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ON A NEW EREMIAS FROM CENTRAL SOMALIA

(PUBBLICAZIONI DEL CENTRO DI STUDIO
PER LA FAUNISTICA ED ECOLOGIA TROPICALI DEL C.N.R.: CII)

BENEDETTO LANZA and MARTA POGGESI

Cattedra di Biologia Generale e Museo Zoologico dell'Università di Firenze

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During an expedition to central Somalia in 1968 by the « Centro di Studio per la Faunistica ed Ecologia Tropicali del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche » (Director Prof. L. Pardi) an enigmatic female lizard was collected by a native in the environs of Bud-Bud.

The specimen doubtless pertains to a new species and may be placed in the genus *Eremias*, but almost surely this generic allocation will not be maintained because:

a) the genus *Eremias*, as presently understood, is not a natural group (ARNOLD, *in litteris* 30.V.1974);

b) the Bud-Bud lizard shows some peculiarities that might justify creating a new genus for it.

We are greatly indebted to Dr E. N. ARNOLD (British Museum of Natural History, London) for his invaluable assistance and revision of the text, and to Miss C. GIULIANI (technician, Museo Zoologico dell'Università di Firenze) for the drawings.

EREMIAS ERCOLINII N. SP.

Holotype. - Adult ♀ n. 5253 M.F. (= Museo Zoologico dell'Università di Firenze); Bud-Bud (about 4°12'N - 46°28'E, 70 km S of El Bur, central Somalia); a native *legit*, 16.VIII.1968.

Derivatio nominis. - We take pleasure in dedicating this interesting new species to our friend and colleague Prof. Antonio Ercolini, Assistant at the Istituto di Zoologia dell'Università di Firenze, whose intelligent and painstaking efforts assured the success of several expeditions to Somalia of the « Centro di Studio per la Faunistica ed Ecologia Tropicali del C.N.R. ».

Diagnosis. - A rather big (body length of the only known female: 66 mm) and short legged *Eremias* with: 3 nasals; ventral plates in 8 straight longitudinal series; collar straight and perfectly free; feebly compressed toes with tricarinate lamellae inferiorly; frontal in contact with 1st, 2nd and 3rd supraoculars; upper head shields nearly smooth; subocular not reaching the lip; rather large dorsal scales (only 37 across the body), clearly imbricate and unicarinate at mid-body (smooth on the flanks); root of the tail covered by large and strongly imbricate scales, unicarinate dorsally and smooth ventrally.

Description of the holotype (Figs 1-3). - Head and body moderately depressed. Head 1.48 times as long as broad, its length goes into head and body length 4.7 times, its depth equal to the distance between the centre of the eye and anterior border of the ear-opening. Snout slightly concave on the mid-line, somewhat pointed and elongated, a little longer than the distance between the posterior corner of palpebral rim and the posterior border of the ear-opening, the latter subelliptic, vertical (2.1×0.8 mm). Canthus rostralis sharp; loreal region nearly flat. Nasal shields feebly swollen; cheeks rather swollen; pileus 2 times as long as broad. Neck broader than the head. Hindlimb short, reaching only the anterior quarter of the axilla-groin distance (just beyond the wrist); foot a little shorter than the head; toes rather slender, feebly compressed; tail lacking. Upper head-shields nearly flat and smooth; a narrow, feeble, elongate, longitudinal prominence on the parietal; frontonasal and anterior $2/3$ of the frontal with a median depression; a feeble longitudinal concavity present also on the outer half of each prefrontal. Frontonasal barely broader than long, forming a very short suture with the rostral; prefrontals nearly $1/3$ longer than broad, in moderate median contact with one another; frontal as long as its distance from the end of the snout, nearly 2 times longer than broad, narrow behind, its entire lateral border in contact with 1st, 2nd and anterior portion of 3rd supraoculars; parietals $1\frac{1}{4}$ times as long as broad. Interparietal as broad as long, nearly as broad but only $2/3$ length of the frontoparietals, in contact with the occipital; occipital subrectangular broader than long, half the length of the interparietal. Four supraoculars, all broader than long; 1st smallest, forming a rather long suture with prefrontal; 2nd and 3rd subequal, nearly 3 times longer than the 1st; 4th

