

## HERPETOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

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### ABSTRACT

One species of amphibian and 25 species of reptiles were seen in Israel (mainly around Elat in the southern 'Arava valley) during October, 1994. *Psammophis schokari* is reported for the first time from southern 'Arava, where only *Psammophis aegyptius* had been found until now. *Cytropodion scaber* is recorded for the third time from this country. Both *Tropicolotes steudneri* and *T nattereri* were found, although not in the same area. A full list of localities is given for every species.

During a one-month stay in southern Israel, several species of reptiles and amphibians were observed, mainly in the southern 'Arava valley but also in Sede Boqer (Negev). An exhaustive list of these data is given. Most observations agree with the already known distribution of the taxa as published by Werner (1988) and modified by subsequent papers, although additional information is given for some species. Ecological and behavioural data are given as well since little has been published except in Hebrew on most of these species.

The field work took place between 30, September and 29, October 1994. The best prospected area is constituted by the immediate surroundings of Elat. Several trips were made to the Elat mountains and the 'Arava valley between Yotvata and the Red Sea. Casual observations were made every day during bird or reptile oriented trips. Around Elat, I tried to visit as many different habitats as possible, both at day and at night. Only day-time visits were made to more distant areas. This results in an unequal coverage of the prospected area.

### METHODS

Identification was usually achieved in the field except for some specimens of more difficult genera *Acanthodactylus*, *Ptyodactylus* which were kept alive a few days for more careful examination before being released. For identification, I used published keys (Leviton *et. al.* 1992, Marx 1968) and papers such as Bafa El Din (1994) for *Tropicolotes*, Heimes (1987) for *Ptyodactylus*, Marx (1988) for *Psammophis*, Salvador (1982) and Werner (1986) for *Acanthodactylus*. As many individuals as possible were photographed to confirm their determination. Localities followed by an asterisk are those from which pictures of the species are kept by the author.

Only when the subspecific identity of the populations was positively established on morphological grounds does the name of the subspecies appear at the top of the species text.

## AMPHIBIA

### Bufonidae

*Bufo viridis* (Laurenti, 1768)

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 470M A.S.L., 29-10-94,  
2 IND.

Both were road kills found inside the campus, among lawns and gardens. The relatively fresh bodies indicated that the animals were active a few days earlier at most.

The systematics of this species is still too confused to propose any subspecific name.

## REPTILIA

### Gekkonidae

*Bunopus tuberculatus* (Blanford, 1874)

YOTVATA, 200 M SE OF THE PETROL STATION (29°53'N, 35°03'E), 70M A.S.L., 24-10-94,  
1 IND.

SAMAR, SAND DUNES E OF THE ROAD ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM 39 (29°48'N, 35°01'E), 80M  
A.S.L., 23-10-94, 1 IND.)\*

ELAT, ACACIA TREES NEAR RODED FARM (29°36'N, 34°59'E), 20M, A.S.L., 22-10-94,  
2 IND.\*

These three locations are situated in the 'Arava valley, which is known to include the whole range of this species in Israel (Werner, 1988). The habitat at Yotvata and Roded farm was hard ground of stony alluvium with scattered acacia trees, at Samar an area of soft sand banks with scattered bushes and stones. The animals were found during daytime, under stones and under an old mattress (the two specimens at Roded farm).

Animals from Israel are often identified as *Bunopus blanfordii* (Strauch, 1887). I follow here Arnold (1980) and Leviton *et al.* (1992) in including *Bunopus blanfordii* in the species *B. tuberculatus*, although I do not have any personal opinion on this subject.

*Cyrtopodion scaber* (von Heyden, 1827)

ELAT, SOUTHERN PALM TREE PLANTATION (29°33'N, 34°58'E), <10M A.S.L., 7-10-94,  
1 AD.\*

An adult of this species was found in the early morning hiding inside the wood building of the ringing station. We were not able to discover any other specimen despite daily searching in this building during October. This individual accidentally died of overheating and is now in the collections of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, France (MNHN 1995-2358). This constitutes the third record of *Cyrtopodion scaber* in Israel (Werner, pers. com.), although the species was included in Israeli herpetofauna by Hoofien (1972) because of its presence in Sinai. The first record also comes from Elat (Hoofien & Sivan 1995), and J. Moravec observed it at this place (Werner pers. com.). The range of this species in the areas has been recently extended in Egypt by Baha El Din (1994) who first found it along the eastern Sinai coast at Sharm El Sheikh, and in June 1994 at Nuweiba (pers. com.). It has also been added to the herpetofaunal list of Jordan by Werner (1991). According to Baha El Din (1994), this species has good colonising abilities. Its presence in Elat probably follows the development of important urbanisation along the northern shores of the gulf of Aqaba.

