

**Two more new species within the *Odatria glauerti*
(Squamata: Varanidae) species complex.**

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ABSTRACT

Hoser (2013) divided the taxon known at the time as *Odatria glauerti* (Mertens, 1957) into two, naming the distinctive Arnhem Land population as a new species, namely *O. hoseerae* Hoser, 2013.

In 2018, Hoser split the east and West Kimberley populations into two species, the type form for *O. glauerti* being from the south-west Kimberley and the Ord River form was formally named *O. davidhancocki* Hoser, 2018.

In 2018, Hoser also flagged other potentially unnamed taxa within this species group from the Kimberley region.

Following further ongoing investigations, including a re-examination of relevant specimens and a re-assessment of the timelines for the creation of extant biogeographical barriers, being somewhere between 1.5-2 MYA, this paper formally names the lower Victoria River, Northern Territory population of putative *O. davidhancocki* as a new species *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and the Carson Escarpment population of putative *O. glauerti* as a new species *O. darrenkeilleri* in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride et al. 1999) as amended online since.

Keywords: Taxonomy; nomenclature; Varanidae; *Odatria*; *Varanus*; *glauerti*; *hoseerae*; *davidhancocki*; Northern Territory, Western Australia; Australia; new species; *bennymcnamarai*; *darrenkeilleri*.

INTRODUCTION

As part of an ongoing global audit of the Varanidae, Hoser (2013) reclassified the mainly western Australian taxon known as *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, 1957 by transferring it into the genus *Odatria* Gray, 1838.

The same act had been performed by Wells and Wellington (1984 and 1985), but unfortunately their eminently sensible (and in hindsight obvious) decision had been effectively boycotted by publishing herpetologists in the intervening two decades. In other words the taxon remained known to most as *Varanus glauerti*.

This boycott had absolutely nothing to do with science, but instead was an unscientific manifestation of ego politics among other so-called herpetologists and their intent to rob Wells and Wellington of any credit for their contributions to herpetology as outlined by Hoser (2007), Hoser (2015a-f) and also as detailed in a more recent context by ICZN (2021) and Hawkeswood (2021).

As I have always put science before politics, it was for that reason that in 2013 I accepted the Wells and Wellington placement of *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, 1957 within the genus *Odatria* Gray, 1838, making it known as *Odatria glauerti*

(Mertens, 1957) (Hoser 2013).

For some years it was known that a morphologically and biologically different population from Arnhem-land referred to *O. glauerti* existed and so it was inevitable that in Hoser (2013) it was afforded formal recognition as a species.

O. hoseerae Hoser, 2013 was named in honour of Katrina Joan Hoser in recognition of her monumental contributions to Australian varanid conservation as outlined in Hoser (2013).

The same description in the same paper referred to eastern and western Kimberley populations as being morphologically distinct, but treated both as being of the same species-level taxon.

Further inspection of specimens from across the Kimberley showed that the East and West Kimberley populations were sufficiently divergent to warrant taxonomic recognition and in fact at the species-level.

Therefore the purpose of the paper of Hoser (2018b) was to formally divide *O. glauerti* as recognized as of that date into two, by formally naming the population found in the East Kimberley and nearby parts of the Northern Territory (extending to near the mouth of the Victoria River, on both sides) as a new species, namely *O. davidhancocki* sp. nov..

The new taxon was obviously morphologically divergent to *O.*

glauerti, of allopatric and disjunct range and also showed significant divergence by way of molecular data as published by Fitch *et al.* (2006).

On that basis the decision to recognize the taxon as a full species as opposed to subspecies was made obvious.

While there was a significant body of material published in relation to *O. glauerti* as recognized prior to the publication of Hoser (2013), most of this is not relevant in this later paper, in as much as the sole purpose of this paper is to formally identify and name two more related species in accordance with the rules set out in the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999 as amended online since).

However I do make mention of relevant materials and methods leading to the obvious results published herein and conclusions, the finality being the two published descriptions herein.

Hoser (2013) flagged that there were two distinct populations being referred to as *O. glauerti*. The molecular data of Fitch *et al.* (2006) *et al.* confirmed that the two populations had species-level divergence.

As the holotype for *O. glauerti* (Mertens, 1957) is from Wotjulum, (south-west) West Kimberley, Western Australia, Australia, specimen number WAM R12337, at the Western Australian Museum in Perth, Western Australia, Australia it is self evident that it is the population from the East Kimberley that needed to be formally named.