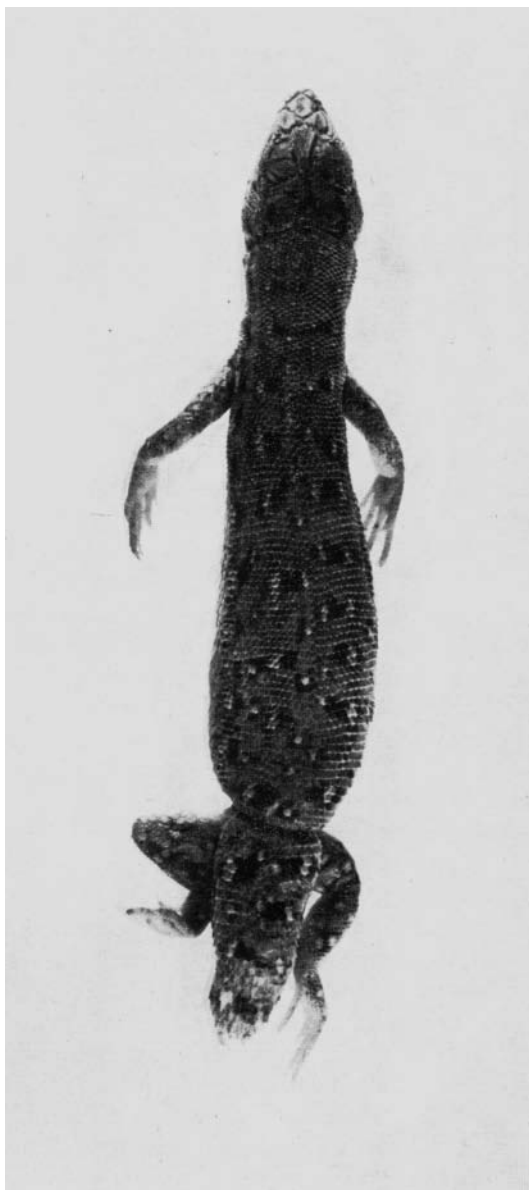


Fig. 1. — *Eremias ercolinii* n. sp.: dorsal view of the holotype.

barely 2 times broader than the 1st; space between prefrontal 1st and 2nd supraoculars, posterior loreal and 1st supraciliary filled by 4/6 granules and small scales, the largest one barely smaller than the 1st supraocular. Between 2nd and last supraciliaries and 2nd to 4th supraoculars 28/28 granules in 2 to 3 rows. First and 2nd supraoculars medially in contact with the frontal; 3rd supraocular medially in contact with the frontal, and, through a longer suture, with the frontoparietal; 4th supraocular separated medially from the frontoparietal by a smaller scale and posteriorly from the parietal by the most posterior supraciliary granules and by a transversely elongated plate only slightly smaller than the 4th supraocular itself. 5/6 supraciliaries, 1st a little longer than the others. Nostril pierced between 3 nasals, the lower in contact with the rostral and 1st upper labial (the left one fused with the anterior loreal); posterior nasal small, about half the size of the nasal (supranasal); anterior loreal 2 times longer than broad, as long as the 2nd; 9 upper labials, 4 of which anterior to the eye. Two little rhomboid scales between the supralabials and the loreals bilaterally. Subocular very long, keeled below the eye, not bordering the mouth, its lower border in contact with 4th-7th upper labials; 7/7 lower labials. Temporal scales granular, smooth (about 60 on each side); 3/3 subequal supratemporals; no tympanic and masseteric shield; no auricular denticulation. Lower eyelid semitransparent with about 12 enlarged scales, the 2 largest ones in its posterior half. Six pairs of chin-shields, the first 2 in contact in the middle. Twenty-eight gular scales, which are larger posteriorly, in a straight line between the symphysis of the chin-shields and median collar plate; gular fold absent; collar straight, perfectly free, with serrated edge, beginning on each side with an antehumeral fold and composed of 9 (11) clearly enlarged scales. Dorsal scales granular, smooth, juxtaposed on the nape, becoming larger, flat, subimbricate and obtusely pointed; clearly uncarinate behind the level of the forelimb, the keel becoming more pronounced distally; the scales become flat and larger on the sides of body towards ventrals. Thirty-eight dorsal scales across the middle of the body. Ventral plates imbricate, with straight posterior border, smooth, broader than long (with the exception of the anterior ones of the outermost and median rows), disposed in 8 longitudinal and 37 transverse straight series. Two preanals by 3/3 small lateral plates and 2 anterior plates a little smaller than the preanal. Scales on anterodorsal surface of forelimb smooth and imbricate, variable in size, not larger than gulars; anteroventral surface of thigh with a series of plates similar to those on the belly, bordered by smaller, flat, imbricate and obtusely pointed scales; dorsal posterior surface of the thigh covered by subimbricate, flat scales usually smaller than those of the neck; lepidosis of the tibia similar to that of the thigh. 16/16 femoral pores. Scales of the sole and subdigital lamellae (22 under the 4th toe) tricarinate and spinulose;