*Hemidactylus turcicus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

ELAT, ELAT (29°34'N, 34°57'E), 80M A.S.L., 3-10-94, 1 JUV.\*

ELAT, CITY CENTRE (29°33'N, 34°56'E), 80M A.S.L., 3-10-94, 1 IND.

ELAT, SMALL BRIDGE ALONG THE ROAD 90 TO TEL AVIV JUST SOUTH OF THE SEWAGE FARM (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 40M A.S.L., 9-10-94, 1 AD.

ELAT, PLANTATION CENTRE NORTH OF SOUTHERN SALT PANS (29°34'N, 34°58'E), 10M A.S.L., 25-10-94, 1 JUV.\*

Widespread around Elat, but never abundant during my prospection. Found active at night, or during daytime under stones or hiding under the bridge on the road to Tel-Aviv.

The animals from this area are called *H. t. turcicus* when other subspecies are recognized.

*Ptyodactylus guttatus* (von Heyden, 1827)

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 470M A.S.L., 29-10-94, 1 AD.

ELAT, 400 M NNW OF THE CEMETERY (29°34'N, 34°56'E) 140M A.S.L., 19-10-94, 1 AD.

ELAT, SMALL BRIDGE ALONG THE ROAD 90 TO TEL AVIV JUST SOUTH OF THE SEWAGE FARM (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 40M A.S.L., 7 & 11-10-94, SEVERAL AD. AND JUV.\*

In Sede Boqer, this species was found on the walls of the field centre inside the campus (one adult active there at night). Around Elat, it was only found far from habitations: under a small bridge in the 'Arava valley among acacia trees (both *P. hasselquistii* and *H. turcicus* were found there alongside *P. guttatus*), and on the vertical rock face of a very small wadi in the hills above the cemetery. In both places, *P. guttatus* was seen active during daytime, whereas only *P. hasselquistii* was found on a night time visit under the bridge mentioned above.

*Ptyodactylus hasselquistii hasselquistii* (Donndorff, 1798)

ELAT, CITY CENTRE (29°33'N, 34°56'E), 80M A.S.L., OCTOBER 1994, SEVERAL IND.\*

ELAT, CEMETERY (29°34'N, 34°56'E), 100M A.S.L., OCTOBER 1994, MANY AD. AND JUV.\*

ELAT, 500M NW OF HOF ALMOG (CORAL BEACH NATURE RESERVE) (29°30'N, 34°54'E), 100M A.S.L., 11-10-94, 1 JUV.

ELAT, SMALL BRIDGE ALONG THE ROAD 90 TO TEL AVIV JUST SOUTH OF THE SEWAGE FARM, (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 40M A.S.L., 7 & 9 & 11-10-94.\*

This is the most abundant house gecko in Elat. It was found in many streets around Hatemarim Blvd., although only one adult was seen inside town, other animals having been young specimens. In the cemetery, I saw numerous individuals of this species, both adults and young, as well as under the bridge along the road 90 to Tel Aviv (see *P. guttatus* above). This species was also found in natural habitat in the wadi above the entrance of the Nature Reserve at Coral Beach, where two young were found active after sunset. All these animals were found exclusively at dusk or at night, except under the bridge along the road to Tel Aviv. Despite nocturnal visits to the cemetery, none was seen after 11 October, probably as a result of much cooler nights.

The sympatric occurrence of these two congeneric Gekkonidae at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba has already been published (Heimes 1987, Werner & Sivan 1993). My casual observations also fit what is known of the more nocturnal habits of *P. h. hasselquistii* compared to *P. guttatus* (Frankenberg & Werner 1979, Werner 1982).

