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Dr Amelia Saul
Executive Officer
Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales
EMAIL: office@rzsnsw.org.au

RE: Paddy Pallin science grant 12 month interim report for project "*Conservation of two data deficient Australian skink species*"

Dear Amelia,

I write to inform you of the progress of my research, which is funded by the Paddy Pallin science grant I won last year for the project: "*Conservation of two data deficient Australian skink species*". This is to fulfil the requirements of the grant conditions of providing a 12 month interim report, to inform you of our progress, and so that we can access further provisions of the funds. Since receiving the initial instalment of the funds, we have used this to pay for accommodation booking and car hire to carry out fieldwork.

The project so far:

Our project is investigating the conservation and ecology of two poorly-known lizard species in northern NSW—the Kaputar Rock Skink (*Egernia roomi*) and the Long Sunskink (*Lampropholis elongata*). We have recently begun fieldwork on these two species (recently because we were waiting for the spring activity season to start). We have already made new discoveries. For example, the critically endangered species *Egernia roomi* has previously only been known to occur at three sites at the summit of Mount Kaputar; we have now discovered the species at 6 new sites, constituting new eastern and southern extents in the species' known range, as well as a new altitudinal low in the species' range. Other novel discoveries of non-target reptile species include new sites on the Nandewar range for *Liopholis modesta* (previously only known from Mount Yulludunida), and a new elevational limit for *E. striolata*, at 1365 m on Mt Coryah. We will soon commence the detailed population monitoring part of the study for this species at the summit of Mount Kaputar. As for *Lampropholis elongata*, we are about to deploy 300 pitfall traps across its last known occurrence sites (i.e. in the Ngulin Nature Reserve and Mt Grundy Fire Tower area). The species has not been seen since 2014, and it is feared that the species may have been heavily affected by the 2019-20 bushfires. We suspect that our pitfall trapping surveys for the species this spring will reveal the species at the historical record sites, given this is the first detailed survey effort for the species. Additionally, we expect that our survey findings, of both the species and of its habitat requirements, will provide valuable information that can inform conservation actions for the species and identify its vulnerability to bushfires.

What comes next?

Our current priority is to finish carrying out our fieldwork on these two species, which is expected to finish January 2023. We will then analyse the data and prepare scientific papers presenting our research findings for both species. I eagerly await the next instalment of the funds for my Paddy Pallin grant, as these funds will be essential for continuing our fieldwork this spring (for providing accommodation and food).

If you would like more information about the progress of this research project, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jules Farquhar', written in a cursive style.

Jules Farquhar
Research Officer, School of Biological Sciences
Monash University