



Tail Bifurcation in a Copper-tailed Skink (*Ctenotus taeniolatus*)

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Lizards are often encountered with amputated tails that are either broken off by predators or competitors (Itescu et al. 2017) or voluntarily shed as an anti-predator mechanism known as caudal autotomy (Gilbert et al. 2013). In a number of species, amputated tails can regrow (Lozito and Tuan 2016) and in some instances a new tail can develop even when the original tail remains partially attached, resulting in an individual with a seemingly forked tail (Ramadanović and Zimić 2019; Khandakar and Sultana 2020). This is known as tail bifurcation and has been reported in a diverse number of families, including but not limited to the Agamidae (Ananjeva and Danov 1991; Ofori et al. 2018), Anguidae (Conzendey et al. 2013), Gekkonidae (Monte de Andrade et al. 2015; Maria and Al-Razi 2018), Gymnophthalmidae (Plessey et al. 2014), Iguanidae (Koleska et al. 2017), Lacertidae (Kolenda et al. 2017; Sorlin et al. 2019), Phrynosomatidae (Mata-Silva et al. 2013), Phyllodactylidae (Koleska 2018), Scincidae (Miles et al. 2020; Mo 2020), Teiidae (Cordes and Walker 2013; Pelegrin and Leão 2016), and Tropiduridae (Martins et al. 2013; Passos et al. 2014).

On 3 January 2023, we encountered an adult Copper-tailed Skink (*Ctenotus taeniolatus*) with a bifurcated tail (Fig. 1) perched on a sandstone formation in Valley Heights, New South Wales, Australia (-33.719944, 150.586194). The striped pattern on the tail ceased approximately one-fifth of the tail length from its base, indicating the site of an earlier amputation.

Tail bifurcation has been reported in many skinks (e.g., Turner et al. 2017; Vergilov and Natchev 2017; Mendes et al. 2019; Dissanayake and Clemann 2022). However, this type of deformity has only been reported three times in the genus *Ctenotus*, twice in the Robust Striped Skink (*C. robustus*; Wilson 2012; Homan 2015) and once in the Grand Ctenotus (*C. grandis*; Ellis 2015). Our observation therefore represents the first report of tail bifurcation in the Copper-tailed Skink, despite the abundance of the species in populated areas in eastern Australia and its frequent detection in herpetofaunal surveys (Hannah et al. 1998; Sass et al. 2008; Henle et al. 2014; Murphy 2022). Some authors have speculated that

tail bifurcation could negatively affect an individual’s locomotion and thus increase predation risk (e.g., Wilson 2012; Dissanayake and Clemann 2022), whereas other authors have



Figure 1. A Copper-tailed Skink (*Ctenotus taeniolatus*) with a bifurcated tail. Photograph by Matthew Mo.

anecdotally reported individuals with tail bifurcations having similar or identical retreat capabilities as conspecifics with normal tails (Ellis 2015; Homan 2015).

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