

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

**Animal Abstract**

**Element Code:** ARACF02011

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus*

**COMMON NAME:** Western Zebra-tailed Lizard, Mojave Zebratail, Gridiron-tailed lizard

**SYNONYMS:**

**FAMILY:** Phrynosomatidae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** *Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus* Cope, 1896, Amer. Nat., Vol. 30, p. 1049. *Callisaurus draconoides* Blainville, 1835.

**TYPE LOCALITY:**

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** LACM.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** Phrynosomatidae is a medium to large family with nearly 125 species. There are ten recognized subspecies of *C. draconoides* (Degenhardt et al., 1996), two of which are found in Arizona, including *C. d. rhodostictus* and *C. d. ventralis* (south-central AZ).

**DESCRIPTION:** For the species: An average or medium-sized lizard with a flattened tail, and long slender limbs and body which are built for speed. Snout to vent lengths average between 2.5-4.0 in (6.4-10.2 cm). Dark tail bands become black ventrally, where they starkly contrast the white background. Their body is yellow-tan with two dark side bars extending up from the belly just behind the forelimbs. The side bars on males extend onto the belly where they are surrounded by blue patches. Bars are faint or absent on females, and the belly lacks blue patches. External ear openings and the forward position of side bars distinguish it from the similar Greater Earless Lizard (*Cophosaurus texanus*). The scales of this lizard are granular, and the throat has 2 folds (Behler 1979). (Behler and King 1979(1992); Degenhardt et al. 1996; Brennan and Holycross 2006).

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Similar to Greater Earless Lizard (*C. texanus*) and Common Lesser Earless Lizard (*Holbrookia maculata*). Distinct "zebra" markings are visible on the underside of the tail; bold black horizontal stripes against a white background. Males have black bars on each side of the abdomen that fade to blue smudge markings on the belly (faint or absent in females). These markings are distinct from similar species in that they appear near the front limbs (Stebbins 2003).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Color photo (Degenhardt et al. 1996: Plate 39)

Color photo of species (Brennan and Holycross 2006: Page 63)

Color illustration (Stebbins 2003: Plate 28)

Color photo of species (Behler and King 1979(1992 reprint): Plate 362)

Color photos of subspecies and habitat (CaliforniaHerps.com, Accessed 12/20/2006).

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

Color photo (Randy Babb, in AZ PARC at <http://www.reptilesfaz.com/Lizards-Subpages/>)

Color photos (Tom Brennan, in AZ PARC at <http://www.reptilesfaz.com/Lizards-Subpages/>)

**TOTAL RANGE:** *C. draconoides rhodostictus* can be found from southwestern Utah (Virgin River Valley), southeastern Nevada, southeastern California, western Arizona (including along the Colorado River within these three states) possibly extending into south-central portions, and south into Mexico in Baja California and Sonora.

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** See “Total Range.”

## **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** *C. draconoides* is a terrestrial lizard that is almost exclusively diurnal, but sometimes is encountered asleep on the surface at night. It is known to effortlessly bury itself in loose sediment (Stebbins 2003). It prefers small grain substrate such as sand or gravel and although most of its time is spent stationary, it does have the ability to move very quickly and is often seen in nature running bipedally (Irschick 2002). This species is considered the fastest of the lizards in the desert. In response to a threat (e.g. predators) they are known to bend and wag their tail slowly over their back before scuttling off, exposing the “zebra” markings under the tail. Innate territorial displays exhibited include leg flexion and head bobs (Degenhardt et al. 1996).

**REPRODUCTION:** Mating occurs in the spring typically around April or May, with clutches laid during the summer months from (May) June to August. One or more clutches of 1-15 eggs may be laid but the average is 4-5 eggs; hatchlings appear from July through November. Clutch size may be significantly correlated with body size. (Behler and King 1979; Degenhardt et al. 1996; Brennan and Holycross 2006).

**FOOD HABITS:** *C. draconoides* are opportunistic feeders consuming such prey items as grasshoppers, bees, wasps, and caterpillars, as well as spiders, smaller lizards, and occasionally flowers. (Behler and King 1979; Degenhardt et al. 1996; Brennan and Holycross 2006).

**HABITAT:** *C. draconoides rhodostictus* are usually found in areas which lack vegetation and maintain a small grain substrate such as open, sandy washes, loose gravel and sometimes rocky regions.

**ELEVATION:** Unknown.

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Mojave and Sonoran deserts. *C. d. rhodostictus* is found primarily in desert flats and washes from the Lower Colorado River Sonoran Desertscrub community (AZ PARC 2006). Dominant plant species include: *Flourensia cernua* (American tarwort), *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snakeweed), *Larrea tridentata* (creosote bush), *Prosopis glandulosa* (honey mesquite), and *Zinnia acerosa* (desert zinnia). (Degenhardt et al. 1996).

**POPULATION TRENDS:** The species is regularly occurring in Arizona and present year-round.

### **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** None  
**OTHER STATUS:** S (Species of Concern, Utah)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Unknown

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:** None

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** None

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** NPS – Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument;  
USFWS – Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. Among others.

### **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

#### **REFERENCES:**

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**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Meaning of the Scientific Name:

*Callisaurus*: Greek *kalos* beautiful and *saurus* lizard.

*draconoides*: Greek *draco* dragon and *-idos* similarity to a – the species of true dragons.

*rhodostictus*: Greek *rhodon* – rose, red color and Greek *stiktos* – dotted or dappled.

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