

Family Lacertidae

Nucras caesicaudata Broadley, 1972

Blue-tailed Sandveld Lizard

South African peripheral

■ DD – Data Deficient (Global)

Assessors: Pietersen, D.W., Alexander, G.J., Tolley, K.A., Conradie, W., Verburgt, L., Weeber, J., Farooq, H.

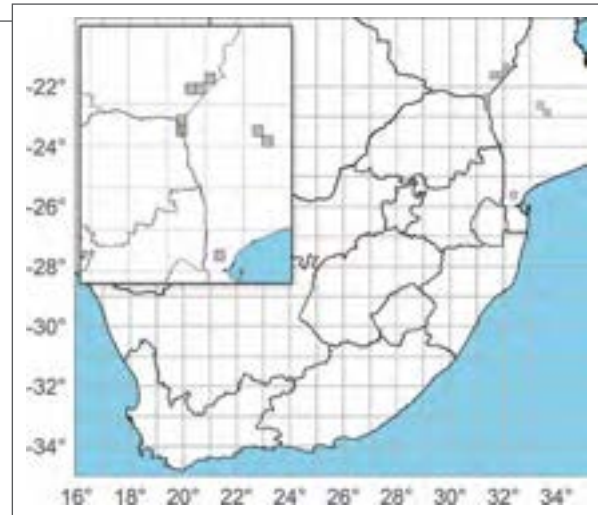
Previous Red List categories:

2021: Data Deficient (Global IUCN assessment).

Assessment rationale: Listed as Data Deficient on the basis that, although this species is reported to have a wide range encompassing multiple well-managed protected areas, it has not been recorded since the 1980s, for reasons that are unknown and might relate either to levels of survey effort or a genuine population decline as a result of unidentified drivers.

Taxonomic notes: No issues. *Other important names:* none.

Distribution: This lizard has been recorded from the Gazaland Plain in southern Mozambique, in southeastern Zimbabwe and just into South Africa (Broadley 1972). It is known from specimens collected in Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, the northern extremes of Kruger National Park in South Africa and scattered localities in southern Mozambique.



Countries of occurrence: Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

Habitat and ecology: Little is known about the natural history of this lizard, although it appears to be associated with arid Savanna on deep sand (Broadley 1972; Pienaar et al. 1983). It is likely to be associated with Nwambiya Sandveld Thicket vegetation. Some observations have been made that possibly suggest this lizard actively forages after bouts of rain (see Broadley 1972), probably due to an increase in insect (prey) availability. *Habitat:* Savanna.

Threats: Although there are no known threats to this species and most records have been taken within well-managed protected areas, it has not been

Nucras caesicaudata, Kruger National Park, Limpopo province (© W.D. Haacke).



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recorded in more than 30 years. Given the available information, it is impossible to evaluate whether the lack of records represents a genuine population decline driven by unknown factors or whether the fairly limited survey effort and the presumed low detection probability for this species have hampered the collection of records.

Population trend: The type series consisted of 49 specimens most of which were collected during a single survey in Zimbabwe (Broadley 1972). A further 13 individuals have been recorded from sites elsewhere in the range, collected over several years. The high number of specimens collected during a single survey (Broadley 1972) suggests that it may be locally common, or the population may fluctuate. However, this lizard has not been recorded for over 30 years, and most records date from the 1960s from the original type series. The most recent record appears to be from 1989, taken in Limpopo National Park, Mozambique. In South Africa, all records are from Kruger National Park made in the 1960s (Pienaar et al. 1978).

Members of this genus are generally considered to be difficult to detect and the activity of this species may be linked to environmental conditions (Broadley 1972). Few herpetological surveys have been conducted within the appropriate areas of this lizard's presumed range, but it is expected to still occur in northern Kruger National Park, South Africa (not surveyed for at least a decade), Banhine National Park,

Mozambique (not surveyed since the early 2000s), Limpopo National Park, Mozambique (no herpetological surveys) and Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe (recently explored by researchers but with no dedicated herpetological fieldwork since about 1980). Although the species is known from the regularly visited Kruger and Gonarezhou national parks, suitable habitat exists only in areas of these national parks that are either rarely visited or inaccessible to both tourists and herpetologists, and incidental observations are therefore unlikely.

Despite the absence of significant survey effort, it is still surprising that the species has not been detected in the last several decades. Thus, the population trend is unknown. There are no obvious threats to the habitat and no obvious land management shifts within these national parks where the species was historically recorded. However, the absence of recent records in these areas that appear to be suitable could possibly indicate a decline.

Conservation and research recommendations: The species has been recorded from Kruger National Park, Limpopo National Park, Banhine National Park and Gonarezhou National Park. Occurrence in northern South Africa, southeastern Zimbabwe and adjacent southern Mozambique requires confirmation to assess the distribution and to identify any threats. This could allow for an evaluation of whether the lack of records reflects a population decline or is the result of poor survey effort relative to the low detectability.