

A new species of the *Acanthodactylus pardalis* group (Reptilia: Lacertidae) from Jordan

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Abstract. A new species of the *Acanthodactylus pardalis* group, *A. ahmaddisii* sp.n., is described from Jordan, from a single specimen which differs from *A. pardalis* (Lichtenstein, 1823) of eastern Libya and Egypt, and *A. beershebensis* Moravec et al., 1999 from Israel. Compared to the latter two populations, *A. ahmaddisii* is larger with smaller head and shorter appendages and fewer (larger) dorsals. It also differs in qualitative pholidotic characters, especially by having tricarinate subdigitals, and in colour pattern.

Kurzfassung. Eine neue Art der *Acanthodactylus pardalis* Gruppe, *A. ahmaddisii* sp.n., wird aus Jordanien beschrieben, auf Grund eines einzigen Exemplares, das sich von *A. pardalis* (Lichtenstein, 1823) aus Ost-Libyen und Ägypten, und von *A. beershebensis* Moravec et al., 1999, aus Israel, unterscheidet. Im Vergleich zu diesen beiden Populationen ist *A. ahmaddisii* größer, mit kleinerem Kopf, kürzeren Gliedern und weniger (größerem) Dorsalschuppen. Die neue Art unterscheidet sich auch durch qualitative Pholidosis-Merkmale, besonders durch die dreikieligen (anstatt einkieligen) Subdigitalschuppen und durch das Farbmuster.

Key words. *Acanthodactylus ahmaddisii*, *A. beershebensis*, *A. pardalis*, Lacertidae, Middle East, Jordan, new species.

Introduction

The population of the *Acanthodactylus pardalis* (Sauria: Lacertidae) group in the Negev of Israel was described by MORAVEC et al. (1999) as a new species, *A. beershebensis*, differing in many characters from the topotypical Egyptian population. Other than that, in southwestern Asia the taxonomy of this mainly North-African group (BOULENGER 1921) has remained neglected. From Jordan HAAS (1943) reported one individual collected in March 1936 by himself, H. MENDELSSOHN and O. THEODOR, 30 or 36 km S of Amman; he noted its differing from Negev specimens, and commented that it may represent a distinct taxon. To date, this has remained the sole find of this group from Jordan (WERNER 1998, DISI et al. 2001). DISI et al. (2001) pointed out that this former report of *A. pardalis* from Jordan probably represents a separate species. Elsewhere the lizards of the *Acanthodactylus pardalis* group are confined to narrowly defined types of soils, that both in Egypt and in Israel have nearly disappeared as natural habitats, leading to a decimation of the lizard populations (MORAVEC et al. 1999, BOUSKILA 2002). By extrapolation, and from partial information, the fate of their population in Jordan appears to be dubious. Therefore it seems urgent to define the Jordanian taxon and to name it, and I do so hereinafter, hoping both to support the efforts to conserve it and, especially, to encourage and guide the efforts to locate it in nature.