

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Animal Abstract**

**Element Code:** ARACJ02071

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Aspidoscelis arizonae* (Van Denburgh, 1896)

**COMMON NAME:** Arizona Striped Whiptail

**SYNONYMS:** *Aspidoscelis inornata arizonae* (Van Denburgh, 1896); *Cnemidophorus arizonae* Van Denburgh, 1896; *Cnemidophorus inornatus arizonae* Van Denburgh, 1896

**FAMILY:** Teiidae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** *Aspidoscelis arizonae* (Van Denburgh, 1896), Proc. California Acad. Sci., Ser. 2, Vol. 6, p. 344. *Aspidoscelis* Fitzinger, 1843.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** "Fairbank, Cochise County, Arizona," USA.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** Unknown.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** As Crother et al. reports in the SSAR 2003 update to the 2002 edition, *Cnemidophorus*, as previously circumscribed, is not monophyletic as presented by Reeder et al. (2002, Am. Mus. Novit. 3365: 1-61). Thus they resurrected *Aspidoscelis* for the clade composed of the species native to North America, and the whiptails from South America retain the genus *Cnemidophorus*. The species *A. arizonae* is 1 of 22 in North America and 1 of 11 in Arizona, including the non-native *A. neomexicana*.

**DESCRIPTION:** A small, gracile, slim lizard with SVL up to 7.2 cm (2.8 in). The coloration ranges from dark brown to reddish-brown, with usually seven light cream to yellow stripes (mid-dorsal stripe often diminished) running down the back. While the tail is long, thin, and bright blue, the species is distinguished by pale blue coloration on the face, feet, and underside, lack of spots, and usually 2-3 enlarged pre-anals. (AZ PARC 2006; Brennan and Holycross 2006).

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** *A. arizonae* is found in low valleys and sandy flats within Semidesert Grasslands; is distinguished by pale blue coloration on the face, feet, and underside; lacks spots; usually has 2-3 enlarged pre-anals. The similar *A. pai* (Pai Striped Whiptail) has only six complete stripes and is found primarily in Plains and Great Basin Grassland, but also occurs in Interior Chaparral, Great Basin Conifer Woodland, and Petran Montane Conifer Forest. *A. uniparens* (Desert Grassland Whiptail) occupies habitat that overlaps with *A. arizonae*. It can be found in valleys and on slopes within Semidesert Grassland and Interior Chaparral, following drainages into the woodlands. They have six

light stripes, no spots, three enlarged, rounded preanals, and a long, thin muted blue to olive colored tail. (Brennan and Holycross, 2006).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Color photo (Randy Babb, *in* AZ PARC 2006 <http://www.reptilesfaz.com/Lizards-Subpages/h-a-arizonae.html>).

Color photo (Erik F. Enderson, *in* Tucson Herpetological Society – Lizards, <http://www.arts.arizona.edu/herp/AZAR.html>).

Color photo (Brennan and Holycross, 2006: p. 83)

**TOTAL RANGE:** Arizona endemic with a small range in southeastern part of state.

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** The small range includes the area in the vicinity of Willcox, Cochise County, and the Hackberry Ranch in Whitlock Valley, Graham County (Wright and Lowe 1993, *in* NatureServe 1993).

**SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** This diurnal lizard is alert and fast moving. It is most active in the morning. It digs its own burrow where it lays its eggs or seeks shelter from the elements (e.g. extreme temperatures, storms, etc.).

**REPRODUCTION:** *A. arizonae* mates in the spring, and is oviparous (lays eggs). It lays one or two clutches of 1-3 eggs each in underground burrows (dens), in late spring or early summer.

**FOOD HABITS:** Forages for insects, spiders, centipedes, and small lizards by digging around the bases of bushes and under surface debris (Brennan and Holycross, 2006).

**HABITAT:** A grassland species, found in low valleys and sandy flats within Semidesert Grassland.

**ELEVATION:** Based on unpublished records in the HDMS, they have been found from 4080 – 4640 feet (1244-1415 m) elevation. There is one questionable observation in 2001 for the Tucson (2530 feet) area, that has of this time has not been verified.

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** A grassland species primarily in alkali sacaton and saltgrass, in low valleys within Semidesert Grasslands.

**POPULATION TRENDS:** NatureServe (2006) reports the total adult population is unknown but likely quite small, with the estimated number of element occurrences likely fewer than 10. The Global short-term trend is declining (decline of 10-30%). According to Wright and Lowe (1993 cited *in* NatureServe 2006), the species is “fairing badly” in Whitlock Valley,

where it occurs in syntopy with a healthy population of *Aspidoscelis tigris* in an overgrazed, shrubby habitat. The Global long-term trend is of moderate decline (decline of 25-50%). The area of occupancy has declined due to degradation of grassland habitat (Wright and Lowe 1993, *in* NatureServe 2006). Its range apparently continues to contract in response to invasion and growth of mesquite (Rosen et al. 1996, *in* BISON-M 2004).

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** 1B (AGFD SWAP 2012)  
[WSC, AGFD, WSCA in press]  
**OTHER STATUS:** Bureau of Land Management Sensitive  
(USDI, BLM AZ 2010)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Threats: Includes urban and agricultural development of vanishing habitats, and habitat degradation by livestock overgrazing (NatureServe 2006). Management Needs: Encourage developers, farmers, and ranchers in the Willcox area (this includes the desert grasslands of the Sulphur Springs Valley) to maintain favorable habitat (AGFD in press, cited *in* BISON-M 2004).

### **PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:**

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Conservation efforts would be benefited by further taxonomic study and better information on the lizard's current range, habitat status, trends, and threats (NatureServe 2006).

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** Private.

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **REFERENCES:**

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- NatureServe. 2006. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 5.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: October 11, 2006).
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- USDI, Bureau of Land Management Region 2. 2010. Arizona BLM Sensitive Species List.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**Revised:** 2006-12-07 (SMS)

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