

Media Release

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ForestrySA discovers rare lizard in Lower South East

ForestrySA has discovered a rare species of lizard living in Malone Heath Native Forest Reserve, in the Lower South East.

Until recently, *Aprasia aurita* – commonly known as the Mallee Worm-lizard – had only been found living in dry heathland within the Big Desert National Park in north west Victoria.

A previous survey in the Reedy Creek Range by the Department of Environment and Heritage found only evidence of the common Striped Worm-lizard, *Aprasia striolata*, living in the Green Triangle area.

However, two specimens collected were initially misidentified during genetic analysis, resulting in the belated discovery of a new species – the Mallee Worm-lizard - in South Australia.

And now the species has been found living within the ForestrySA-managed Malone Heath Native Forest Reserve near Furner, south of the original discovery site.

The area provides swamp gum and grass habitat vastly different to Victoria's heathland, exciting experts.

ForestrySA Conservation and Recreation Planner Bryan Haywood was responsible for the find.

"I couldn't believe my luck when I checked beneath a roofing tile commonly used for reptile surveys," Mr Haywood said.

"The first one I turned over had this little fellow curled up beneath it.

"I didn't know if it was the Mallee Worm-lizard at first, until SA Museum experts analysed close-up photos taken of the head and back scale markings."

Identifying features of the Mallee Worm-lizard:

- Black marks down centre of each scale (on top of the body)
- Obvious ear opening (under magnification)
- Smoky-grey to light grey-brown in colour
- Up to 15cm long
- About 4mm in diameter

The lizard found at the Malone Heath Native Forest Reserve will be kept at the South Australian Museum.

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