

Mesalina guttulata (Lichtenstein 1823) **Small-spotted Lizard**
(Fig. 56)

Lacerta guttulata Lichtenstein 1823:101. Type locality: Restricted to Lower Egypt (near Alexandria or Siwa) by Segoli et al. (2002).

Lectotype: ZMB 1119 designated by Segoli et al. (2002).

Lacerta olivieri (part) Audouin 1829

Scapteira punctulata Gray 1838

Eremias pardalis Duméril and Bibron 1839

Eremias pardaloides Blanford 1879

Eremias guttulata Anderson 1898, Flower 1933

Eremias guttulata guttulata Marx 1968

Mesalina guttulata Szczerbak 1975

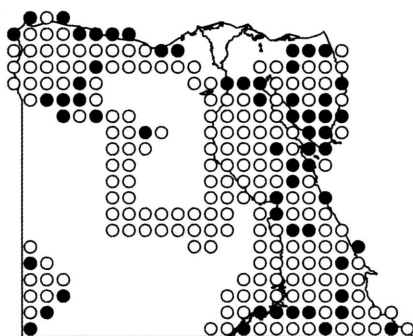
Mesalina guttulata guttulata Saleh 1997

Arabic: *sihliya saghirat al-nuqat*

Taxonomy: Currently regarded as monotypic, since the subspecies *M. g. watsonana* (Stoliczka 1872) was elevated to specific status by

Arnold (1986). A variable taxon, which probably represents a species complex.

Diagnosis: A rather small slender lizard, with a maximum SVL of 56 mm (Anderson 1898). Snout fairly long, usually with 4 supralabials anterior to the subocular. Lower eyelid with a window made of two large transparent scales of roughly equal size, each



Small-spotted Lizard
(*Mesalina guttulata*)

clearly edged with black pigment. Temporals small, smooth; tympanic shield obvious. Dorsal scales medium-sized, granular or subimbricate. Average number of dorsals at mid-body 43 (range 39–45) and ventrals 10, respectively; average number of femoral pores 12 (10–15) (based on a sample of 46 Egyptian specimens). Ventral side of lower arm covered with small granules. Dorsal side of tibia covered with rather weakly keeled scales. Dorsal surfaces usually light brown-gray, with scattered dark and light spots, which often form a weak striated pattern. Tail irregularly banded, blue in young animals. Venter white. Hemipenis very small, with two lobes.

Variation: The species is generally quite uniform throughout its range in Egypt, but pattern is somewhat variable. Animals at higher altitudes in the Gebel Elba area are darker and more strongly patterned (almost striated) than those in lowlands. The population found along the western Mediterranean coast is characterized by an almost patternless dorsum and very pale grayish coloration.

Habitat and ecology: Diurnal and ground dwelling. Lives in rocky habitats: on mountains and hillsides, gravel plains with scattered stones, and in small rocky wadis. Capable of surviving under extreme desert conditions. Rather secretive and elusive.

Range: The Saharo-Sindian region, from Morocco to Iran, south to the Sahel.

Distribution in Egypt: Widespread; found in almost all parts of the country, except the cultivated areas of the Nile Valley. West of the

Nile recorded from the Mediterranean coast and from almost all the Western Desert oases. Scortecci (1935) reports one specimen from Uadi Abd-el-Mâlech (= Wadi Abd El Malek) in Gilf El Kebir in 1933, and the author collected a single specimen from the same Wadi in February 1997 (SMB 8500). Capocaccia (1977) reports one example collected in 1968 from Karkur Ibrahim, Gebel Uweinat (Libya) less than 10 km from the Egyptian borders. The species is particularly widespread in the Eastern Desert and has been recorded from Gebel Elba in the south, to the Isthmic Desert in the north. In Sinai it is only absent from the dune fields of the north and appears to be largely replaced by *M. bahaeldini* in areas above 1,000 m. Recorded from many islands of the Hurghada Archipelago: Ashrafi, Abu Mingar, Giftun El Kabir, Gubal El Saghir, South Geisum, Magawish El Kabir, Shadwan, Tawila, Um El Haimat El Saghir (Lanza 1968, Goodman et al. 1985, Baha El Din unpub. obs.).

Status and conservation needs: Common and widespread. Inhabits areas which are less likely to be severely affected by human activity, thus populations should be stable. Classified as Least Concern by IUCN (2005).