

Family Lacertidae

Nucras aurantiaca Bauer, Childers, Broekhoven & Mouton 2019

Orange Sandveld Lizard

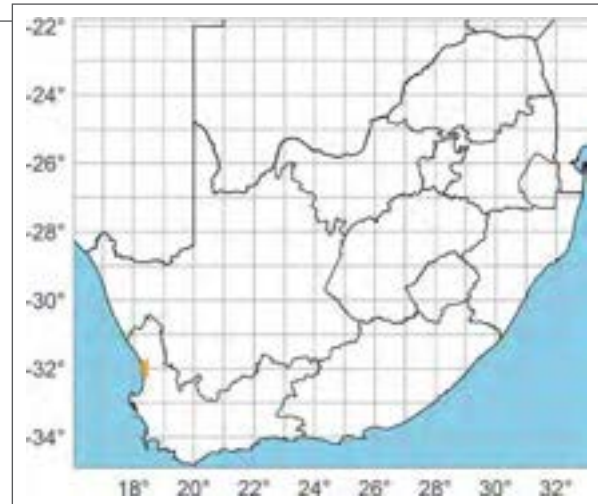
■ DD – Data Deficient (Global)

Assessors: Tolley, K.A., Conradie, W., Weeber, J., Alexander, G.J., Pietersen, D.W.

Previous Red List categories:

2019: Data Deficient (Global IUCN assessment).

Assessment rationale: This species is known from only two localities, which are in different vegetation types and bioregions along the west coast of South Africa. Bauer et al. (2019) suggested that the species be considered Endangered due to declines in the EOO and AOO quality and extent because of agriculture and tourism activities. Recent land cover mapping indicates that 44% of the habitat in the area where the records were collected is heavily impacted by agriculture, but land use change associated with urbanisation and tourism is negligible (Geo Terra Image 2015; Skowno et al. 2019). However, nothing is known about the habitat association that defines the distribution of the species, so the EOO cannot be estimated with any confidence. Given the general area along the west coast of South Africa has undergone substantial habitat transformation (Geo Terra Image 2015, 2016), but that the EOO could range anywhere from tens of km² to thousands of km², the



Data Deficient category is appropriate until such time that additional records can be collected.

Taxonomic notes: There are no taxonomic issues. *Other important names:* none.

Distribution: This species occurs along the west coast of South Africa, recorded from only two localities, near Lambert's Bay. Two specimens were collected in 2005 on Farm Bosduifklip and one from Farm Fonteintjie in 2011 (incidental camera trap record), about 20 km north of Bosduifklip. Using the Lambert's Bay strandveld vegetation type as a proxy for occurrence, Bauer

Nucras aurantiaca, Lambert's Bay, Western Cape province (© C. Keates).



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Nucras aurantiaca, male, Lambert's Bay, Western Cape province (© C. Keates).

et al. (2019) suggested it might occur from Donkin's Bay in the north to Elands Bay in the south. However, neither of the two locality records are from this vegetation type (see Habitat below). The distribution and EOO are therefore considered unknown at present.

Country of occurrence: South Africa.

Habitat and ecology: The two recorded localities are within the West Strandveld and Namaqualand Sandveld bioregions within the Fynbos biome (see Dayaram et al. 2019). The habitat is moderately impacted by sheep grazing at both localities. The species might be associated with loose, sandy substrate (Bauer et al. 2019). *Habitat:* Shrubland.

Threats: Natural habitats of the west coast of South Africa are under threat from large-scale, commercial agriculture, and 5% of the remaining natural habitat has been converted to agriculture since 1990, primarily for potato farming, and it is likely that this lizard would be affected by decline in the extent and quality of habitat. Land cover change associated with tourism (see Bauer et al. 2019) is not a significant part of the expanding human footprint. The total percentage of land cover associated with urbanisation is <1% of the area, and this has not shown a notable change across the larger landscape since 1990 (Geo Terra Image 2015, 2016). However, there have been several new strip-mining applications that are in various

stages of approval, which could heavily impact the coastal margin and inland (<https://www.protectthwestcoast.org/>). An increase in mining could pose a threat to this species in the immediate future.

Population trend: Given that there are only three confirmed records from two localities, it is not possible to infer whether the species is stable or in decline. Furthermore, because species of *Nucras* tend to be naturally sparse in the landscape and difficult to detect, the paucity of records for *N. aurantiaca* cannot be used to imply rarity or declines.

Conservation and research recommendations: The overall region is considered an Endangered ecosystem (Skowno et al. 2019) and poorly protected, although there are several declared protected areas within the region and additional areas have been identified as priority focus areas in terms of the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy (Department of Environmental Affairs 2016). Thus, research that focuses on surveys of the area to collect additional locality data are paramount to better define the distribution of this species, and the extent of historical and current habitat transformation within the range of the species needs to be assessed. Research on the extent of emerging pressures is required to assess population trends, i.e., the expanding mining footprint should be monitored to assess further declines in habitat quality and extent.