

Coromandel striped gecko

Toropuku 'Coromandel'

An enigma



Adult male Coromandel striped gecko. DOC

Quickfacts

Discovered in 1997 on the Coromandel Peninsula

Last mainland population, related to a species now only found on two islands in the Marlborough Sounds

Sometimes inhabits gardens

They seek them here, they seek them there.

Coromandel striped geckos are undoubtedly very rare – only a dozen or so have ever been seen. They were only discovered in 1997, when one was caught in a house in Coromandel township. As well as being very rare, they are also nocturnal and well-camouflaged by their stripes and colour. This means we do not know where Coromandel geckos live, how widely they are found, or how many there are. It is possible that striped gecko could be found anywhere in the coastal and lowland areas of the North Island, northern South Island and nearby islands.

Most of what we think we know about Coromandel striped gecko is based on what we know about the related Stephens Island striped gecko, which is now known to occur on both Stephens and Maud Islands in the Marlborough sounds. And we don't know much about that lizard either – it takes between 1 and 5 hours of searching to find each gecko. The Stephens and Maud populations and the Coromandel gecko are thought to be members of the same species of gecko named *Toropuku stephensi*, but as genetically-distinct populations. On Stephens Island, striped gecko live in shrubland,



vineland and low coastal forest where they feed on insects, fruit and nectar. They live for over 16 years. The similarly-patterned gold-stripe gecko *Woodworthia chrysosireticus* is known in Taranaki down to Mana Island and individuals of this species (and others) could be mistaken for the Coromandel striped gecko.

The Coromandel striped gecko is likely to be similar to the Stephens Island striped gecko, but its life expectancy on the mainland will be much lower due to the number of exotic predators there. Rats, mice, stoats, cats and hedgehogs are all known to be having an impact on New Zealand's native lizards, as they will be on the Coromandel striped gecko. The gecko living in trees or shrubs is scarcely a defence as many of these predators are superb climbers. Also, many arboreal (tree-living) lizards regularly return to the ground, mainly to move between trees, where they are more vulnerable to predators. While moving along the ground they are also known to be squashed by cars. New Zealand geckos give birth to 1-2 live young - not eggs like the rest of the world's geckos - an adaptation to the cold climate (New Zealand's lizards are the most southern lizards in the world). This is a very low birth rate when compared to overseas lizards, and is one of the reasons why New Zealand lizards cannot cope with the amount of predation from exotic mammals.

What next?

To protect the Coromandel striped gecko we need to know more about where it is found, and therefore sightings of this gecko are very important and should be passed on to the local Department of Conservation office as quickly as possible. It is also important to discover if they occur in safer places, such as places where the numbers of predators are controlled. The Moehau Environment Group has predator control programmes in a number of sites, and it would be well worth specific surveys to discover if these geckos occur there. Survey techniques such as loosely sheathing part of a tree trunk with 5mm thick foam sheets leaving 2 adjacent edges unattached which can be lifted to inspect for geckos, or searching at night for geckos using spotlights and binoculars, may be fruitful, but it may take considerable effort to find even one of these animals!

More information

Website: Driving Creek Wildlife Sanctuary Trust. [Link](#)

Website: Moehau Environment Group. [Link](#)

Article: rare Coromandel striped gecko found. DOC media release, 26 April 2013. [Link](#)

Article: Rare geckos released into the wild after six years in captivity. Stuff, 16 June 2016. [Link](#)

Book: A photographic guide to reptiles and amphibians of New Zealand. By Tony Jewell and Rod Morris. New Holland, Auckland, 2008.

Report: A striped gecko (*Hoplodactylus stephensi*) at Coromandel. Conservation Advisory Science Notes No. 232. Department of Conservation, Wellington. [PDF](#)



Photos



Adult Coromandel striped gecko next to a plastic ruler to give scale. DOC

This webpage represents the views of the Endangered Species Foundation of New Zealand and not necessarily those of other individuals or organisations involved in the conservation of this species.

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