discoveries" as their own.

As demonstrated here, the apparent attempt to remove from the scientific record, one relatively minor (excuse the pun) "paper" from the scientific record, created over 30 years of substantial scientific confusion, which will no doubt be carried for many years beyond now. Weigel's actions in terms of his publication and more seriously his actions post-dating it have caused irreparable harm to herpetology, scientific research and conservation of two potentially threatened species.

I note here that the clear and evident suppression of Weigel's 1985 "paper" was in stark contrast to his usual behaviour as a "publicity junkie" in which he and his minions aggressively seeks TV and print media publicity for all and sundry to promote himself and his business, even going to far as to be effectively "buying" Facebook likes for his business social media account.

Wide and proper dissemination of works of a taxonomic nature is important and this is why Weigel's flagrant disregard for the provisions of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999) was so destructive.

Having said this, the actions of Weigel and his minions pales into insignificance, when compared to the ruthless actions of Wolfgang Wüster and his gang of thieves as detailed by Hoser (2015a-f). In this case the Wüster gang of thieves is seeking to wipe from the scientific record many hundreds of scientific papers, authored by numerous authors and involving well over 1,000 scientific names in the existing scientific record.

Already their actions have caused unprecedented chaos and anarchy in the science of herpetology and wider areas of zoology in general, the conservation of wildlife and for public safety.

Therefore it is important that the historical record of "*Varanus kingorum*", "*Varanus minor*" and "*Worrellisaurus bigmoreum*" by made widely known so that the mistakes caused by the taxonomic vandalism and subsequent actions of John Weigel not be repeated in the future.

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Luke and Gina Faba, lawyers at Stenta Legal, 1 Queens Road, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, successfully retrieved some relevant data and hard drives illegally seized by Glenn Sharp and Emily Gibson, claiming to be acting on the orders of Ron Waters, head of wildlife law enforcement at the Victorian Government Wildlife department on 17 August 2011 during an unlawful violent armed raid on the author's facility.

The trio, and the dozens of others they employed in their so-called "Operation Bassett" (as detailed in Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal 2015) all worked for the Victorian Government Wildlife Department (at the time called "DSE").

Their destructive armed raid, in which they also illegally killed numerous live reptiles held by the author, was found to be illegal by several courts of law after the fact, including by the Victorian Court of Appeal in 2014 and Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (VCAT) in 2015.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in terms of this paper and the author.

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