I did not find any of the meristic characters given by Heimes (1987) to be useful in assigning an individual *Ptyodactylus* to the correct species. As stated by Werner & Sivan (1993), adults of these two species are easily identified by colour pattern (see these authors and Heimes 1987 for a description). Young specimens of *P. hasselquistii* may be more puzzling since some of them show a distinctly spotted pattern rather like the other

species, although spot shape is somewhat different (see picture 1). Differences in tail length, head shape and nostril shape are also very useful (*P. guttatus* has a tail shorter than body, a more robust body, a much wider head and rounder snout and more protruding nostrils). The pictures in Werner & Sivan (1993) illustrate these differences well.

*Stenodactylus sthenodactylus* (Lichtenstein, 1823)

ELAT, WATER PUMPING STATION (29°33'N, 34°56'E), 170M A.S.L., 10-94, 1\*

ELAT, SOUTHERN PALM TREE PLANTATION (29°33'N, 34°58'E), <10M A.S.L., 10-94, 1.

YOTVATA, 200 M SE OF THE PETROL STATION (29°53'N, 35°03'E), 70M A.S.L., 10-94, 1.

Widespread around Elat where single specimens were found active at night near the pumping station (on hard stony ground), in the palm tree plantation (on very soft earthy ground) and north of the southern salt pan (on hardy stony alluvium). One was found under a stone during daytime at Yotvata, on stony ground under acacia trees.

The eastern populations (including the animals from Israel) are usually included in the nominate subspecies *S. s. sthenodactylus* (see Werner 1988).

*Tropicolotes nattereri* Steindachner, 1901

ELAT, NUMEROUS LOCALITIES, (29°33'-29°34'N, 34°55'-34°58'E), 30-200M A.S.L., OCTOBER 1994.\*

One of the most easily found reptiles around Elat. Individuals of this species were discovered during day or night under stones, planks or mostly under small stone piles in the 'Arava valley and in the hills, always on rocky or stony substrate. Some were also seen active on the ground at nights. Its widespread occurrence in the southern 'Arava valley makes it almost certain that it occurs in Jordan as well.

Although already suspected by Werner (1988), the occurrence of this species in southern Israel was not firmly established until the work of Baha El Din (1994). All the specimens I saw corresponded to the statements of this author on the morphology and identification of this species, except that one individual had an indistinct dorsal pattern. It was in all other aspects identical to the other specimens seen around Elat.

I did not find *T. steudneri* in the southern 'Arava. The specimen of the latter species seen in the Negev (see below) was distinctly different in both colour and proportions (see picture).

*Tropicolotes steudneri* (Peters, 1869)

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 440M A.S.L., 28-10-94, 1 IND.\*

A small individual of this species was found under a small rock on a steep slope with boulders just south of the campus (see picture 2). See remarks under *T. nattereri*.

These observations confirm the presence of both *T. steudneri* and *T. nattereri* in Israel, a fact that was not previously firmly established (Werner 1988, Baha El Din 1994).

**Agamidae**

*Laudakia stellio* ssp (Linnaeus, 1758)

ABOUT 15 KM N OF ELAT, ABOUT HALFWAY UP NAHAL ETEQ, (≈29°42'N, ≈34°56'E), ≈450M A.S.L., 13-10-94, 1 AD.

One adult active at midday in Nahal Eteq was found in the shade, on a big branch of a dead acacia.

The *L. stellio* populations from southern Israel, southern Sinai and southern Jordan are either included in the subspecies *brachydactyla* (Schmidt & Marx 1956, Leviton *et al.* 1992) or considered to represent another (undescribed) subspecies (Werner 1988).

*Laudakia stellio brachydactyla* (Haas, 1951)

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°50' +30°51'N, 34°46'E), 360-460M A.S.L., 29-10-94, NUMEROUS IND.

Very abundant from the bottom of the En 'Avedat valley to the Sede Boqer campus, many adults and young being active there during the morning and early afternoon.

These specimens were seen in an area (central Negev) where the occurrence of the subspecies *brachydactyla* is widely recognised (Werner 1988). I was able to catch an adult male which conformed very well to the diagnosis of this subspecies given by Haas (1951a).