Since the publication of Hoser (2018b), live specimens from both sides of the mouth of the Victoria River in the Northern Territory have since been inspected and while morphologically in major respects seem to conform with the specimens from the Lake Argyle and Bungle Bungles areas, they are in fact sufficiently divergent in various ways, in particular with regards to colouration in live specimens on a consistent basis to be flagged as a different taxon.

On a complete re-assessment of the evidence and any division to be made, it was determined that it should also be made at the species level.

Other putative species that have been split across the same biogeographic barrier and constrained by it, including for example *Worrellisaurus bigmoreum* Hoser, 2018 split from *W. kingorum* (Storr, 1980), was split with the new entity formally named at the species level (Hoser 2018a).

Likewise *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) sonnemannii* Hoser (2017), from the Keep River area of the Northern Territory was split at the species level from *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) mcmillani* (Storr, 1978), type locality Mitchell Plateau, Western Australia, a species it had been confused with and *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) robinsoni* (Smith, 1995), type locality being the Ord River Drainage in the east Kimberley in Western Australia, with which it also been confused with, as a newly named species, based both on morphological and species-level genetic divergence as cited by Hoser (2017).

Hoser (2018b) also wrote of putative *O. glauerti*:

"While I have formally recognized the taxon from the East Kimberley, I should note that I am not entirely satisfied that all other Kimberley specimens are in fact of a single species, or of one single subspecies-level taxon.

This view is based on different morphotypes from the north and north-west Kimberley, versus those from the south-west, including the type locality for *O. glauerti* and of course including the type specimen for *O. glauerti* itself, which I have viewed."

To that end, I continued to scrutinize specimens of putative *O. glauerti* from the West Kimberley, including from the Mitchell Plateau area and the Carson Escarpment.

While not entirely convinced that the Mitchell Plateau specimens are conspecific with the type form of the species, *O. glauerti*, I have for the time being provisionally placed them with that species.

In terms of the specimens from the Carson Escarpment, I have formed the view that they are sufficiently divergent to warrant

being treated as a new species and so are formally named as such within this paper.

With respect of that decision I refer for example to *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) alba* Hoser (2017), type locality Theda Station, North Kimberley, Western Australia, which was split from *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) mcmillani* (Storr, 1978), type locality Mitchell Plateau, Western Australia, a species it had been confused with and *Oedurella (Parvusdactylus) robinsoni* (Smith, 1995), type locality being the Ord River Drainage in the east Kimberley in Western Australia, with which it also been confused with, as a newly named species, based both on morphological and species-level genetic divergence as cited by Hoser (2017)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Prior to the final taxonomic decisions being made as executed in this paper, I inspected about 100 specimens assigned to *O. glauerti*, including specimens of *O. hoserae* and *O.*

davidhancocki from across the range of all the relevant putative taxa. These have included specimens in government-owned State Museums, for which acknowledgement is not normally explicitly given here or in my other taxonomic papers as it should be assumed by any vaguely sensible reader. I have also seen numerous relevant specimens in life and by way of quality photos of specimens with known locality data.

I also consulted relevant literature with a view to finding and/or reading original descriptions of potentially relevant taxa, this being Cogger *et al.* (1983), Mertens (1957), Storr (1980), Weigel (1985), Wells and Wellington, 1984, 1985), and checking for available synonyms of which there were none.

RESULTS

These are already outlined in the abstract and introduction and I note that the two species formally named below in accordance with the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999 as amended online since) did not have any available synonym names that I could use or resurrect from synonymy.

In terms of the scientific names formally assigned to the two new species, they should not be amended in any way unless absolutely mandatory under the rules of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Ride *et al.* 1999 as amended online since).

Descriptions do unless otherwise stated, refer to adult specimens in good health and in the absence of factors such as ill health, excessive stress, injury, aging or similar. Considerable material in the two following descriptions is duplicated as the relevant species need to be formally separated from one another and share other closely related taxa. Online material cited either in text or in the references was last checked as being online as cited on 10 March 2022.

ODATRIA BENNYMCNAMARAI SP. NOV.

LSIDurn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:683A29AF-7495-4F00-8672-38372AED844E

Holotype: A preserved specimen in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, specimen number R24867 collected from Lobby Creek, Bradshaw Station, Northern Territory, Australia, Latitude -15.35 S., Longitude 130.1 E. 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.190862.001 collected from the Bradshaw Training Area (Timber Creek), Northern Territory, Australia, Latitude -15.03196 S., Longitude 129.86069 E.

