

The Orange-tail skink



**Proposal for translocation
N. Cole**

The slit-eared skinks *Gongylomorphus* spp.

- Diverse group throughout Mauritius, La Réunion and the offshore islands
- Today only Mauritian species survive

Bojer's Group



Serpent Island



Ilot Vacoas
Ile aux Fouquets



Round Island
Pigeon Rock
Flat Island
Gabriel Island
Gunners Quoin

Macchabé Group



SW Mauritius



Flat Island

The slit-eared skinks *Gongylomorphus* spp.

- Decline and fragmentation of the *Gongylomorphus* community

Bojer's Group



Serpent Island



Ilot Vacoas
Ile aux Fouquets



Round Island
Pigeon Rock
Flat Island
Gabriel Island
Gunners Quoin

Macchabé Group



SW Mauritius



Flat Island

Lycodon aulicus
Suncus murinus
Herpestes javanicus
 function of habitat & mammals

Flat Island: The last *Gongylomorphus* community


- The only location to support more than one *Gongylomorphus* species



- Bojer's skink (on 4 other islands)
- Orange-tail skink (nowhere else)

Orange-tail skink



- Discovered in 1995
- Freeman (2003) determined its sub-specific status genetically



- Arnold (*pers. comm.*) - morphologically distinct to be a full species
- Minimum population estimate of 810

Orange-tail skink

- Ross (2004) population fairly widespread
- Concentrated in small area of *Sapindus* forest
 - Dense leaf-litter
 - Relatively cool
 - Relatively humid

Adapted from Rees (2008)

Orange-tail skink

- August 2007
- Road created through the main skink stronghold



Photo: Nicole Lohrmann

Orange-tail skink

- Significant loss of habitat
- Increased disturbance



Photo: Nicole Lohrmann


Orange-tail skink

- Plans of snakes
- All island developed
- Previous occurrences were
- Predation rate of **ONE** wolf snake = loss of 800 skinks in 400 days




Orange-tail skink

- To safe-guard against disturbance and ultimately extinction we need to establish a new population elsewhere
- Translocation of less than 10% of the minimum estimate = up to 80 skinks
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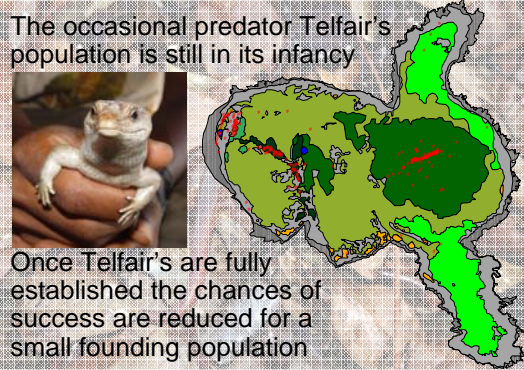
- Gunners Quoin is **CURRENTLY** the **ONLY** suitable recipient island



- It has the habitat, albeit exotic & mostly Valley limited
- It is free of IAS responsible for skink extinctions
- Reptile species present known to co-exist
- There are no risks of introducing disease

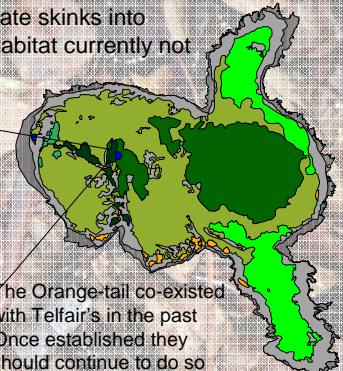

Orange-tail skink

- The occasional predator Telfair's population is still in its infancy
- Once Telfair's are fully established the chances of success are reduced for a small founding population



Orange-tail skink

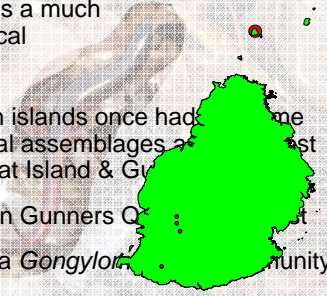
- Propose to translocate skinks into suitable structural habitat currently not utilised by Telfair's

- The Orange-tail co-existed with Telfair's in the past
- Once established they should continue to do so

Orange-tail skink

- The current locations of the Macchabé and Orange-tail skink, including past observations demonstrates a much wider historical distribution
- The northern islands once had some herpetofaunal assemblages as most similar for Flat Island & Gunners Q
- Most likely on Gunners Q
- Re-creating a *Gongylot* community



Orange-tail skink

- If we act now we have a far greater chance of success and nothing to lose...