*Pseudotrapelus sinaitus* (von Heyden, 1827)

ELAT, NUMEROUS LOCALITIES, (29°33'-29°34'N, 34°55'-34°58'E), 10-200M A.S.L. OCTOBER 1994\*.

ABOUT 15 KM N OF ELAT, ABOUT HALFWAY UP NAHAL ETEQ. (≈29°42'N, ≈34°56'E), ≈450M A.S.L., 13-10-94, SEVERAL AD & JUV.\*

This agamid lizard was most abundant in the hills around Elat where it was active mainly at the hottest times of the day. It was observed in Nahal Eteq as well, and in the 'Arava valley around the Southern Salt Pans where it seemed to be much less numerous. All these animals were found active during day-time.

*Trapelus pallidus pallidus* (Reuss, 1834)

"ALAEEMON NATURE RESERVE", ALONG THE ROAD 90 ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM. 33 (29°43'N, 35°00'E) 90M A.S.L., 14 & 20-10-94, 2 IND.\*

SAMAR, SAND DUNES E OF THE ROAD 90 ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM 39 (29°48'N, 35°01'E), 80M A.S.L., 23-10-94, 1 IND.\*

In these two places, the habitat consisted of soft sand banks with scattered bushes and stones. All specimens were found active during day-time.

*Uromastix aegyptius* (Forsskål, 1775)

ELAT, JUST N OF THE AIRPORT (29°33'N, 34°57'E), 10M A.S.L., END OF OCTOBER 1994, 1 AD.

Its burrow was at the edge of a recently created earth-bank dominating the Northern Salt Pans, its entrance just beside a patch of dense green plants, in a very disturbed area. Several *Uromastix* were reported to me from the 'Arava around Elat, probably belonging to this species, which is apparently widespread in this area.

Disi (1991) describes a pre-noon and a pre-dusk activity peak for this species in the 'Arava. Daily visits were made to this particular burrow at the end of the month, but the animal was only seen about once every second day, and only in late morning. Although little can be said from such casual observations, this fact, together with the lack of other contact with this species despite active searching in an area where it is said to be common (R. Yosef, pers. com.), suggests a reduced activity at this time of the year.

Populations of this species from the 'Arava valley have been included in the subspecies *microlepis* (Blandford, 1874), which may not be valid (see Leviton *et al.* 1992 for a short review).

*Uromastix ocellatus ornatus* (von Heyden 1827)

ELAT, 500 M W. OF THE CEMETERY (29°34'N, 34°56'E), 180M A.S.L., END OF OCTOBER 1994, 1 AD.\*

This animal had an horizontal burrow about 120 cm long in a steep rocky slope facing south and dominating a small wadi with scattered acacia trees. It was seen on several days at the end of the month. On 19 October, it was observed for a long time. It was already sunbathing on rocks close to its burrow when I arrived at the end of the morning. It stayed there for about one hour, when it left the slope to go down the wadi. It then fed on various plants on the ground before climbing on an acacia tree to eat leaves. It returned to the slope less than an hour later and disappeared. I do not know whether it went out again later that day.

The importance of plants in the diet is well documented for *U. aegyptius* (Foley *et al.* 1992) and *U. acanthinurus* (Bons 1959), so plant consumption has to be expected for *U. ocellatus* as well.

The granite mountains near Elat are the only place where *U. ocellatus* is known to occur in Israel (Werner 1988).

**Scincidae**

*Chalcides ocellatus ocellatus* (Forsskål, 1775)

ELAT, HOTELS AREAS (29°33'N, 34°57'E), < 10M A.S.L., 30-09-94, 1 AD.

ELAT, SOUTHERN PALM TREE PLANTATION (29°33'N, 34°58'E), < 10M A.S.L., 3-10-94, 1 AD & 22-10-94, 1 AD\*

YOTVATA, SEWAGE LAGOON (29°53'N, 35°03'E), 70M A.S.L., 20-10-94, 2 IND.

YOTVATA, 1 KM SW OF THE GAS STATION (29°53'N, 35°02'E), 70M A.S.L., 24-10-94, 1 IND\*.

