

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

MOUNT, ROBERT H. 1968. *Eumeces egregius*.*Eumeces egregius* (Baird)
Mole skink

Plestiodon egregius Baird, 1858: 256. Type-locality, "Indian Key, Monroe County, Florida." Syntypes, U. S. Natl. Mus. 3127 (2 specimens, both apparently males, examined by author), collected by G. Wurdemann (date not given).

Eumeces egregius: Cope, 1875: 45.

• CONTENT. Five subspecies are recognized: *egregius*, *onocrepis*, *similis*, *lividus*, and *insularis*.

• DEFINITION. This is a fairly small species of *Eumeces* (adults from 34 to 62 mm snout-vent length; females average 4.5 mm longer than males). The limbs are reduced, the primary temporal is lacking, and the ear opening is partially closed. There are usually three supraoculars. Scale rows at midbody number 18 to 24. Both head and body lack a median light stripe. Sexually active males are suffused with yellow, orange, or reddish-orange on the lips, chin, sides of neck, lower sides of the body, and occasionally on the ventrum.

• DESCRIPTIONS. The original descriptions of *Eumeces e. egregius* and *E. e. onocrepis* are by Baird (1858) and Cope (1871), respectively. Both of these are brief and partially inaccurate. A general description, apparently based on a composite series of *E. e. egregius* and *E. e. onocrepis*, was given by Cope (1900). Taylor (1935) described both forms in detail. McConkey (1957) described *E. e. similis*, and Mount (1965) described *E. e. lividus* and *E. e. insularis*.

• ILLUSTRATIONS. Illustrations (some duplicates) are available as follows: *Eumeces e. egregius*—Taylor (1935), fig. 2 in pl. XXXI and fig. 83 (head only); Smith (1946), pl. 109A, B, and C, and figs. 102 and 103 (head only); Conant (1958), pl. 18 (color); and Mount (1965), fig. 8C. *E. e. onocrepis*—Smith (1946), as *E. onocrepis*, pl. 110A and B; Conant (1958), pl. 15 (color); Mount (1965), fig. 8E. *E. e. similis*—Mount (1965), fig. 8A. *E. e. lividus*—Mount (1965), fig. 8D. *E. e. insularis*—Carr and Goin (1955), as *E. egregius*, pl. 54; and Mount (1965), fig. 8B. *E. e. onocrepis* × *E. e. lividus* intergrade—Taylor (1935), as *E. e. onocrepis*, fig. 1 in pl. XXXI; and Smith (1946), as *E. onocrepis*, pl. 110C.

Mount (1963) provided a photograph of copulation between a male *E. e. similis* and a female *E. e. lividus*, and photographs of aggressive displays by males of *E. e. similis* and *E. e. onocrepis*.

• DISTRIBUTION. The range of *Eumeces egregius* includes Florida, the Coastal Plain of Georgia, and portions of the Coastal Plain and adjacent provinces of Alabama east of the Black Warrior and Tombigbee rivers. This skink is strongly fossorial and occurs in greatest numbers where the soil is sandy or gravelly and dry. Such habitats often support sand-hill or scrub vegetation associations (Laessle, 1958, discussed the nature and distribution of these associations).

• FOSSIL RECORD. None.

• PERTINENT LITERATURE. The most recent treatment of variation and systematics (Mount, 1965) included a consideration of previous discussions by Taylor (1935), Carr (1940), Smith (1946), Neill (1957), and McConkey (1957). A study of the life history and ecology by Mount (1963) amplified previous work by Hamilton and Pollack (1958).

Distributional works, most containing observations on ecology, have been published by Loveridge (1930), Van Hyning (1933), Neill (1940, 1948, and 1958), Kauffeld (1941), Janson (1954), Duellman and Schwartz (1958), LeBuff (1960), and Mecham (1960). Other pertinent contributions are Babbitt (1951, mating), Telford (1959, ecology) and Hamilton and Pollack (1956, predators).

• REMARKS. The common names used in this account are those that I proposed in 1965. The old name, "red-tailed skink," is inappropriate for the blue-tailed subspecies, *E. e. lividus*. The antecedents "striped," "brown," and "Georgia,"

used in the old names for *E. e. egregius*, *E. e. onocrepis*, and *E. e. similis*, respectively, are also inappropriate. Almost all *E. egregius* have stripes; brown is only one of several color variants in *E. e. onocrepis*; and *E. e. similis* occurs in Florida and Alabama as well as in Georgia.

• ETYMOLOGY. *Egregius*, from the Latin "egregious," connotes distinctness or prominence, and perhaps was applied in reference to some particular uniqueness of this form among the lizards with which Baird was acquainted. *Onocrepis* (Latin, "ass shoe") refers to the figure produced by the light striping on the front of the head, which Cope described as "horse-shoe shaped." *Similis* (Latin, "like") alludes to the similarity of *E. e. similis* to the nominate subspecies. *Lividus* (Latin, "blue" or "black") refers to the blue tail. *Insularis* (Latin, "island") alludes to the island habitat.

