



Fig. 213: *Acanthodactylus gongrorhynchatus* at burrow near Sweihan, UAE.

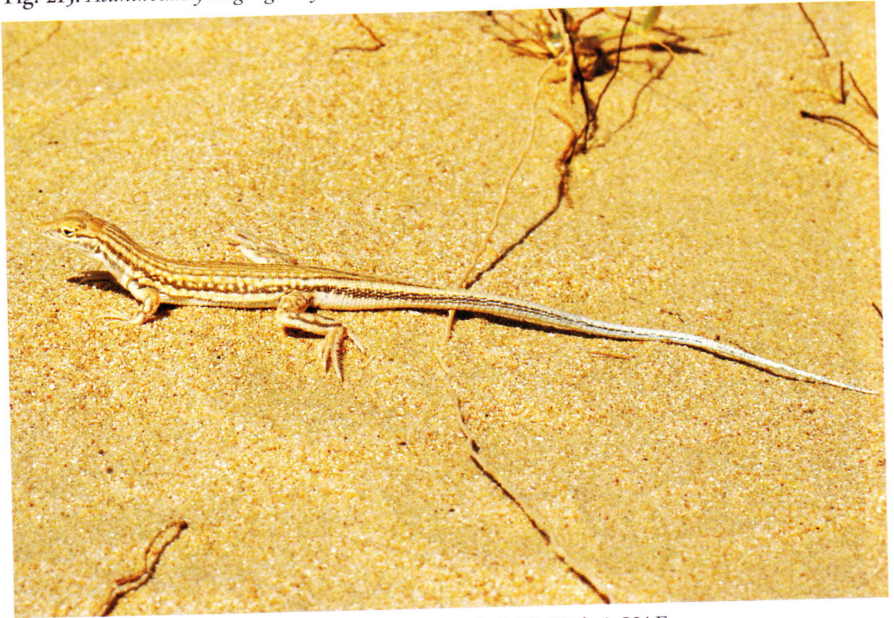


Fig. 214: *Acanthodactylus gongrorhynchatus* near Jebel Ali, Dubai, UAE.



Fig. 215: *Acanthodactylus gongrorhynchatus* on hot sand near Dubai, UAE.

Acanthodactylus gongrorhynchatus LEVITON & ANDERSON, 1967
Saudi Fringe-toed Lizard

Synonymy

None.

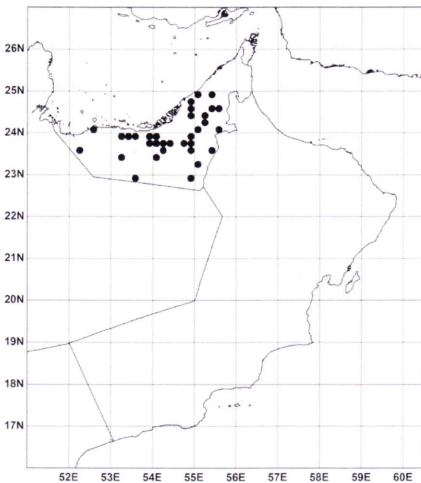
Range. Eastern Arabia including eastern Saudi Arabia and western UAE. Not reported from Qatar.

Size. Up to 65 mm SVL. Tail more than twice the length of the body.

Identification. A small species of fringe-toed lizard of moderate build, but with a conspicuously narrow and pointed snout. One row of granules between supraoculars and superciliaries. There are four longitudinal rows of scales along the third and fourth fingers. Subdigital scales with one keel. Pectination on toes well-developed. Subocular usually separate from the lip. Four upper labials anterior to centre of eye. Temporals sharply keeled. Dorsal scales fine, becoming more keeled and imbricate posteriorly, 56–74 at mid-body. 10 or 12 (occasionally 14) ventral scale rows at mid-body.

Juveniles are more strongly striped than adults. A conspicuous dark lateral stripe runs from the eye, along the flanks above the limbs and onto the tail. This stripe may contain pale spots. Dorsal to this is a clear pale stripe. Medially, there are often five narrow dark stripes, the most lateral of which join over the tail base. In other individuals, the central dorsum may be reticulated. The pale stripes may contain reddish spots which continue onto the back of the head. The tail is blue in juveniles. The back ground-colour is cream to buff. The underside is white.

Biology. A diurnal, ground-dwelling lacertid. During the hot season, activity starts about one to two hours after sunrise and continues for four to five hours, with another period of activity in late afternoon. Animals often stand and move with their heads held high and foreparts raised, their pelvic region and tail low to the ground. They are generally active hunters, feeding on insects, caterpillars and spiders. They have been observed standing still and then making a rapid dive pushing their snouts into the sand for prey. Prey is eaten on the spot. Thermo-regulation is achieved using the shade of plants and minimizing contact with hot sand surfaces by raising the body as high as possible, standing on finger tips and heels, with the tail in contact at a single point. Animals will lift diametrically opposite feet off the sand alternately. Burrows are dug into the sand often on firm, sloping surfaces or at the base of vegetation. The burrows slope at about 45° , and are dug with the front feet, the loosened sand being cleared with the hind feet. The entrance of the burrow may be closed from inside using the terminal portion of the tail to sweep sand in and then withdrawing the tail through the small remaining aperture.



Habitat. Aeolian sand habitats, including sandy plains, sand sheets and dunes.

Distribution. Not yet recorded from Oman, though very likely to occur in sand areas near the UAE border. Widespread, even though scattered localities throughout the sandy areas of the UAE from near the western borders of Abu Dhabi (with Saudi Arabia) to Al Ain and Dubai.

Pertinent references. ARNOLD 1983, LEVITON & ANDERSON 1967, ROSS 1989a, SALVADOR 1982.