Some were found active: sunbathing in a flower-bed in the hotel area around midday or in the morning around the ringing station under *Suaeda* bushes. Others were found beneath a plank under the base of a *Tamarix* bush on sandy ground at the Yotvata sewage and beneath a plank inside a small bush among acacia trees on hard ground 1 km south of Yotvata on 24 October. All the specimens I have seen conformed to the description of the nominate subspecies given by Mateo *et al.* (1996).

*Eumeces schneideri* (Daudin, 1802)

ELAT, WATER PUMPING STATION (29°33'N, 34°56'E), 170M A.S.L., 16-10-94, 1 AD.\*

An adult was seen there moving (foraging?) around and inside a big bush, near midday. Specimens from southern Israel belong to the subspecies *schneideri* (Werner 1988).

*Sphenops sepsoides* (Audouin, 1829)

YOTVATA, SEWAGE LAGOON (29°53'N, 35°03'E), 70M A.S.L., 24-10-94, 1 AD.\*

This individual was found in the sand beneath a plank under a *Tamarix* bush at Yotvata sewage farm, in an area of bushes on earthy ground far away from the sand banks. One *C. ocellatus* was found under the same plank.

Although this situation does not seem to be typical for the species according to the published material (Werner 1968), it may not be too unusual since its close relative *S. boulengeri* is often found in the same micro-habitats in Morocco (Ph. Geniez pers. com). Our specimen from the 'Arava lacked any spots on the tail, whereas the two specimens from the Negev depicted in Werner (1968) show an obviously spotted tail, as it is the case in *S. boulengeri*.

## Lacertidae

### *Acanthodactylus boskianus* (Daudin, 1802)

ELAT, GARDENS AND PARKS IN TOWN (29°33'N, 34°56' & 34°57'E), 10-80M A.S.L., OCTOBER 1994, SEVERAL AD.\*

ELAT, ACACIA TREES AROUND SEWAGE FARM (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 20M A.S.L., 22-10-94, SEVERAL JUV.\*

ABOUT 15 KM N OF ELAT, ABOUT HALFWAY UP THE WADI ETEQ, (≈29°42'N, ≈34°56'E) ≈450M A.S.L., 13-10-94, 1 JUV.\*

Specimens from acacia trees around the sewage farm were syntopic with *A. ophiodurus*. This species and the following may be difficult to tell apart even in the hand. The colour of the underside of the tail of the young (red in *A. ophiodurus*, blue in *A. boskianus*) is said to be a useful clue to separate the two species in Arabia (Leviton *et al.* 1992). All the specimens I identified had a red or pale underside of the tail, and only one briefly seen young *Acanthodactylus* from north of Elat had a blue tail. The tail colour thus cannot be used to separate *A. boskianus* from *A. ophiodurus* at least in southern Israel. In Morocco, young *A. boskianus* may have a red or blue undertail, although red is far more frequent (pers. obs.). Adults of *A. boskianus* can usually be identified by their larger size, more contrasting colour pattern on the back, with lines of black spots and white flecks, darker dorsum of the tail and bigger and less numerous dorsal scales. The snout shape is also different, being blunter on *boskianus*. When present, the central dorsal stripe (formed on *boskianus*, reaching head without fork on *ophiodurus*) is the most useful character, being especially well marked on young specimens. Nevertheless, I found some animals (*A. ophiodurus* with poorly marked dorsal pattern) to be tricky, even in the hand. The pectination of the toes did seem to differ - based on examination in the field in any of the specimens I have caught. Eyelid pectination is a useful character, but is difficult to assess even in the hand.

Salvador (1982) does not recognise the subspecies *asper* (Audouin, 1829).

### *Acanthodactylus ophiodurus* (Arnold, 1980):

11 KM N OF ELAT, NEAR THE DOUM PALMS (29°37'N, 34°59'E), 30M A.S.L., 13-10-94, SEVERAL AD.\*

"ALAEEMON NATURE RESERVE", ALONG THE ROAD 90 ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM. 33 (29°43'N, 35°00'E), 90M A.S.L., 14-10-94, 1 AD. & SEVERAL JUV.\*

SAMAR, SAND DUNES E OF THE ROAD 90 ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM 39 (29°48'N, 35°01'E), 80M A.S.L., 15-10-94, 1 AD. & SEVERAL JUV.\*

