

# A synopsis of African and south Arabian geckos of the genus *Tropicolotes* (Reptilia: Gekkonidae), with a description of a new species from Egypt

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**Abstract:** Preliminary observations indicate that seven (possibly eight) *Tropicolotes* species can be recognized in Africa and south Arabia. In addition to four taxa currently recognised at the specific level, *T. algericus* and *T. somalicus*, widely regarded as subspecies of *T. tripolitanus*, should be elevated to full species. A new species, *Tropicolotes bisharicus* sp. n., previously referred to *T. somalicus*, is described from south-east Egypt.

**Kurzfassung:** Vorläufige Beobachtungen zeigen, dass in Afrika und im südlichen Arabien sieben (möglicherweise acht) *Tropicolotes*-Arten leben. Zusätzlich zu vier Taxa, denen derzeit Artrang zuerkannt wird, sollten auch *T. algericus* und *T. somalicus*, die in der Regel als Subspezies von *T. tripolitanus* gelten, vollen Artrang erhalten. Aus Südost-Ägypten wird eine neue Art beschrieben, *Tropicolotes bisharicus* sp. n., die bisher als Unterart von *T. somalicus* angesehen wurde.

**Key words:** New species, Gekkonidae, *Tropicolotes*, Egypt, Arabia, Africa.

## Introduction

The genus *Tropicolotes* Peters, 1880 is widely distributed throughout the vast Saharo-Arabian region. The difficulty in finding and studying these diminutive animals, combined with their patchy geographical representation in scientific collections, has led to a less than satisfactory taxonomic evaluation to date. Only four species belonging to the genus are currently recognised in the region. These can be divided into two groups; one with smooth dorsals encompassing *T. steudneri* (Peters, 1869) and *T. nubicus* Baha El Din, 1999; the other with clearly keeled dorsals made up of *T. tripolitanus* Peters, 1880 and *T. scorteccii* Cherchi & Spanò, 1963 (LOVERIDGE 1947, ARNOLD 1980, SCHNEIDER 1990, KLUGE 1991, SZCZERBAK & GOLUBEV 1996, BAHA EL DIN 1999). The African records of *T. nattereri* Steindachner, 1901 by PASTURE (1960) and WERNER (1983) have been shown to be erroneous by SHIFMAN et al. (1999). Four further taxa have been described from Africa: *T. somalicus* Parker, 1942; *T. occidentalis* Parker, 1942; *T. tripolitanus algericus* Loveridge, 1947 and *T. tripolitanus apoklomag* Papenfuss, 1969. These are currently largely regarded as subspecies of *T. tripolitanus*, mostly because of their general likeness in possessing keeled body scales (LOVERIDGE 1947, GUIBÉ 1966, MINTON et al. 1970, SCHNEIDER 1990, KLUGE 1991, BONS & GENIEZ 1996, SCHLEICH et al. 1996, SZCZERBAK & GOLUBEV 1996).