



Fig. 227: *Acanthodactylus schmidti* male, Wahiba Sands, Sharqiyah, Oman.

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Fig. 228: *Mesalina adramitana* near Dubai, UAE.



Fig. 229: *Mesalina adramitana*, Al Khod, Muscat, Oman.



Fig. 230: *Mesalina adramitana*, Wadi Agran, Al Buraimi, Oman.

Mesalina adramitana (BOULENGER, 1917)
Hadramaut Sand Lizard

Synonymy

Eremias adramitana BOULENGER, 1917

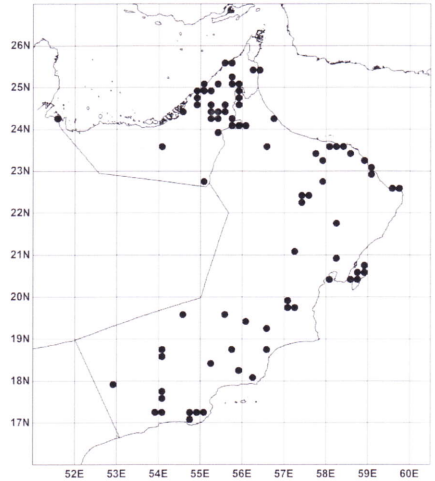
Mesalina adramitana – ARNOLD, 1986

Range. Southern Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and UAE.

Size. Up to 46 mm SVL.

Identification. A small, lightly built and very fast lacertid with a long tail. The toes do not have fringes and the nostril openings are well separated from the first upper labial scale. The dorsum is brown, generally closely matching the substrate, so animals from areas of lighter sand are paler. The underside is white. In most animals a darker stripe, often interrupted with paler spots, runs from the ear along the flanks, above the hind legs and onto the sides of the tail (where it may form a line of darker spots). Dorsal to this is a narrow, pale buff or white stripe bordered with dark on its median side. The central back is pale, often with two lines of whitish spots. The top of the head is uniform brown, or finely mottled with dark.

This species can be separated from *Mesalina brevirostris* (with which it may be sympatric along the Arabian Gulf coastal regions of the UAE) by having 10 (rather than 12) rows of ventrals, the two rows bordering the mid-line usually being narrower than those in more lateral rows (although this character does not hold for more inland UAE populations, which may have only eight scale rows). The scalation shows considerable geographic variation. Animals from Dhofar have 29–37 dorsal scales across mid-body, 21–31 scales from the symphysis of chin shields to the gular fold, 10–14 femoral pores under each thigh, and 18–25 lamellae under the fourth toe. Animals from elsewhere have higher scale counts: 32–45 dorsal scales across mid-body, 25–31 scales from the symphysis of chin shields to the gular fold, 11–17 femoral pores under each thigh, 18–27 lamellae under the fourth toe.



Biology. A fast-moving diurnal lizard, which uses an active hunting mode to catch its prey of small insects, including ants. It may cover long distances, running in short dashes and scenting with its tongue. It will climb through the branches of shrubs and amongst dead leaves and litter searching for prey. In hot conditions these lizards move onto grass clumps or small shrubs to get off the hot ground surface. They are able to tolerate high temperatures, the critical maximum temperature being over 46 °C.

They dig burrows, usually sited at the base of a small shrub. They have been observed covering the entrance to their burrow with sand, perhaps to prevent other lizards from taking them over.

Clutch size of two to four eggs, probably laid throughout the year when sufficient nutrition is available.

The systematics of *Mesalina* in Arabia is not well known at present, and it is likely that *M. adramitanus* is a complex of several species.

Habitat. Sand and gravel plains, stony outwash plains, often with sparse vegetation.

Distribution. Widespread in inland and coastal areas of Oman and the UAE, avoiding sand seas and mountain slopes. Even within sand areas, it may be found on harder surfaced interdunal plains. Not recorded from the Salalah Plain.

Pertinent references. ARNOLD 1980a, 1984, 1986, ROSS 1988.