A Patternless Morph of the Marbled Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis marmorata*; Squamata: Teiidae) in New Mexico

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Marbled whiptails, *Aspidoscelis marmorata*, occur in the Chihuahuan Desert of New Mexico, western Texas, and Chihuahua, Coahuila, and western Nuevo León, Mexico (Dixon, 2009). These are large teiid lizards with a maximum snout-vent length of 107 mm in males and 97 mm in females (Dixon, 2009). The dorsal pattern of the marbled whiptail, as the name implies, consists of marbled reticulation of black spots and white stripes, and this pattern becomes more broken toward the base of the tail (Fig. 1). Ventral scales are large rectangular plates with black flecking throughout. Ballinger and McKinney (1968) reported four patternless morphs of 17 individuals in a population of marbled whiptails in the southern end of the Mescalero–Monahans Shinnery Sands Ecosystem in Crane County, Texas. Herein, we report a second occurrence of a patternless marbled whiptail in the same ecosystem in southeastern New Mexico.

In May 2009, we began research on lizards in southeastern New Mexico. Since then, we have captured 332 marbled whiptails. On 8 June 2010, we collected a patternless female 5.1 km SSW Maljamar, Lea County, New Mexico (32°48′48″N, 103°47′1″W, 1,224 m elevation; TCWC 94725: snout-vent length, 58 mm; tail, 119 mm; mass, 5.3 g; Fig. 1). Like the patternless marbled whiptails described by Ballinger and McKinney (1968) in Texas, the dorsal pattern was uniformly grayish-brown, and ventral scales were lacking the black flecks common to this species.

The individual we discovered was in shinnery oak (*Quercus havardii*) and sand-dune blowout habitat. Three other species of lizards that inhabit this ecosystem have patternless morphology; dunes sagebrush lizard *Sceloporus arenicolus* (Fitzgerald and Painter, 2009), prairie lizard *S. consobrinus* (Smith et al., 1992), and side-blotched lizard *Uta stansburiana* (Ballinger and McKinney, 1967). Therefore, patternless morphology is common for lizards in this ecosystem, but occurrence of a patternless teiid is unique.

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The frequent occurrence of patternless marbled whiptails (23.5%) in the population studied by Ballinger and McKinney (1968) in Texas and its persistence in this region for >40 years, as evidenced by subsequent collection and examination of additional specimens in 1981 (TCWC 62182–62183), 1984 (TCWC 62821–62822), and 2007 (TCWC 92221), indicates the trait is enduring in the region. Our collection of a patternless marbled whiptail in New Mexico represents the first record outside of Crane County, Texas. Further investigation of patternless marbled whiptails in this ecosystem will be necessary to understand the cause and persistence of this unique pattern.

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**Literature Cited**


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