

## ***Anguis melanostictus* Schneider, 1801, a Valid Species of *Barkudia* (Sauria: Scincidae) from Southeastern India**

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**Abstract.**— *Anguis melanostictus* Schneider, 1801, based on a watercolor in Russell (1796), from the Coromandel coast of India, is shown to be a species of *Barkudia*, nonconspecific with *B. insularis* Annandale, 1917, and is revived. *B. melanosticta*, is compared with the holotype and other specimens of *B. insularis* from Orissa State, and shown to be larger (SVL 161.0–164.9 mm, vs. 107.0–143.0 mm), in addition to differing in the following characteristics: palatal teeth present (vs. absent); anterior lobe of tongue distinctly narrowed (vs. not differentiated); and lobules around ear opening absent (vs. present). A neotype of *Barkudia melanosticta* (Schneider, 1801) is designated, based on an adult female from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh State, southeastern India (ZSI 20627).

**Key words.**— Sauria, Scincidae, *Anguis melanostictus*, *Barkudia insularis*, *Barkudia melanosticta*, neotype designation, Andhra Pradesh, southeastern India

### **Introduction**

Patrick Russell (1726–1805), perhaps the first Western herpetologist in India, a medical doctor by training, was posted as naturalist by the British East India Company at Vizagapatnam (at present Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, southeastern India). Russell is best known for a two volume folio of watercolors of snakes, published in 1796 and 1801–1802 (finished between 1807–1810; see Adler, 1989; Zhao and Adler, 1993), that concentrated on the fauna of the region. Russell's books are unique in that he used local vernaculars of the species illustrated, but not their scientific or English names, and several leading herpetologists of the time have named new species on the basis of the watercolors in Russell. Accounts of the life of Patrick Russell can be found in Adler (1989) and Smith (1931). The only reptile that is not a snake described and illustrated in Russell (1796: 48; Pl. XLII), a blind worm snake (*Typhlops*)-like reptile, was named *Anguis melanostictus* by Schneider, 1801. Russell referred to the species only by the local vernacular name, Rondoo talooloo pam (an obvious corruption of 'renda talu pam', Telugu for two-headed snake), and referred the species to the genus *Anguis*. Subsequent workers (e.g., Gray, 1845; Günther, 1864) have assigned the species provisionally to the genus *Anguis*, the latter author crediting the name, in error, to Merrem (1820). The species is unlisted in the next several major works on the herpetology of the region, including Boulenger (1890) and Smith (1935).

Because the description was substantial, including details of scalations, coloration and scale counts, it is clear that the species illustrated by Russell and named as *Anguis melanostictus* by Schneider (1801) is a species of *Barkudia*, known to be endemic to the east coast of peninsular India (see Smith, 1935). Diagnostic features described by Russell (1796) matches only this genus amongst all other southern Asian species of scincids: ventrals 151; head and neck subequal; the forehead covered with "laminae of unusual shapes" (fide Günther, 1864); teeth small, numerous; eyes lateral, small; nostrils small; trunk cylindrical, of the small thickness throughout the body; body scales imbricate; each with a black dot, and eight to 10 parallel dotted lines forming a line that runs from the head to the end of the tail; length 10.5 inches; tail round, smooth, its tip blunt; tail length 4.5 inches; color reddish-brown; ventrals and subcaudals glossy white.

The genus *Barkudia* and its type species, *B. insularis*, was established on a single specimen of a legless scincid from Barkuda Island, Chilka Lake (19° 46'N; 85° 20'E), Ganjam District, Orissa State, Eastern India, by Annandale (1917). Smith (1935) provided a redescription of the species, expanding the original description based on a reexamination of the holotype at the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). No further species of the genus has been described and Greer (1970), in his analysis of the phylogenetic relationships of scincid lizards, included the genus in the subfamily Scincinae. Although subsequent specimens have been found at the type locality (Annandale,