ELAT, ACACIA TREES AROUND SEWAGE FARM (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 20M A.S.L., 22-10-94, SEVERAL AD. & JUV.\*

YOTVATA, ACACIA TREES AROUND THE GAS STATION (29°53'N, 35°03'E), 70M A.S.L., 24-10-94 SEVERAL IND.\*

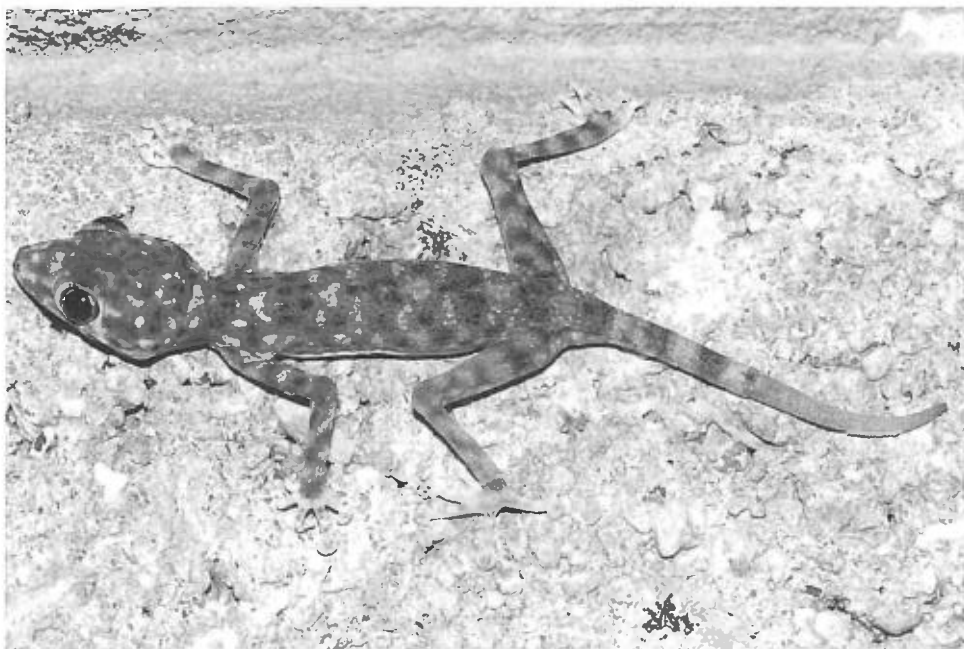
MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 460M A.S.L., 29-10-94, NUMEROUS AD. & JUV.\*

This species is widespread along the 'Arava valley between Elat and Yotvata, in most habitats from sandy areas to hard gravel ground with acacia trees. The syntopy with *A. boskianus* was observed in acacia trees north of Elat. All these observations fall within the range of *A. ophiodurus* published by Werner (1986).

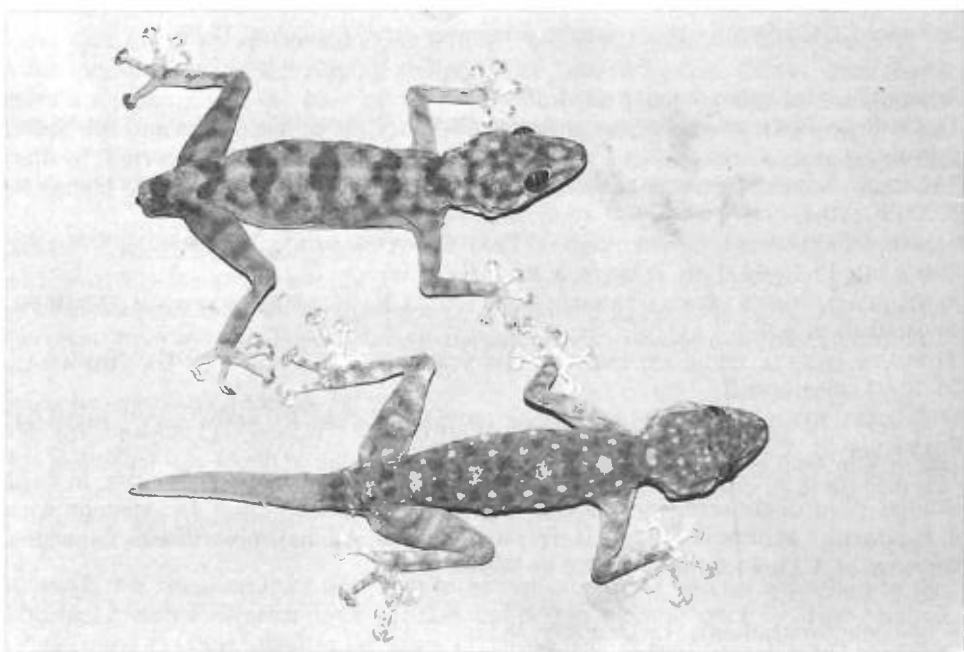
### *Acanthodactylus pardalis* (Lichtenstein, 1823):

