

A new lizard of the *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* group (Squamata: Lacertidae) from Egypt

by Sherif M. Baha El Din

Abstract. Two morphologically and ecologically distinct populations of lizards belonging to the *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* species group (previously treated as conspecifics under the name *A. longipes*) are documented as occurring in sympatry over a wide geographical area in Egypt. The occurrence of bona fide *A. longipes* in the Western Desert of Egypt is confirmed; while populations in the eastern part of the country and previously referred to *A. longipes*, are described as a new species.

Kurzfassung. Es werden zwei morphologisch und ökologisch unterschiedliche Populationen von Eidechsen aus der *Acanthodactylus scutellatus*-Artengruppe dokumentiert, die bisher als konspezifisch unter dem Namen *A. longipes* behandelt wurden. Es wird gezeigt, dass beide Populationen in einem großen Arealbereich sympatrisch vorkommen. Die Zugehörigkeit von Tieren aus der Westlichen Wüste Ägyptens zu *A. longipes* wird bestätigt, während Populationen aus östlichen Landesteilen, die bisher ebenfalls als zu *A. longipes* gehörend angesehen wurden, als neue Art beschrieben wird.

Key words. Lacertidae, *Acanthodactylus*, new species, Egypt.

Introduction

The genus *Acanthodactylus* Fitzinger, 1834 is that genus of the family Lacertidae (CROCHET et al. 2003) with the highest number of species: up to 39 species are distributed across northern Africa and south-west Asia. At least 5 species are represented in Egypt, of which those belonging to the *A. scutellatus* (Audouin, 1829) species group are the most widespread. The *A. scutellatus* group is a monophyletic clade (HARRIS & ARNOLD 2000) consisting of several sand adapted species found in North Africa and northern Arabia. Due to the great similarity in external morphology, extensive geographic variation and vast distribution of some species, the number of species recognized by different authorities has fluctuated greatly over the years. Between three and four species were acknowledged by ARNOLD (1983), BONS & GIROT (1964) and SALVADOR (1982). However, it is apparent that the group is more complex than previously believed. In a recent review of the North African members of the *A. scutellatus* group (excluding Egypt) CROCHET et al. (2003) recognised six species: *Acanthodactylus aureus* Günther, 1903, *A. dumerili* (Milne Edwards, 1829), *A. scutellatus*, *A. longipes* (Boulenger, 1918), *A. senegalensis* Chabanaud, 1918 and *A. taghitensis* Geniez & Foucart, 1995. Furthermore HARRIS & ARNOLD (2000) and RIFAI et al. (2003) recognized *A. hardyi* (Haas, 1957) as a full species, rather than a subspecies of *A. scutellatus*.

Acanthodactylus longipes was described as a variety of *A. scutellatus*. It was first recognised as a full species by BONS & GIROT (1964), based on the fact of its sympatric occur-