1. *Eumeces egregius egregius* (Baird)
Florida Keys mole skink

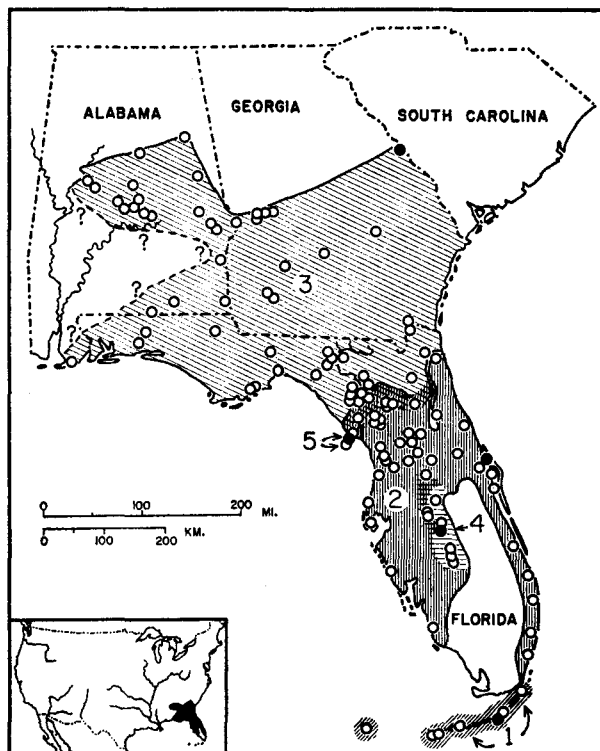
Plestiodon egregius Baird. See species account.

Eumeces egregius: Cope, 1875: 45.

Eumeces egregius egregius: Taylor, 1935: 490, part. See *E. e. similis* account.

• DEFINITION. This subspecies has a red or brownish-red tail, dorsolateral light stripes that neither widen nor diverge, and conspicuous lateral light stripes. Twenty-two or more scale rows occur in approximately 60 per cent of the individuals. The orange or reddish-orange suffusion in sexually active males often extends onto the ventrum.

• REMARKS. The relationship of this poorly known subspecies to the others has not been clearly established. In coloration, it most closely resembles *E. e. similis*, which McConkey (1957) believed to be its precursor. Mount (1965) noted that in certain aspects of squamation, *E. e. egregius* is intermediate between *E. e. similis* and *E. e. lividus*.



MAP. Solid symbols mark type localities; hollow symbols are other known localities. Question marks indicate unknown boundaries.

2. *Eumeces egregius onocrepis* (Cope) Peninsula mole skink

Plistodon onocrepis Cope, 1871: 82. Type-locality "Dummet's Plantation, Florida" (see remarks). The holotype was collected by C. J. Maynard and deposited in the Museum of the Peabody Academy of Science, but apparently is lost. The date of collection was not given.

Eumeces onocrepis: Cope, 1875: 45.

Eumeces egregius: Cope, 1900: 655, part.

Eumeces egregius onocrepis: Taylor, 1935: 497.

• DEFINITION. The dorsolateral light stripes show widening, divergence, or both. Tail color is brown, red, orange, yellow, pinkish, or violet, but never blue.

• REMARKS. This subspecies, presumably derived from intergrades between *E. e. similis* and *E. e. lividus*, or their fore-runners, is extremely variable. This variation needs more detailed analysis than has thus far been attempted.

Stejneger and Barbour (1939: 90) were apparently correct in assuming the type-locality to be Dummit (Dummet's) Grove, two miles southeast of Allenhurst in Brevard County. Mount (1965) incorrectly stated that Dummit Grove is on Merritt Island. Actually, the site is 15 miles north of Merritt Island, which is delimited on the north by Banana Creek.

3. *Eumeces egregius similis* McConkey Northern mole skink

Eumeces egregius egregius Taylor, 1935: 490, part.

Eumeces egregius similis McConkey, 1957: 17. Type-locality "northwestern outskirts of Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia." Holotype (examined by author), Univ. Florida Coll. 7647 (female), collected by Wilfred T. Neill, 29 March 1939.

• DEFINITION. The dorsolateral light stripes, evident from hatching, neither widen nor diverge. The tail is red, reddish-orange, orange, or reddish-brown. Scale rows at midbody are usually 21 or fewer. There are 6 supralabials on each side.

• REMARKS. Geographic variation in this subspecies involves the nature of the body stripes. The dorsolateral stripes are conspicuous and extend onto the tail in eastern and southeastern populations, but tend to become abbreviated and less evident in populations inhabiting central western Georgia, Alabama, and the Florida Panhandle. Concomitantly, the lateral stripes are less well developed, or absent, in the western populations.

4. *Eumeces egregius lividus* Mount Blue-tailed mole skink

Eumeces egregius lividus Mount, 1965: 209. Type-locality, "east side of U. S. Hwy. 27, 5.2 miles N Avon Park, Polk County, Florida." Holotype, a female, Univ. Florida Coll. 12642.1, collected by R. H. Mount on 27 February 1960.

• DEFINITION. The unregenerated tail from hatching to young adult is always intense blue. Regenerated tails and those of old adults vary in color from light blue to salmon. The dorsolateral light stripes show widening, divergence, or both. There are 7 supralabials on each side.

• REMARKS. This subspecies may have persisted in Florida throughout the Pleistocene and possibly resembles the phenotype of the precursor of the species (Mount, 1965).

5. *Eumeces egregius insularis* Mount Cedar Keys mole skink

Eumeces egregius insularis Mount, 1965: 210. Type-locality, "Cedar Key Airstrip, Levy County, Florida." Holotype, a female, Univ. Florida Coll. 12598.4, collected 8 April 1960 by R. H. Mount.

• DEFINITION. The dorsolateral light stripes, often indistinct, neither widen nor diverge. Tail color varies from dull, dark orange to reddish-brown or maroon. The hatchling in life is very dark, almost black; the stripes are only faintly discernible.

• REMARKS. The relationship of this subspecies to the others has not been clearly established. In coloration it resembles most closely some of the western populations of *E. e. similis*. As in *E. e. egregius*, however, certain characteristics of squamation suggest influence from *E. e. lividus*.

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