

# Collared delma



Poplar box habitat © Craig Eddie

## Description

The collared delma is the smallest of the legless lizards, growing to a total length of 15 centimetres with a tail twice the length of its body.

This lizard resembles a small snake or large worm and is coloured reddish-brownish on top with a bluish grey flush to the tail. The head and neck is strongly banded with broad black and narrow yellow/red bands. The chin and throat has bold grey to black bands or marbling. It has a relatively short blunt snout and conspicuous external ear-openings. Scales occur in 16 rows at mid-body.

## Distribution

The core range of the collared delma is within south east Queensland, however, in the Brigalow Belt it has been recorded from scattered localities including Millmerran, Warwick, the Bunya Mountains, Expedition Range, Blackdown Tableland and stock routes west of Roma.

## Habitat

This species is often found in rocky terrain within eucalypt woodlands dominated by ironbarks, spotted gum, white cypress pine and smooth-barked apple. The ground layer often contains kangaroo grass. It has also been recorded in woodlands of river red gum, poplar box and brigalow with no significant rock component, and adjacent to semi-evergreen vine thickets.

## Ecology and Life Cycle

The collared delma is a secretive, burrowing flap-footed lizard that shelter under rocks, logs, leaf litter and in soil cracks. They are most active during the day, however, also become active during the evening or twilight during warmer weather.

They are presumed to be solitary and long lived (greater than 5 years). It feeds on small arthropods including native cockroaches and other insects and spiders.

All delmas lay two eggs per clutch, with the collared delma believed to lay around December, hatching in February or March.



## Scientific Name:

*Delma torquata*

## Conservation Status

Vulnerable - IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (International)

Vulnerable - *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (National)

Vulnerable - *Nature Conservation Act 1992*



Collared delma © Steve Wilson

## Key Threats

**Habitat disturbance:** This delma is particularly sensitive to habitat disturbance e.g. rocks being overturned. This factor is significant when considering that this species appears to be sedentary, staying within a very small area and possibly using the same rock for shelter.

**Grazing effects:** Overgrazing by stock results in habitat degradation through soil compaction, erosion and alteration of the vegetation community. Small remnants and isolated unconnected strips of vegetation are often used as areas of shade for cattle. The isolation of remnants combined with heavy grazing pressure may result in significant changes to remnant vegetation condition such as loss of plant material and ground cover.

**Invasive weeds:** Collared delmas are known to decline in rocky areas covered by invasive weeds such as creeping lantana *Lantana montevidensis*.

**Inappropriate roadside management:** Roadsides and road reserves often provide suitable reptile habitat. Populations of reptiles that live within linear remnants, such as roadside strips, are particularly vulnerable to disturbances that remove essential microhabitat features, for example, rocks, logs, dense leaf litter and fallen bark. Threats can arise from inappropriate roadside burns, slashing and road widening.

## Did You Know?

The collared delma can be hard to identify as it looks very similar to some other legless lizards, for example the immature excitable delma *Delma tinctoria*. A distinguishing feature of delmas is the unforked fleshy tongue, obvious external ear-openings and two small scaly hindlimb flaps that are remnants of ancestral hind legs. Like some other lizard species and the gecko, the collared delma can re-grow its tail if severed or cast-off.

## How to help

- Maintain large, healthy, connected patches of native vegetation and avoid ploughing remnant strips/patches of native grassland or woodland.
- Ensure grazing practices are sustainable, maintaining greater than 70% ground cover.
- If burning, use cool burns in a mosaic pattern that promote patchiness and leave areas of ground cover unburnt. If possible, leave stick-raked timber piles unburnt.
- Contact your local NRM group to get information on implementing a weed control program in your area.
- Consider entering into a conservation agreement (e.g. Land for Wildlife, Nature Refuges or incentive agreements through grant programs) for conservation and land management assistance.
- Report sightings to WWF-Australia, the Queensland Museum or the EPA/QPWS. Taking a photo of live or dead specimens is useful to help identification.

To find out more about saving threatened species check out [www.wwf.org.au/tsn](http://www.wwf.org.au/tsn) or contact the Threatened Species Network at [tsn@wwf.org.au](mailto:tsn@wwf.org.au).



The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia.



Australian Government



WWF



Grassy poplar box habitat © Craig Eddie