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 460M A.S.L., 29-10-94, 1 AD. M.

I could find only one individual of this species despite active searching in an area with loess soil just outside the campus. It was active in a dense green bush at mid-afternoon.

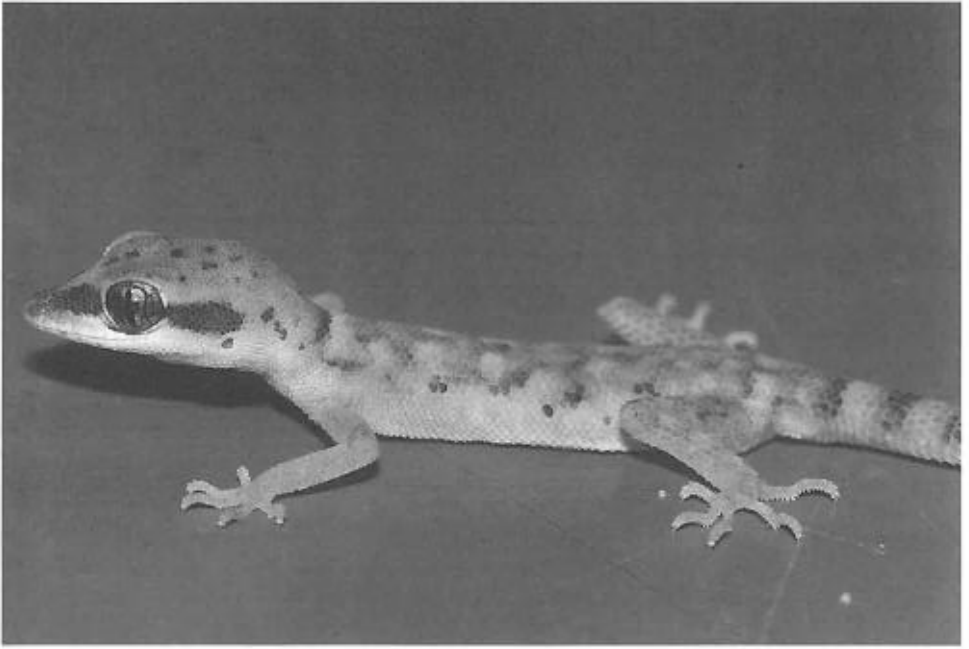


**Plate 1.** Young specimen of *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii hasselquistii* from Elat, southern Israel. Compare coloration with specimens in plate 2.



**Plate 2.** Adult specimens of *Ptyodactylus guttatus* (below) and *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii hasselquistii* (above) from Elat, southern Israel.





**Plate 3.** *Tropicolotes nattereri* from Elat, southern Israel.  
A specimen with poorly marked dorsal pattern.



**Plate 4.** *Tropicolotes steudneri* from Sede Boqer, central Negev.  
Compare colour and proportions with the specimens in plate 3 and in  
Baha el Din (1994).

*Mesalina olivieri* (Audouin, 1829):

"ALAEON NATURE RESERVE", ALONG THE ROAD 90 ELAT-TEL AVIV AT KM. 33 (29°43'N, 35°00'E), 90M A.S.L., 10-10-94, 2 AD.

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 460M A.S.L., 29-10-94, 1 AD.

In both these localities, this species was found on soft ground (sand in the 'Arava, loess in the Negev). It is morphologically clearly distinct from the following species by different colour, pattern and more robust habitus (especially head shape).

