

*Ophisops jerdonii* Blyth, 1853

Class: Reptilia  
 Order: Squamata  
 Family: Lacertidae  
 Genus: *Ophisops*  
 Species: *jerdonii*  
 English Name: Punjab Snake-eyed Lacerta or Rugose Spectacled Lacerta



**Diagnostic Features:** Smallest of all Pakistan's lacertid lizards; eyelids fused, forming transparent cap; head shields rugose in adults; dorsals granular, imbricate, 28–35 around midbody.



**Description:** Small but of typical lacertid body form; upper head shields strongly keeled and striated, smooth or nearly so in the young; ear opening oval, a little smaller than the eye; canthus rostralis well marked; nostril in a large anterior nasal, sometimes divided, with two smaller postnasals, the lower of which is larger than the upper and might sometimes be regarded as an anterior loreal; frontonasal single, rarely longitudinally divided; prefrontals in contact or separated by a small scale; 4 supraoculars, numbers 2 and 3 much larger than the rest, and separated from the supraciliaries by a row of small scales; interparietal larger than the occipital; supralabial 5 below the eye; temporal scales strongly keeled, the upper two, which border the parietal, being the largest; supralabials 7–8, infralabials 6–8; tympanic shield moderately large; no distinct collar but its position



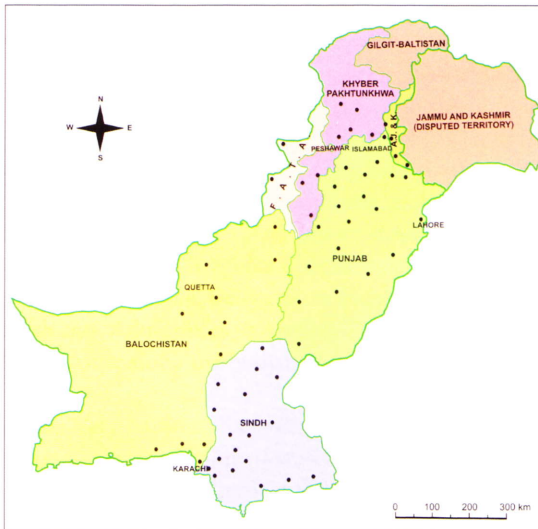
Fig. 60: *Ophisops jerdonii*.

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indicated by enlarged scales; dorsal scales subequal, rhomboidal, nearly as large as the caudal and lateral scales, in oblique longitudinal series converging towards the vertebral line; ventral plates smooth, trapezoidal, in 6–7 longitudinal and 21–29 transverse series (males 21–27, females 26–29); 28–35 scales around the middle of the body; caudal scales keeled, in annuli; toes without fringe of pointed scales; a large precloacal plate; the hind limb reaches to the antehumeral fold, or between it and the ear in the male, to the axilla, or not quite so far in the female; 12–14 femoral pores in the females, 16–18 in the males; SVL of adults 45–49 mm. TL to 90 mm, TL/SVL 1.58–2.18.

Dorsum ground color khaki, chestnut, olive-brown, or golden, deeper and richer on flanks; a pair of white, golden to lemon-yellow lateral streaks, upper one extending from behind eye and supraciliaries to tail, lower bordering upper lip and extending along body flanks to the base of the hind limb; zones between strips and on each side of midline with short, dark, transverse bars, more prominent in males; a series of small vertebral spots may be present; lips, sides of the neck, and the space between the two light stripes also spotted with black; ventrum yellowish white.

**Habits and Habitat:** It may be found in *Acacia* thorn forest, grassy foot of stony hills, between tufts of grass in dry, stony area (Mertens, 1954a); coastal sand dunes, under bushes. It is plentiful in moderately dry, rocky terrain and on alluvial plains, along dikes and edges of cultivated fields; in dry areas, restricted to oases and stream margins; maximum elevation to about 2,000 m (Blanford, 1876).



**Fig. 61:** Distribution of *Ophisops jerdonii* in Pakistan.

It is diurnal, terrestrial, and moderately secretive. Its body color excellently blends with its habitat. Often found under rocks, leaf litter, and rubbish, it moves fast from one shelter to another and due to its small serpentine body and small diameter, creeps with ease under stones and slabs. It may be found at any season over most of its range in Pakistan and is the only lizard commonly active on the cooler winter days. Its diet consists mainly of termites, but also feeds on caterpillars, ichneumonids, spiders, ants, and small grasshoppers and their eggs; small insects (Minton, 1966).

This lizard breeds from April to June. Eggs have been found in the field in July and August. Clutches of four eggs have been reported (Minton, 1966); in size 7 by 7 mm. Anderson (*in* Minton, 1966) found several clutches buried in loose, slightly moist sand. The SVL of smallest juveniles measure up to 15–20 mm.

**Distribution:** This lizard is a widely distributed lizard in the plains and semi-hilly regions throughout Pakistan and India. In Pakistan it has been recorded, apart from various localities in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh plains, from alpine Punjab, the Salt Range, Waziristan, and Khuzdar in Balochistan. In Las Bela, at the western edge of their range, the lizards are confined to oases and the margins of streams. They have been collected at elevations up to about 1,676 m. The author has collected it at Mangora (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), Hab Dam (Karachi), Islam Kot (Nagar Parker, Sindh), Shakarparian (Islamabad) and various lakes of the Salt Range, Punjab.