

***Ophisops elegans* Menetries 1832 Elegant Snake-eyed Lizard**
(Fig. 63)

Ophisops elegans Ménétries 1832: 63. Type locality: Baku, Azerbaijan

Amystes ehrenbergi Wiegmann 1835

Gymnops meizolepis Stoliczka 1872

Ophisops elegans Boulenger 1920, Baha El Din 1992, Saleh 1997

Ophisops blanfordi Schmidt 1939

Arabic: *sihliya thu'baniyat al-'ayn*

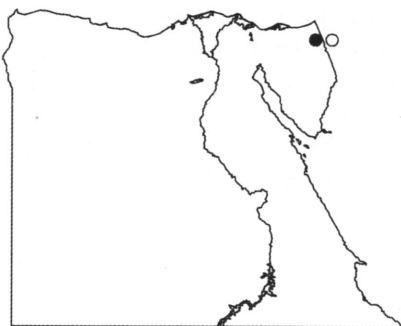
Taxonomy: Seven subspecies have been described from various parts of the species' range, which extends from southeast Europe and North Africa to northwest India. *O. e. ehrenbergii* is most likely the subspecies occurring in Egypt, as it is the one known from neighboring Israel and Palestine.

Subspecies in Egypt:

***Ophisops elegans ehrenbergii* (Wiegmann 1835)**

Amystes ehrenbergi Wiegmann 1835

Ophisops elegans Baha El Din 1992, Saleh 1997



Elegant Snake-eyed Lizard
(*Ophisops elegans*)

Diagnosis: A small, slender lizard. Largest Egyptian specimen has a SVL of 42 mm. Tail proportionately relatively long, average tail/SVL ratio = 2.4 ($n=4$). Supraciliaries separated from supraoculars by small granules; tympanum partly covered by a kidney-shaped tympanic shield; supratemporals large distinct from other temporals; occipital

absent or very small. Dorsals medium-sized (22–32) imbricate, strongly keeled; 6 ventrals; 9–11 femoral pores (based on 14 specimens from Egypt and Israel). Dorsal parts generally grayish; pattern striated, composed of 4 dark and light stripes; color and pattern has the same intensity and contrast along the entire back; limbs with dark marbling; venter grayish white.

Variation: Adult males have the dark stripes broken up into bands of black reticulation. Juveniles more strongly striated.

Habitat and ecology: Inhabits lightly to fairly well-vegetated rocky hillsides and wadis. In the El Quseima area it was found in small runnels with *Lycium shawii* bushes and dense spinose vegetation.

Range: North Sinai, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan.

Distribution in Egypt: Barbour (1914) first reported *Ophisops elegans* in Sinai from a locality named “Fuweila.” Flower (1933) and Schmidt and Marx (1956) list the species for Sinai apparently based on this report. Later Hoofien (1965) determined that this locality is in fact in Jordan, thus excluding it from the Egyptian fauna. The next mention of the species in Egypt was by Marx (1968), who reported its occurrence along the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria. These animals, as it turns out, are actually referable to the North African *O. occidentalis*. In fact, the first and only substantiated report of *O. elegans* from Egypt is that by Baha El Din (1992), who found the species from near El Quseima in northeastern Sinai, where the only Egyptian specimens were collected (NMNH 133526, SMB 252

and 8373). The species could possibly be found in other similar habitats in the hills of North Sinai, such as Gebel Maghara.

Status and conservation needs: Uncommon and highly localized. Common outside Egypt, but local populations could be lost if current habitat degradation in the El Quseima area continues. In Egypt it is Vulnerable on account of its small range. Classified as Least Concern by IUCN (2005).