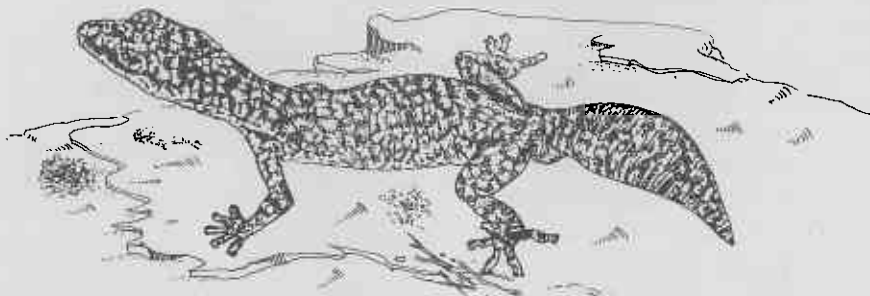


Create fauna habitat on rock outcrops using paving slabs

LOOSE rocks have been removed from many granite outcrops, either by the water authority to build walls to channel water, or, around urban centres, by householders for use in landscaping. The crevices under these rocks are a most important fauna habitat. Two researchers in NSW decided to see if they could recreate habitat on degraded sandstone outcrops by putting out concrete paving slabs.

They were interested in the endangered broad-headed snake (*Hoplocephalus bungaroides*) and its major prey, the velvet gecko (*Oedura lesueurii*). The gecko uses rock crevices for shelter, so declines in numbers when the rocks are removed. Then the snake numbers decline also. The researchers put out pavers, propped up to give a variety of crevice widths. Some



Marbled Velvet Gecko, Oedura marmorata. Purplish-brown with white or yellow speckles, in cross-bands when young. In WA, mulga region and north.

were in shady areas, some more exposed.

The results showed that the geckos used these crevices. This demonstrates that habitat restoration with appropriate-sized concrete pavers may be a feasible conservation technique for degraded rock outcrops.

They recommend the use of large pavers (30-45 cm wide, 5-10 cm

thick) with a variety of crevice sizes up to 10mm, to maximise the diversity of retreat sites.

Has anyone here had success with a similar technique?

Reference: Webb, J.K. & Shine, R. 2000. "Paving the way for habitat restoration: can artificial rocks restore degraded habitats of endangered reptiles?" Biological Conservation 92, pp 93-99.