

## Genus *Meroles* Gray, 1838—desert and savanna lizards

The genus *Meroles* contains eight species that occur mainly in extremely arid environments in the western parts of southern Africa (see Uetz 2012). The centre of diversity is Namibia, but the ranges of four species extend into the western part of the *Atlas* region, while *M. squamulosus* has a large range elsewhere in the southern and south-eastern parts of Africa. These lizards have been the subject of recent phylogenetic research and the taxonomy of most species is well-resolved (Lamb & Bauer 2003; Edwards

*et al.* 2012; Engleder *et al.* 2013). *Ichnotropis squamulosa* was recently transferred to this genus (Edwards *et al.* 2012, 2013a; Engleder *et al.* 2013). Clutch size in the *Atlas* region varies from two to eight eggs, but as many as 12 eggs may be laid by *M. squamulosus* (Branch 1998). There are no endemic species in the *Atlas* region. These lizards generally occupy very large ranges and occur in areas that are sparsely inhabited by humans, and therefore they are probably not threatened by anthropogenic activities.

### *Meroles ctenodactylus* (A. Smith, 1838)

#### GIANT DESERT LIZARD; SMITH'S DESERT LIZARD

Andrew A. Turner

**Regional:** Least Concern

**Taxonomy:** No notable issues.

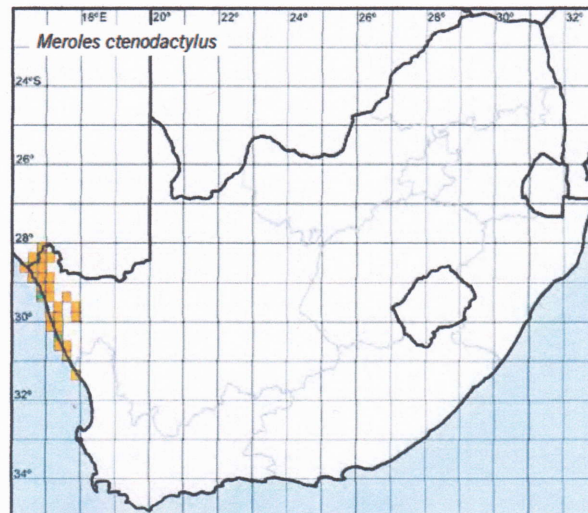
**Distribution:** Distributed from Sossusvlei in southern Namibia, southwards along the West Coast of South Africa in the Northern Cape, to Brand se Baai in the upper Western Cape (Branch 1998; Branch 2013). In the *Atlas* region its range extends inland as far as Okiep.

**Habitat:** Inhabits sparsely vegetated areas with loose sand (Branch 1998). Recorded from well-vegetated dune slacks and dune hummocks at Sossusvlei (Branch 2013).

**Bioregion:** Namaqualand Sandveld; Richtersveld; Namaqualand Hardeveld; Northwest Fynbos; Southern Namib Desert; Inland Saline Vegetation.

**Assessment rationale:** Occurs over a large area that is sparsely occupied by humans. No known threats.

**Conservation measures:** None recommended.



*Meroles ctenodactylus*—N of Alexander Bay, Richtersveld, NC J. Marais