

Revision of the Three-striped Dasyures, Genus *Myoictis* (Marsupialia: Dasyuridae), of New Guinea, With Description of a New Species

P.A. WOOLLEY

Department of Zoology, La Trobe University, Bundoora VIC 3086, Australia
p.woolley@latrobe.edu.au

ABSTRACT. The history of the discovery and naming of specimens now referred to *Myoictis* is presented. A study of virtually all known specimens of *Myoictis* deposited in Museum collections was undertaken to clarify the number of species in this genus of endemic New Guinean dasyurid marsupials. Based on a number of morphological features four species are now recognised, namely *M. melas*, *M. wallacei*, *M. wavicus* n.stat. and *Myoictis leucura* n.sp. The form of the tail readily distinguishes the four species. The distribution of each species has been mapped and no overlap found in their ranges as presently known. Field observations are recounted. Data for all specimens examined is appended to facilitate future studies.

WOOLLEY, P.A., 2005. Revision of the three-striped dasyures, genus *Myoictis* (Marsupialia: Dasyuridae), of New Guinea, with description of a new species. *Records of the Australian Museum* 57(3): 321–340.

The first dasyurid marsupial from the island of New Guinea, now known as *Myoictis melas*, was collected in August 1828. Heinrich C. Macklot and S. Müller were among the members of the Natural Science Commission for the Netherlands Indies (Husson & Holthuis, 1955) who visited the south coast of New Guinea where the Dutch were establishing a Government post at Lobo, on Triton Bay. While there a Papuan brought a small male marsupial aboard the navy corvette “Triton” on which they were travelling. All they could learn from this and other Papuans concerning the animal was that it lives in the forest on the ground, forages mainly at night and is called “Insinsie” by the inhabitants of the region (Müller & Schlegel, 1845). It was recognized as a new species of *Phascogale*, eight of which were already known from Australia, and referred to as *Phascogale melas* by Macklot (1830), the specific name given in reference to its uniform black colour.

Müller (1840) also used this name in conjunction with a very brief, non-diagnostic “description”* in a footnote to his report on the expedition. Some years elapsed before it was redescribed in greater detail as *Phascogalea melas* (Müller & Schlegel, 1845). I follow Laurie & Hill (1954) and later authors in attributing the name *Phascogale melas* to Müller (1840).

Schlegel (1866a) described a second species of this genus based on two specimens (male and female) collected by H.A. Bernstein in February 1865 on the island of Salawati, northwest New Guinea. This species, *Phascogalea Thorbeckiana*, differed markedly from *P. melas* in being brightly coloured and having three black stripes down the back. In the same year as he described *Thorbeckiana*, Schlegel drew attention to a specimen collected by A.R. Wallace on the Aru Islands that was described by Gray (1858) as *Myoictis Wallacii* [sic]. Schlegel (1866b)

* The “description”, in translation from the Dutch, reads as follows: Size of an ordinary rat (*Mus rattus*). Uniformly black; on the back the short soft hair has the purest colour and is slightly shiny. The underside fades into a dull rusty black. The underside of the tail and the paws and the blunt tipped ears are sparsely covered with short fine hairs. The eyes are brown.