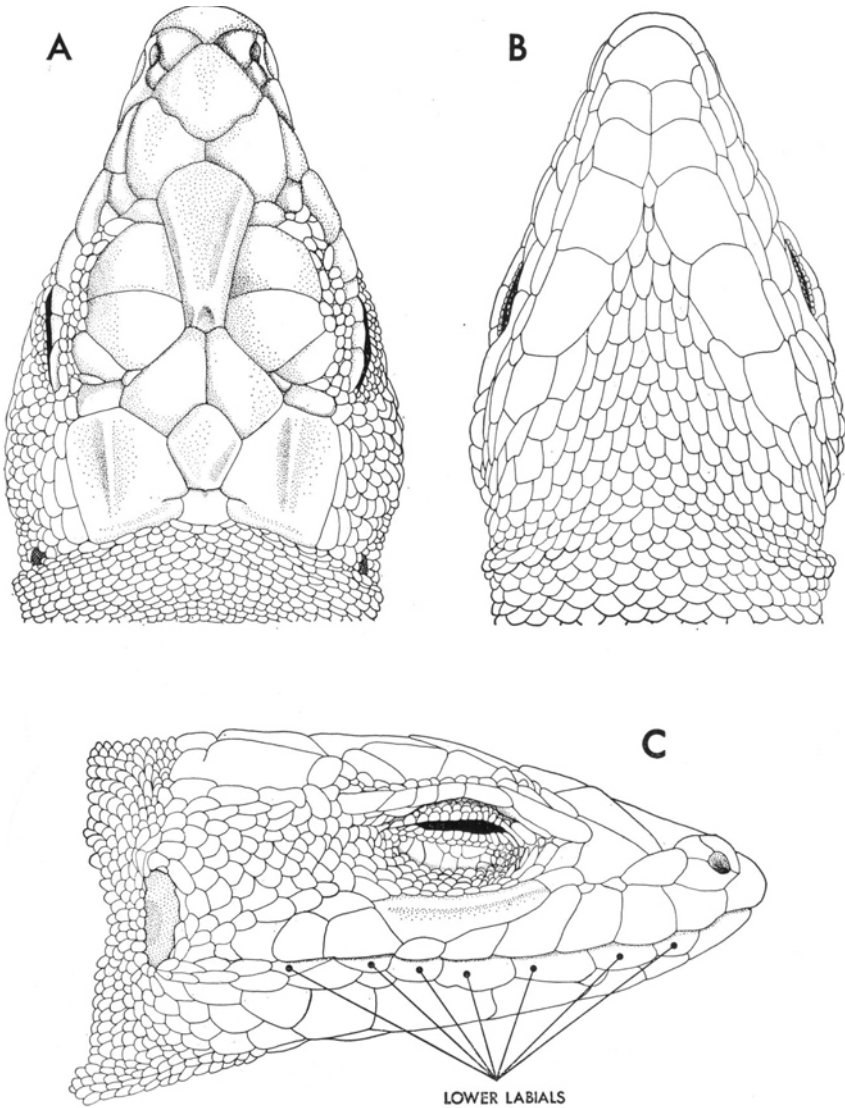


Fig. 2. — *Eremias ercolinii* n. sp. (holotype): dorsal (A), ventral (B) and side (C) view of head.

proximal portion of the tail dorsally covered by scales similar to the dorsal ones but larger and more imbricated; ventral tail scales similar to the median anterior ventrals.

