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A NEW SPECIES OF SCINK FROM THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.

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(Plate i.)

UNTIL recently there were only two known species of the genus *Tribolonotus*, a peculiar genus thought to be restricted to New Guinea, but two more were found in the Solomon Islands by members of the Whitney South Sea Expedition and described by C. E. Burt during the year 1930. The following description is of a fifth species, also from the Solomon Group, and I have named it for the Rev. Father J. B. Poncelet, who has collected many excellent specimens of many kinds for the Trustees of the Australian Museum. Owing to the general shape of the body and the rows of large spines or scutes on the dorsal surface of this lizard, it has been referred to by laymen as a young crocodile. The native name, supplied by Fr. Poncelet, is 'Ubaibo'.

Tribolonotus ponceleti, sp. nov.

Definition.—Head strongly differentiated from the neck, with a slightly curved posterior border, which bears a number of short spines much smaller than those on the dorsal surface of the body. Eyelids well developed, scaly. Tympanum superficial, vertical, oval, and as large as the eye opening. Shields of head strongly rugose, the sutures thereby being very indefinite. Four supraoculars; a large preocular which forms a suture with the nasal; a large single shield covers the snout between the preoculars, the frontal, and the rostral. The parietals are somewhat broken up and not easy to define, though the posterior are the largest. Two large supra-temporals. The second labial is very small and does not completely separate the first from the third. The latter is exceptionally long and enters the orbital ring. Five lower labials, the first the longest. A large, azygous post-mental is followed by two pairs of chin shields. Dorsal surface of body covered with strongly keeled, spinose scales. The dorsal ridge is well developed and formed of a double row of strong curved spines, there being about twenty-nine of these between the head and the sacral region. Gular and ventral scales imbricate and keeled. There are four anal scales, the central pair considerably enlarged. Caudal scales spinose above and keeled ventrally, and there are forty-eight from the junction of the body to the tip of the tail. The hindlimb stretched forward does not reach to the axilla. The forelimb is covered above with strongly keeled, almost spinose scales. Digits well developed, roundish, with smooth transverse lamellæ under the fingers, and somewhat tubercular ones under the toes; there are twenty-five under the fourth toe.

Total length: 223 mm. (tip of tail missing); body, 110 mm. Head, 34 mm.; width of head, 25 mm.; width of neck, 12 mm. Hindlimb, 50 mm.

Colour (spirit specimen).—Dark brown above, with indications of lighter blotches or cross markings, more particularly on the tail. The hinder portion of the top and sides of the head are distinctly light brown. The lower surfaces are immaculate.

Distribution.—At present known only from the type locality, which is Buin, east Bougainville Island, Solomon Islands.

Described from a single specimen, the holotype (Number R.11459) in the Australian Museum.

Affinities.—Four other species of this remarkable genus are known: *T. novæ-guineæ* Schlegel¹ and *T. gracilis* de Rooij,² both from New Guinea, and *T. blanchardi* Burt³ and *T. schmidti* Burt,⁴ the former from Choiseul and the latter from Beagle, both localities in the Solomon Islands.

The following table gives the main differences between the four species:

	<i>novæ-guineæ.</i>	<i>gracilis.</i>	<i>blanchardi</i>	<i>schmidti.</i>	<i>ponceleti.</i>
Caudal spines	Upright double row. —	Project backwards, double row. —	Single row. 32	Double row. 29	Double row, backwards. 29
1st chin shield ..	As long as post-mental.	Longer than post-mental.	?	?	Shorter than post-mental.
Scale rows chin to vent	?	?	43	35	51
Lamellæ 4th toe ..	?	?	22	20	25

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I.

Tribolonotus ponceleti, sp. nov.

Fig. 1.—Ventral view to show chin shields, anal scales and keels of ventral scales. × 2/3, approx.

Fig. 2.—Dorsal view. × 2/3, approx.

Fig. 3.—Profile. × 4/3.