The animals from Israel are sometimes included in the subspecies *schmidti* (Haas, 1951).

*Mesalina guttulata* (Lichtenstein, 1823):

MIZPE RAMON, 28-10-94, 1 AD

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER, ALONG THE ROAD TO EN' AVEDA (30°50'N, 34°46'E) 400M A.S.L., 29-10-94, 1 AD.

In these two places it was found in rocky habitats (bare stones with little vegetation in Mizpe Ramon, rocky slope between the campus and En 'Avedat in Sede Boqer). At Sede Boqer both *M. guttulata* and *M. olivieri* occurred. The ecological segregation between these two lizards is already well known (Haas 1952, Pasteur & Bons 1960, Werner 1982).

*Ophisops elegans* (Ménétriés, 1832):

MIDRESHET BEN GURION AT SEDE BOQER (30°51'N, 34°46'E), 460M A.S.L., 29-10-94, 1 AD.\*

Active during the morning in gardens near the Mitrani centre.

According to Werner (1988), only the subspecies *ehrenbergii* (Wiegmann, 1835) occurs in Israel.

*Psammophis schokari* (Forsskål, 1775)

ELAT, JORDAN-ISRAEL BORDER CROSSING POINT (29°34'N, 34°58'E), 9-10-94, 1 JUV. DEAD ON ROAD\*

ELAT ACACIA TREES SW OF SEWAGE FARM (29°35'N, 34°58'E), 20M A.S.L., 9-10-94, 1 AD. DEAD\* (KILLED BY PREDATOR?)

Both localities are in the 'Arava valley, on hard ground of stony alluvium with scattered acacia trees. These two specimens are now in the collections of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris (juv: MNHN 1995-2359; ad: MNHN 1995-2360). They agree with the diagnosis of *P. schokari* given by Marx (1968, 1988). They have 170 and 171 ventral scales respectively and a clear brown mid ventral band.

Werner (1988) reports the presence of *P. aegyptius* in southernmost Wadi 'Arava. These findings represent an interesting range extension for *P. schokari* in Israel and establish the sympatric occurrence of both species in southern 'Arava.

*Spalerosophis diadema cliffordii* (Schlegel, 1837)

ELAT, SOUTHERN PALM TREE PLANTATION (29°33'N, 34°58'E), < 10M A.S.L., 9-10-94, 1 AD.\* & 18-10-94, 1 AD.\*

These two individuals were found active soon after sunrise. The first one was mobbed by numerous birds of several species (mainly *Passer domesticus*, *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*, *Turdoides squamiceps*) in the *Sueda* bushes near the ringing station. The other was apparently sunning in a patch of dense green vegetation inside the date plantation.

*Telescopus dhara dahra* (Forsskål, 1775)

ELAT, NEAR THE CEMETERY (29°34'N, 34°56'E), 100M A.S.L., 2-10-94, 1 AD.\*

Found at night, moving on bare rocky ground in the hills, but not far (less than 300 m) from the cemetery, which is planted with many trees and plants.

This specimen and the published photographs of this species from the Middle-East that we have seen obviously differ in colour pattern from the three Moroccan specimens we have been able to examine in colour pattern (head black on specimens from Morocco), arguing for the recognition of the north-African populations at least as a distinct subspecies: *T. d. obtusus*.

## DISCUSSION

Although it is difficult to draw general conclusions from observations made during such a short period, it may be interesting to compare our list of data from the southern 'Arava with the list of species that could be expected in this area (Salvador 1982, Werner 1988, Werner & Sivan 1993). I found all the Geckonidae that could be expected from the published material except *Tropiocolotes steudneri* and *Stenodactylus doriae*. According to Baha El Din (1994), the former species is probably erroneously cited from the southern 'Arava valley, because of misidentification of *Tropiocolotes nattereri*. The latter species inhabits soft sand areas where it can best be found at night. I visited such habitats around Samar and Yotvata, but only during day time. Around Elat, where I searched for reptiles at night, there is no area of sand dunes. My list of Agamidae, Scincidae and Lacertidae include all the species that are known to inhabit this area, a fact reflecting their conspicuous and mostly diurnal habits. Snakes are notoriously difficult to find, and my observations are not representative of the local snake fauna.

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