Diagnosis: *Odatria davidhancocki* Hoser, 2018 and *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. are keyed out as *O. glauerti* (Mertens, 1957), better known as *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, 1957 in most contemporary texts such as Cogger (2014).

O. davidhancocki and *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. are readily separated from *O. glauerti* and the newly named species *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. by the following: On the second half of the

length of original unbroken tails there are 20-26 white cross bands, versus 14-19 in *O. glauerti* and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov., while in *O. hoserae* Hoser, 2013, there are just 10-12 white cross bands, this being perhaps the most easy way to distinguish the three species groups from one another at a glance and in the absence of locality data.

O. davidhancocki is characterised by a dorsal body pattern that is more-or-less reddish-orange with yellow bands, versus a grey to tan colour, generally being obviously grey on the forebody and head in *O. glauerti* and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. versus reddish at the forebody of *O. davidhancocki*.

In contrast to the above, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. is separated from all the preceding species by having a combination of on the second half of the length of original unbroken tails there are 20-26 white cross bands (in common with *O. davidhancocki* only); and (in contrast to *O. davidhancocki*) on the body, the darker cross-bands are greyish as opposed to reddish-orange, or if reddish, then dark reddish and with a greyish overlay, and these darker bands are significantly wider than the yellowish interspaces, versus about the same width or less, in *O. davidhancocki*. The upper surfaces of the forelimbs are blackish in *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. versus greyish brown in *O. davidhancocki*.

O. hoserae is separated from all of *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov., *O. glauerti* and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. by having well developed and prominent ocelli on both the back of the neck and all four legs, this not being seen in the other four species, which instead have either spots on the legs or spots tending to form incomplete or indistinct ocelli, and no well defined ocelli on the neck.

O. hoserae is of similar body colouration to *O. davidhancocki* (as defined above) but differs in having much stronger contrast between the dark and light bands, as well as dark reddish bands being twice as wide as the yellowish ones, versus lighter bands being slightly wider than the dark bands or of the same width in *O. davidhancocki*.

O. glauerti is readily separated from all of *O. hoserae*, *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. by the fact that the base and anterior of the upper surface of the tail does not have well-defined bands, whereas the banding on this part of the tail in the other four species is prominent.

O. glauerti is further separated from all of *O. hoserae*, *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. by the colouration on the throat, which is a thick dark yellow colour (slight orange), versus light yellow in *O. hoserae*, *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov..

Specimens of *O. glauerti* from Mitchell Plateau, in line with the holotype form from further south on the south-west Kimberley coast, have reduced in size yellow markings on the back, giving a well defined ocellated pattern on the body not seen in other *O. glauerti* from other parts of the north Kimberley or south-west Kimberley, or the other two east Kimberley species *O. davidhancocki* and *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov.. However on the neck, these ocelli are not prominent as seen in *O. hoserae* a species from the Top end of the Northern Territory

O. darrenkeilleri sp. nov. is separated from its closest relative *O. glauerti* which based on the above it would be identified as, by having a dorsum consisting of well-defined darker and lighter cross bands, being about 8 between the fore and hind limbs, these bands consisting of large and merged square-shaped ocelli with the upper and lower boundaries of these bands being irregular and in line with the outlines of the ocellal that join one another, as in the lines bulge out towards the centres of the sides of the ocelli. The bands on the lower back diverge along the midline to become broken, with the end point of the rows of ocelli on the midline being different on either side of the dorsum. In *O. glauerti* from the nearby Mitchell Plateau and further south along the west Kimberley coast, the light ocelli on the back

either do not merge, or do so only just and then only in some parts of the dorsum, as opposed to on all or most of the back in *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov..

There is also no significant divergence of the rows of (smaller sized in this species) ocelli on the lower back in *O. glauerti* on either side of the midline. Rows of light ocelli are less than 10 on the back of *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. between fore and hind limbs, (measured going down the body of the lizard in an anterior to posterior direction, as opposed to across the back), versus more than 10 in *O. glauerti*.

O. glauerti, *O. hoserae*, *O. davidhancocki* *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. are separated from all other Australasian monitors by the following suite of characteristics: Medium adult size up to 80 cm in total length; gracile build, with a long neck and the tail that may exceed 1.8 times the body length; a black tail with brilliant white or bluish-white rings to the tip; neck and shoulders being grey to tan or yellowish to rusty in colour, a prominent black temporal stripe; an unmarked yellow or white throat.