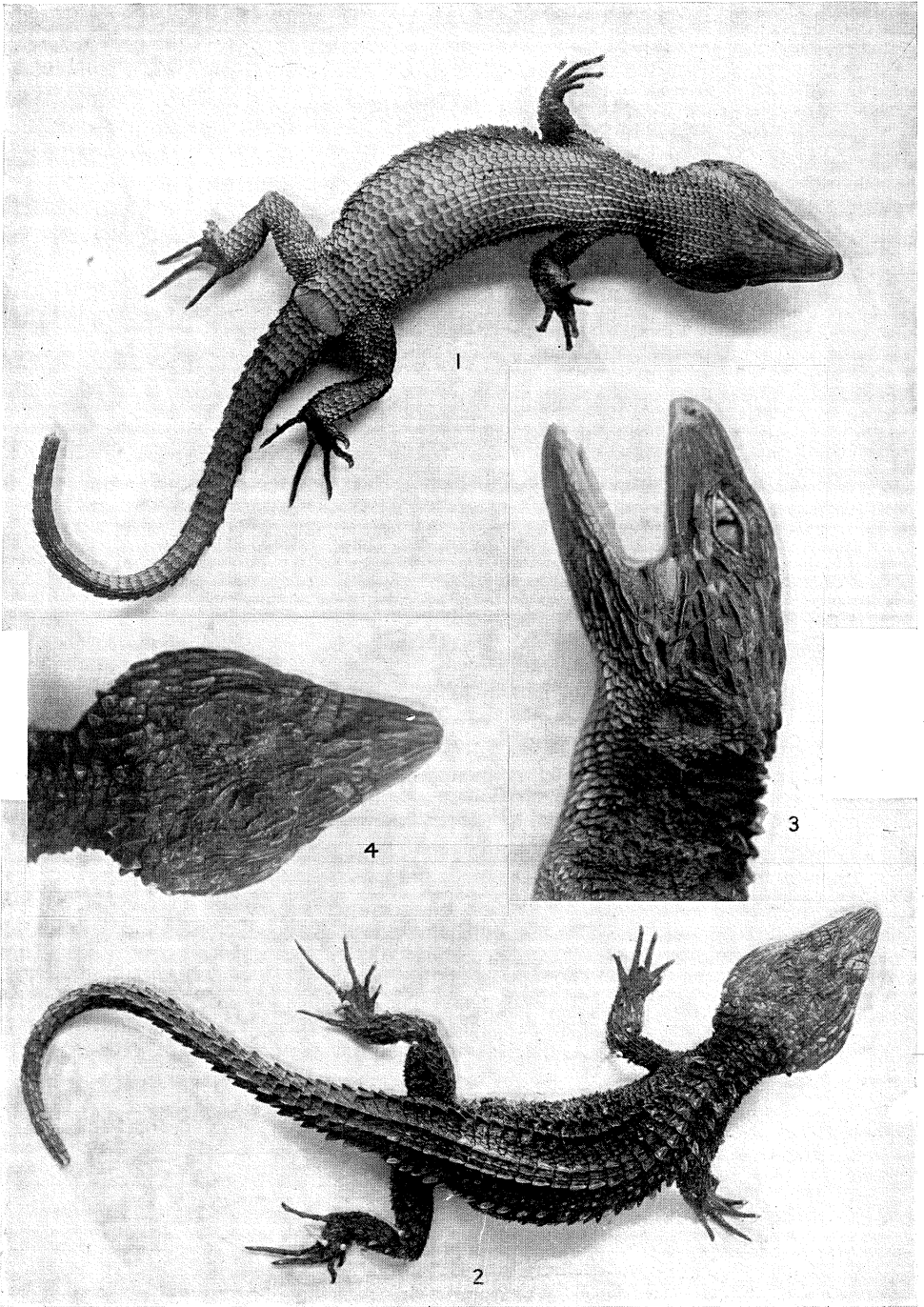
Fig. 4.—Top of head. × 4/3.

¹ de Rooij.—Rept. Indo-Austr. Arch., Vol. i, 1915, p. 281.

² de Rooij.—*Loc. cit.*, p. 281.

³ Burt.—*Amer. Mus. Novit.*, 427, 1930, p. 2.

⁴ Burt.—*Loc. cit.*, p. 3.



G. C. CLUTTON, photo.