

Acanthodactylus ophiodurus ARNOLD, 1980
Snake-tailed Fringe-toed Lizard

Synonymy

None.

Range. Arabian Peninsula from southern Sinai, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Yemen.

Size. Up to 62 mm SVL. Tail long, about 2 to 2.3 times SVL.

Identification. A smallish fringe-toed lizard with a longitudinally striped dorsal pattern. The general form, including the snout, is moderately robust. The nostrils are prominent. One row of granules between supraoculars and superciliaries. There are usually three longitudinal rows of scales along the 3rd and 4th fingers. Sometimes an interrupted and irregular 4th row may be present. Subdigital scales with one or more keels. Pectination on toes moderate. Subocular nearly always separated from lip. Usually four, but occasionally five, upper labials anterior to subocular. Eyelids strongly pectinate. Temporals sharply keeled. Dorsal scales coarse, keeled and imbricate posteriorly, 25–38 at mid-body. 10 to 11 ventral scale rows at mid-body.

Colour and pattern highly variable. Typically juveniles and sub-adults are more strongly striped with a mid-dorsal dark stripe and two lateral dark stripes on either side, the more lateral of which extends to the corner of the eye. The mid-dorsal stripe tends to have a constant width and extends from the back of the head to above the vent. The more medial lateral stripes come together over the base of the tail. The back ground-colour is buff or off-white, and the stripes are blackish, grey or reddish-brown. The dark stripes and pale stripes between them may become progressively more mottled and in some individuals the longitudinal pattern is almost obscured. Females tend to retain more of the striped pattern than males. In juveniles and some adults the tail is reddish, especially ventrally.

Biology. A diurnal, ground-dwelling lacertid. These lizards are active throughout the day in the cooler months, but only in the morning and late afternoon in summer.

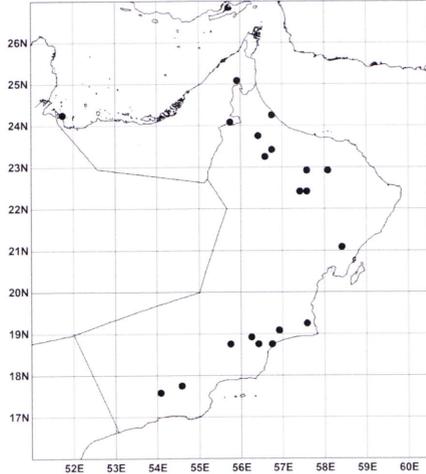




Fig. 221: *Acanthodactylus opheodurus*, Kharrarah, Qatar.



Fig. 222: *Acanthodactylus opheodurus*, Araqi, Aynayn, Wadi Mushaqasah, Al Wusta, Oman.



Fig. 223: *Acanthodactylus ophiodurus*, Ja'aluni, Al Wusta, Oman.



Fig. 224: *Acanthodactylus ophiodurus*, southern Oman.

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Individuals tend not to stray very far from vegetation. They hunt for insects and other invertebrate prey using both passive and active techniques. During active hunting, they move jerkily, following an apparently random course, or chase prey spotted from a distance. In passive hunting they tend to use a shaded ambush location. The tail is waved laterally after bouts of movement and in response to conspecifics.

Females reported to lay clutches of four eggs (Jordan) in summer. No breeding information available for SE Arabia.

Habitat. This species is usually found on relatively hard desert surfaces, such as sandy-gravel plains, dry wadis, interdunal plains, outwash plains. Avoids sand seas and mountain areas.

Distribution. In the UAE, this species is known from the Sila Peninsula in western Abu Dhabi, and from gravel plains bordering the Hajar Mountains and Jebel Hafit. In Oman, records occur on the outwash plains south of the Hajar Mountains and in similar habitats as far as Dhofar.

Pertinent references. ARNOLD 1980a, 1983, 1984, CUNNINGHAM 2001, DISI *et al.* 2001, SALVADOR 1982, TIEDEMANN 1991.