Measurements (in mm). - From tip of snout to vent = 66; length of head from tip of snout to posterior edge of ear-opening = 14.1; length of pileus = 13.1; width of pileus = 6.5; width of head = 9.5; depth of head = 6.0; eye-opening = 2.3; from tip of snout to anterior corner of palpebral rim = 6.6; from posterior corner of palpebral rim to posterior

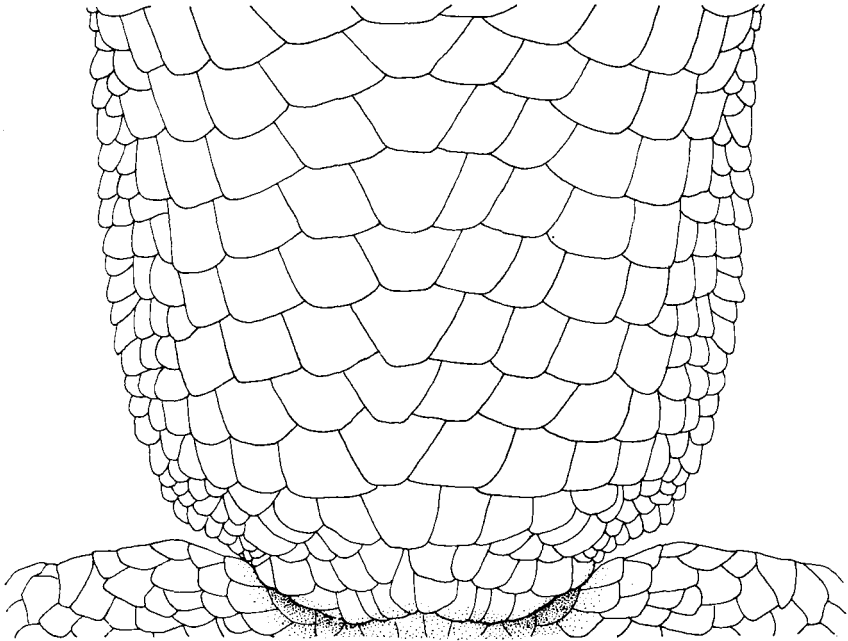


Fig. 3. — *Eremias ercolinii* n. sp. (holotype): ventral view of posterior part of the body.

edge of ear-opening = 5.9; from axilla to groin = 35; forelimb = about 19; hindlimb = about 26; foot = 13.6.

Coloration (in alcohol). - Dorsal ground hazel brown. Pileus finely dotted dark-brown or blackish. Neck and trunk with numerous dark-brown scales. Some of the latter are grouped in 2 paravertebral series of 9-10 spots, each spot margined by 1-4 whitish scales laterally and sometimes by 2-3 similar scales medially. The lateral whitish scales have a longitudinal disposition and form a largely discontinuous supraciliary stripe. An irregular, feeble, narrow brownish dorso-lateral stripe runs from nape to the root of tail; subocular stripe whitish, continuous and brown-edged along the neck, formed by 8-9 small, irregular spots surrounded by some dark-brown

or blackish scales. Ground colour of the dorsal parts of the limbs hazel-brown; hindlimb with some small, whitish, blackish-edged spots; these are barely indicated on the forelimb. Entirely ivory-white below.