Brown (2014), at page 853 bottom left has a photo of *O. davidhancocki* in life.

Images of *O. davidhancocki* in life can be found online at: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/5414382>

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<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/112036433>

and

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/3691859>

Brown (2014), at page 853 top has a photo of *O. glauerti* in life.

Brown (2014), at page 852 bottom has a pair of images of *O. glauerti* from the Mitchell Plateau area of Western Australia.

Brown (2014), at page 853 middle left has a photograph of *O. hoserae* in life.

An image of a live *O. hoserae* can be seen online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/99163837>

A photo of *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. in life can be found online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/106919730>

Storr (1980), at page 259 has a photo of *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. in life.

All conform to the diagnosis just given.

Distribution: *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. is only known from the lower Victoria River region of the north-west Northern Territory, Australia, including the Keep River drainage.

Etymology: *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. is named in honour of Benny McNamara a snake catcher based at Colac, Victoria, Australia (AKA Snake Catcher Colac), in recognition of his services to herpetology and public safety in his region of western Victoria, Australia.

ODATRIA DARRENKEILLERI SP. NOV.

LSIDurn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:6F30FF31-7C86-46D4-AF70-13231E365546

Holotype: A preserved specimen in the Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia, specimen number WAM R.152796 collected from the Drysdale River National Park, Western Australia, Australia, Latitude 15.033 S., Longitude 126.816 E. This government-owned facility allows access to its holdings.

Diagnosis: Until now, *Odatria darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. has been treated as a northern population of *O. glauerti* (Mertens, 1957), better known as *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, 1957, *sensu* Hoser (2018), or Cogger (2014), who has a different concept of the species *O. glauerti* to Hoser (2018).

Odatria davidhancocki Hoser, 2018 and *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. are keyed out as *O. glauerti* (Mertens, 1957), better known as *Varanus glauerti* Mertens, 1957 in most contemporary texts such as Cogger (2014).

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O. hoserae is separated from all of *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov., *O. glauerti* and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. by having well developed and prominent ocelli on both the back of the neck and all four legs, this not being seen in the other four species, which instead have either spots on the legs or spots tending to form incomplete or indistinct ocelli, and no well defined ocelli on the neck.

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In *O. glauerti* from the nearby Mitchell Plateau and further south along the west Kimberley coast, the light ocelli on the back either do not merge, or do so only just and then only in some parts of the dorsum, as opposed to on all or most of the back in *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov..

There is also no significant divergence of the rows of (smaller sized in this species) ocelli on the lower back in *O. glauerti* on either side of the midline. Rows of light ocelli are less than 10 on the back of *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. between fore and hind limbs, (measured going down the body of the lizard in an anterior to posterior direction, as opposed to across the back), versus more than 10 in *O. glauerti*.

O. glauerti, *O. hoserae*, *O. davidhancocki*, *O. bennymcnamarai* sp. nov. and *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. are separated from all other Australasian monitors by the following suite of characteristics: Medium adult size up to 80 cm in total length; gracile build, with a long neck and the tail that may exceed 1.8 times the body length; a black tail with brilliant white or bluish-white rings to the tip; neck and shoulders being grey to tan or yellowish to rusty in colour, a prominent black temporal stripe; an unmarked yellow or white throat.

Brown (2014), at page 853 bottom left has a photo of *O. davidhancocki* in life.

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<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/3691859>

Brown (2014), at page 853 top has a photo of *O. glauerti* in life.

Brown (2014), at page 852 bottom has a pair of images of *O. glauerti* from the Mitchell Plateau area of Western Australia.

Brown (2014), at page 853 middle left has a photograph of *O. hoserae* in life.

An image of a live *O. hoserae* can be seen online at:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/99163837>

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<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/106919730>

Storr (1980), at page 259 has a photo of *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. in life.

All conform to the diagnosis just given.

Distribution: *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. is only known from Carson Escarpment in the north-east Kimberley district of Western Australia, Australia.

Etymology: *O. darrenkeilleri* sp. nov. is named in honour of Darren Keiller of Norlane (Geelong), Victoria, Australia, (AKA Snake Catcher Geelong), a snake catcher of many decades in recognition of his services to herpetology and public safety in the Barwon region of Victoria, Australia.

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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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