

Acanthodactylus margaritae

TAMAR, GENIEZ, BRITO & CROCHET, 2017

LC

Common names: Margarita's Fringe-fingered Lizard (E), Acanthodactyle de Margarita (F), Lagartija de Margarita (S).



Fig. 474: Portrait of an *Acanthodactylus margaritae*. Agadir.
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Range: Endemic to Morocco.

Distribution in Morocco: The southwestern part of the country: south and west of the High Atlas and north of the Anti-Atlas (i.e., north of the range of *Acanthodactylus busacki*), principally the Souss Valley from Agadir to Aoulouz as well as the Souss-Massa National Park as far as at least 3 km northeast of Sidi Boulfdaïl. From Agadir and along the Atlantic coast, it reaches the Tamri area, 79 km north of Agadir. Records of "*A. busacki*" from near Essaouira and further north are probably referable to *A. erythrurus lineomaculatus* (question marks on the map). A roughly 60 km wide gap between the ranges of *A. busacki* and *A. margaritae* corresponds to the western extension of the Anti-Atlas (Sidi Ifni region).

Altitude: 0–450 m.

Identification: Somewhat similar to *Acanthodactylus busacki* but with more slender proportions, a more pointed nose, more flattened and slightly imbricate, keeled dorsal scales keeled, and eight light stripes or rows of light ocelli along the body (six in *A. busacki*); the two additional stripes correspond to a row of distinct ocelli along each flank above the more basal light stripe. Sexual dimorphism less marked but the cheeks, the throat and the belly of breeding males have a yellowish hue. Flank ocelli, and sometimes dorsal ones, are also yellow in this period (Spring). In old males, black reticulation does not invade the dorsal pattern, and the longitudinal stripes are always visible. Females and juveniles

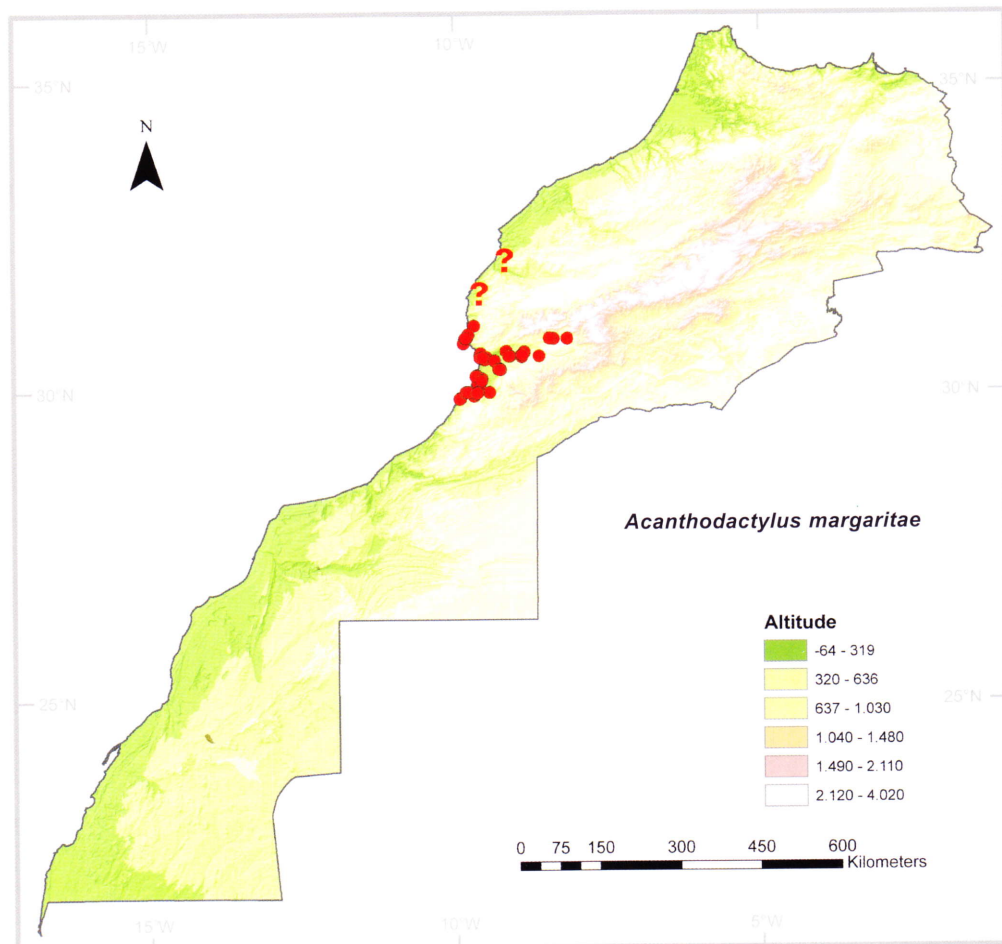




Fig. 475: *Acanthodactylus margaritae*, male. Oued Massa.

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Fig. 476: *Acanthodactylus margaritae*, male (on top) and female. Agadir.

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Fig. 477: *Acanthodactylus margaritae*, juvenile. 24 km east of Taroudant.

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strongly resemble *A. erythrurus lineomaculatus*, but the latter species has a more northerly distribution, the tail is always red in these age groups, only six longitudinal and narrow light stripes along the body, only two supraocular plates (three in all members of the *A. pardalis* complex), and only ten longitudinal rows of ventral plates (12 in all members of the *A. pardalis* complex). A row of large, green to sky blue ocelli is typical to *A. erythrurus lineomaculatus* while in *A. margaritae*, these ocelli are white or yellow and smaller.

Habitat: Flat steppes, particularly in the argana forest of the Souss Valley. Also in sandy formations close to the ocean. From Agadir

to the south, it is replaced by *A. aureus* in large sandy areas and dunes, but when these are sufficiently vegetated, both species can be found in syntopy (e.g., along the lower reaches of the Oued Massa River).

Biology: A diurnal lizard that spends much time basking and around bushes, moving quickly to capture prey and escape predators. Uses small holes in the sand, or bushes as a refuge.

Remarks: *Acanthodactylus margaritae* is the sister species of *A. busacki* within the *A. pardalis* complex (TAMAR *et al.* 2017).