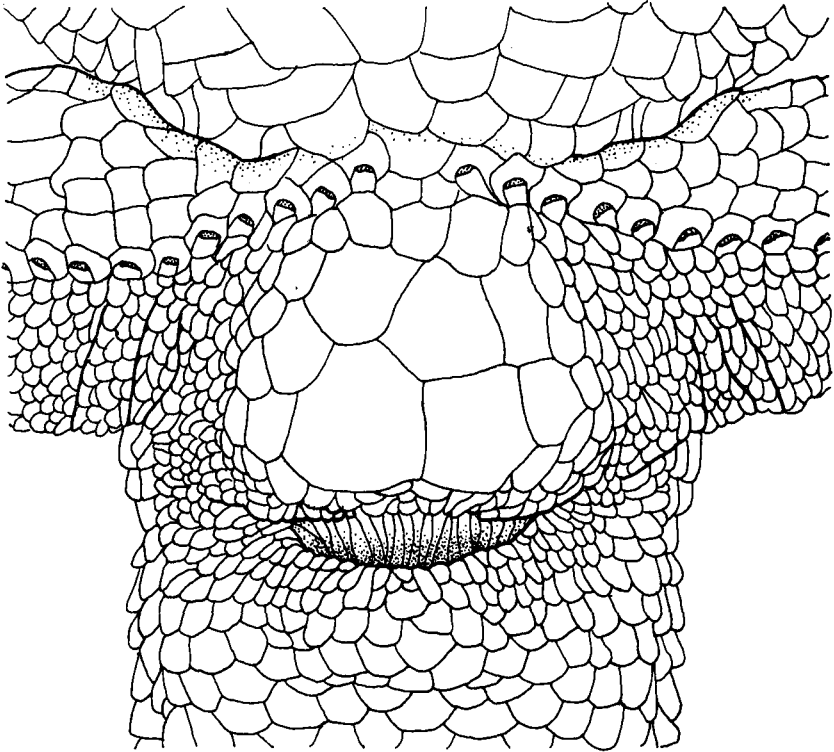


Fig. 4. — *Eremias ercolinii* n. sp. (holotype): cloacal region.

Affinities. - According to BOULENGER's classification (1921, pp. 227-231), *Eremias ercolinii* could be included among the *Lampreremias* species of group A (*E. nitida*, *E. quadrinasalis*), as well as among those of the *Mesalina* group B (subgenus *Pedioplanis*: *E. lineocellata*, *E. aspera*, *E. burchelli*, *E. capensis*); however, it differs from these in a large number of characters. It is enough to remember that *E. nitida* Günther, 1872, *E. quadrinasalis* Chabanaud, 1918, *E. burchelli* Dum. & Bibr., 1839 and *E. capensis* A. Smith, 1838 have juxtaposed, granular dorsal scales and subocular reaching the mouth; *E. lineocellata* Dum. & Bibr., 1839 and *E. aspera* Boulenger, 1917 have a dorsal lepidosis similar to that of *E. ercolinii* but

also a lower eyelid with a large transparent disc, subocular reaching the mouth, etc.

Superficially *E. ercolinii* most resembles to the South African forms of the subgenus *Pedioplanis*, but this may be due to convergence.

Until now, nine species of *Eremias* were known from Somalia: *E. olivieri*, Audouin, 1829 has juxtaposed, granular scales and subocular reaching the mouth; *E. savagei* Laurent & Gans, 1965, *E. mucronata* (Blandford, 1870), *E. smithi* Boulenger, 1895, *E. septemstriata* Parker, 1942, *E. erythrostickta* Boulenger, 1891, *E. brenneri* Peters, 1869, *E. striata* Peters, 1874 and *E. spekii* Günther, 1872 have the frontal separated by the supraoculars. However, many characters as well as a larger size distinguish *E. ercolinii* from all the above-mentioned species.

SUMMARY

Description of a new Lacerid lizard tentatively assigned to the artificial genus *Eremias*: *E. ercolinii* from Bud-Bud (central Somalia).

RIASSUNTO

Descrizione di un nuovo Lacertide della Somalia centrale (Bud-Bud: circa 4°12'N - 46° 28'E), assegnato in via preliminare al genere artificiale *Eremias*: *E. ercolinii*.

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Prof. BENEDETTO LANZA
Dr. MARTA POGGESI
Museo Zoologico dell'Università
Via Romana, 17
50125 Firenze