

## Molecular review of the genus *Panaspis* sensu lato (Reptilia: Scincidae) in Cameroon, with special reference to the status of the proposed subgenera

ANDREAS SCHMITZ<sup>1</sup>, IVAN INEICH<sup>2</sup> & LAURENT CHIRIO<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Department of Herpetology and Ichthyology, C.P. 6434, CH-1211 Geneva 6, Switzerland; email: andreas.schmitz@mhn.ville-ge.ch

<sup>2</sup> Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Département Systématique et Evolution (Reptiles), Case courrier 30, 25 rue Cuvier, F-75005 Paris, France

### Abstract

The scincid taxa connected to the genus *Panaspis* sensu lato have undergone various taxonomic changes based mainly on morphological studies in the last century, but their true relationships are still far from clear. In the present study we applied Bayesian, maximum parsimony, and maximum likelihood methods of phylogenetic inference to mitochondrial 12S rRNA and 16S rRNA gene fragments to examine the degree of genetic variation within the genus. We found considerable genetic differentiation between the different proposed subgenera. Similarly, we could show that two species considered to be part of the former subgenus *Leptosiaphos* are in reality genuine members of the genus *Lacertaspis*. Based on our results we propose the recognition of the four former subgenera as full genera, and we identify several additional, possibly subgeneric, lineages within the different newly recognized full genera.

**Key words:** Scincidae, Cameroon, *Panaspis* sensu lato, *Afroablepharus*, *Lacertaspis*, *Leptosiaphos*

### Taxonomic and nomenclatural history of the genus *Panaspis* Cope, 1868

The systematics of the African scincid lizards, originally placed in the genera *Ablepharus* Lichtenstein, 1823 and *Lygosoma* Hardwicke & Gray, 1827, have been subject to large scale taxonomic changes both on the generic and subgeneric levels, especially in the last few decades. This is especially true for the species attributed to the genus *Panaspis* Cope, 1868.

The genus *Panaspis* was erected by Cope (1868) to accommodate his newly described species *anaeus* from Angola (Cope, 1868: 317). This species was later considered to be a