

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Rediscovery of the holotype of *Leiurus berdmorei* Blyth, 1853 (Sauria: Gekkonidae)

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The gekkonid *Leiurus berdmorei* was described by Blyth (1853: 646) from "Mergui" (in Myanmar), and named for its collector, Captain Thomas Mathew Berdmore (1811–1859). By the time the taxon was synonymised by Boulenger (1885) under *Hemidactylus bowringii* (Gray, 1845), a decision followed by most recent reviewers, including Wermuth (1965) and Kluge (1993), it had already been referred to the genus *Doryura* by Theobald (1868: 29) and *Hemidactylus* (*Doryura*) by Stoliczka (1872: 100) (who redescribed and illustrated the taxon obviously with additional material), and by Blanford (1876: 637). Smith (1935: 99) reported that the holotype of *Leiurus berdmorei* was lost.

The reptile collection of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI; see Roonwal, 1963; Sewell, 1932 for, historical sketches of the institution), which has most of the types described by Edward Blyth (1810–1873), a former curator of the zoological museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta, is an important repository of Asian zoological types. A specimen of *Hemidactylus bowringii* was discovered in the collection of the ZSI with two labels prepared by Mahendranath Acharji, then Assistant Zoologist, ZSI, on 13 May, 1935. One referred to the material as the type of *Hemidactylus* (*Doryura*) *berdmorei* Stoliczka, with the locality of collection given as "Mergui", and Capt. Berdmore as collector. The other label gave the reference to Theobald (1868: 29), presumably as the source of identification of the specimen. The apparently unnecessary confusion with the authorship of the specific name of the species Blyth described has an even earlier origin: Blanford (1876: 637) referred to the species as belonging to Stoliczka, adding that he could not find the specimen in the Indian Museum, which may have resulted from the unavailability of the relevant literature to Acharji and to oversight on the part of Blanford. At any rate, this presumably resulted in the holotype of *Leiurus berdmorei* Blyth, 1853 being mistaken for the type of *Hemidactylus* (*Doryura*) Stoliczka. The next reviewer, Smith (1935), could not find the type in the Indian Museum collection, and declared it lost.

The type of *Leiurus berdmorei* Blyth, ZSI 6173 (Fig. 1) is partially preserved (head, parts of torso and tail-tip only) and disintegrating: over 120 years ago, Blanford (1876) reported the type was "not in good condition". Although at present in the synonymy of *Hemidactylus bowringii*, we consider the holotype of *L. berdmorei* be important given the wide distribution of *H. bowringii* (east-

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Figure 1. Holotype of *Leiurus berdmorei* Blyth, 1853 (ZSI 6173).

ern India east to eastern China and southern Japan), its unreliable type locality (see Zhao and Adler, 1993: 183) and lack of a recent review of east Asian species of *Hemidactylus*.

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