

New lizard and rhynchocephalian material from the Lower Cretaceous of southern Italy

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The Lower Cretaceous (Albian age) locality of Pietraroia, near Benevento in southern Italy, has yielded a diverse assemblage of fossil vertebrates, including at least one genus of rhynchocephalian (*Derasmosaurus*) and two named lizards (*Costasaurus* and *Chometokadmon*), as well as the exquisitely preserved small dinosaur, *Scipionyx*. Here we describe material pertaining to a new species of the fossil lizard genus *Eichstaettisaurus* (*E. gouldi* sp. nov.). *Eichstaettisaurus* was first recorded from the Upper Jurassic (Tithonian age) Solnhofen Limestones of Germany, and more recently from the basal Cretaceous (Berriasian) of Montsec, Spain. The new Italian specimen provides a significant extension to the temporal range of *Eichstaettisaurus* while supporting the hypothesis that the Pietraroia assemblage may represent a relictual island fauna. The postcranial morphology of the new eichstaettisaur suggests it was predominantly ground-living. Further skull material of *E. gouldi* sp. nov. was identified within the abdominal cavity of a second new lepidosaurian skeleton from the same locality. This second partial skeleton is almost certainly rhynchocephalian, based primarily on foot and pelvic structure, but it is not *Derasmosaurus* and cannot be accommodated within any known genus due to the unusual morphology of the tail vertebrae.

Key words: Lepidosauria, Squamata, Rhynchocephalia, palaeobiogeography, predation, Cretaceous, Italy.

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