

Mesalina rubropunctata (Lichtenstein 1823) **Red Spotted Lizard**
(Fig. 60)

Lacerta rubropunctata Lichtenstein 1823: 100. Type locality: Egypt
and Nubia.

Scapteira nebulosa Gray 1838

Mesalina lichtensteini Gray 1838

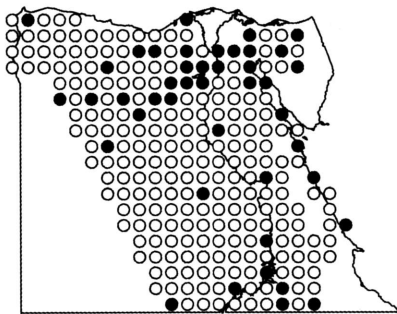
Eremias rubropunctata Anderson 1898, Flower 1933, Marx 1968

Mesalina rubropunctata Szczerbak 1975, Saleh 1997

Arabic: *sihliya hamra' al-nuqat*

Taxonomy: Monotypic.

Diagnosis: A small to medium-sized dorso-ventrally compressed lizard, with a maximum SVL of 67 mm (Boulenger 1920). Snout rather short, usually with 4 supralabials anterior to the subocular, which usually reaches the upper lip; nasal areas distinctly swollen; upper nasals not in contact behind rostral. Lower eyelid with a window made of 5–8 semi-transparent scales of roughly equal size. Occipital scale present, in contact with the interparietal; temporals small, smooth; tympanic shield small. Dorsal scales small, granular. Average number of dorsals at mid-body 60 (range 53–67) and ventrals 12, respectively; average number of femoral pores 16 (13–19) (based on a sample of 34 Egyptian specimens). Dorsal side of tibia covered with smooth scales. Subcaudals smooth. Dorsal surfaces pinkish gray, with reddish and whitish spots, reddish spots larger on the flanks and sides of tail. Venter white.



Red Spotted Lizard
(*Mesalina rubropunctata*)

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Variation: Juvenile plain pinkish gray with no pattern and a blue tail; a bluish hue is evident on posterior side of thighs.

Habitat and ecology: A species of extreme desert, found in open flat sandy and gravelly deserts with or without scant vegetation cover. Often the only apparent vertebrate in many areas of the Western Desert.

Range: Mauritania and Morocco east across North Africa to Sudan and Egypt.

Distribution in Egypt: Western and Eastern deserts and North Sinai; easternmost record from North Sinai is of a specimen collected 35 km southwest of El Arish (Baha El Din 1992), southernmost from Wadi Gharandal (Flower 1933). In the Eastern Desert confined to the larger wadis such as Wadi El Allaqi and Wadi

Araba, and on the Red Sea coastal plain. One specimen (SMB 10575) was collected on Wadi El Gemal Island in the Red Sea. The species is widespread throughout the Western Desert, including the extreme southwest. Scortecci (1935) reports one specimen from “El-Auenât” (= Gebel Uweinât) and Capocaccia (1977) reports another from Gilf El Kebir Plateau. Does not penetrate the better vegetated parts of the Mediterranean coastal plain, nor the extensive dunes of the Great Sand Sea.

Status and conservation needs: Uncommon but widespread. Classified as Least Concern by IUCN (2005).

Genus *Ophisops* Menetries 1832