

Additions to the herpetofauna of the Wadi Wurayah National Park, Fujairah

by Balázs Farkas, Balázs Buzás & Valér Farkas

Situated in the Emirate of Fujairah, Wadi Wurayah lies within a priority WWF Global 200 Ecoregion (Ecoregion 127, Arabian Highlands and Shrublands). On account of its rich diversity of rare and endangered mountainous and freshwater habitats and species it was granted protection on March 15th, 2009, following the issuance of Law No. 2 of 2009 by His Highness Hamad bin Mohammad Al Sharqi, the Ruler of Fujairah. The safeguarded area covers a total of 219 km², comprising a core zone of 118 km², a buffer zone of 92 km², and an ecotourism zone of 9 km² and reaches an elevation of 1080 m a.s.l. In January 2013, Fujairah Municipality and Emirates Wildlife Society–World Wide Fund for Nature signed a three-year agreement to transform the newly created preserve into a national park of outstanding importance, the Wadi Wurayah National Park (WWNP; Tourenq *et al.* 2009, Judas 2016). Due to

these developments the WWNP received considerable attention from conservationists. Tourenq *et al.* (2009) recorded nine reptile species—*Pseudotrapelus sinaitus* (all UAE populations are now allocated to *P. jensvindumi*, see Tamar *et al.* 2016), *Pristurus celerrimus*, *Pristurus rupestris*, *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii*, *Bunopus spatulurus* (ssp. *hajarensis*), *Omanosaura cyanura*, *Omanosaura jayakari*, *Platyceps rhodorachis*, and *Echis omanensis*—from the WWNP but failed to confirm the occurrences of three species—*Hemidactylus* sp. (later identified as *H. flaviventris*), *Psammophis schokari*, and *Echis carinatus* (ssp. *sochureki*)—previously documented from the area (WWF United Arab Emirates Project Office 2006). Since then, following the discoveries of *Asaccus gallagheri* (Pierson 2014), *Mesalina adramitana*, *Chalcides ocellatus* (ssp. *ocellatus*), and *Trachylepis tessellata* (Judas 2016), the total number of reptile species raised to 15, with nine being endemic to the Hajar Mountains. We here wish to report the presence of yet another lizard and a snake species as well as to correct the taxonomic assignment of fan-footed geckos inhabiting the WWNP.



Figure 1. Photographic voucher specimen of *Asaccus caudivolvulus* from the Wadi Wurayah National Park (photo by Valér Farkas).

***Asaccus caudivolvulus* Arnold & Gardner, 1984** **Musandam leaf-toed gecko, وزغة ورقية الأصابع من الإمارات**

One specimen photographed on November 6th, 2017 at 19:16 hrs, 25°23.845' N, 56°16.184' E, at ± 195 m altitude (Figure 1) and another on December 12th, 2017 at 18:46 hrs on boulders in the vicinity of the celebrated freshwater pools, 25°23.847' N, 56°16.186' E, at ± 190 m a.s.l. Unfortunately, our permit did not allow the actual capture of individuals and we were thus not able to take measurements and count scales of either lizard. However, *A. caudivolvulus* is easily distinguished from *A. gallagheri*



Figure 2. An *Asaccus gallagheri* encountered close to the entrance gate of the WWNP in 2016 (photo by Balázs Buzás).

(Figure 2) by having enlarged tubercles on the back extending to the upper arms, clearly visible in our photo as small white dots (Gardner 2013). In comparison, both microendemic species—*A. gardneri* and *A. margaritae*—recently split off from *A. caudivolvulus* chiefly on the basis of molecular data have smooth brachia (Carranza *et al.* 2016). Even though it may be locally abundant within its restricted coastal range, urban development seriously threatens the continued existence of *A. caudivolvulus* (Carranza *et al.* 2016). Gardner (2013) recorded it from “the rocky wadis draining west into the Gulf, around Khasab; Harf, Khawr Niad, Jiddat Sahasa, Rawdah, Wadi Bih, Wadi Khabb Shamsi, Tayyibah, Wadi Uyaynah, Khabb, Wadi al Qulaydi, and in the isolated rocky headland of Jebel Ras south of Khawr Fakkan.” Meanwhile, the Wadi al Helo (Sharjah) population has been shown to represent a distinct species, *A. margaritae*, whereas the Musandam Peninsula as a whole is believed to be occupied by *A. gardneri* (Carranza *et al.* 2016). *Asaccus caudivolvulus* occurs in sympatry with a fan-footed gecko of dubious identity within the limits of the WWNP (see below).

Ptyodactylus orlovi

Nazarov, Melnikov & Melnikova, 2013

Orlov’s fan-footed gecko, وزغة أورلف مروحية الأقدام

One specimen photographed on November 6th, 2017 at 19:45 hrs and a second one on December 12th, 2017 at 18:07 hrs on rock slabs, 25°24' N, 56°16' E, at ± 180 m a. s. l., at a few metres’ distance from the spots where our *Asaccus caudivolvulus* were located. Whilst we were regrettably not permitted to manipulate and thoroughly examine them, our images reveal these lizards to have had non-contrasting head patterns, which challenges their identification as *P. hasselquistii* (Figures 3–4). Alas, the low resolution of our digital pictures makes a detailed comparison with the two species consistent with this feature—*P. orlovi* and *P. ruusaljibalicus*—impossible. However, while *P. ruusaljibalicus* seems to be restricted to the Dibba region of Fujairah (Simó-Riudalbas *et al.* 2017), *P. orlovi* is known from numerous locations in the Hajar Mountains between the Masafi/Dibba Depression (UAE) and Al Ashkarah (Oman) so we tentatively reassign the WWNP fan-footed geckos to the latter taxon.

***Telescopus dhara dhara* (Forsskål, 1775)**

Arabian cat snake, حية القطن العربية

One specimen photographed in rocky terrain close to the entrance gate of the WWNP on December 12th, 2017 at 19:42 hrs, 25°23.335' N, 56°18.659' E, at ± 80 m a. s. l. (Figure 5). According to Gardner (2013), this unmistakable opisthoglyphous colubrid snake has a large distribution range stretching along “the peripheral mountains of Arabia, from the Gulf of Aqaba, southwards through the Hijaz to the Yemen mountains [and] the mountainous and rocky areas of Oman,” with scattered records from “northern central Arabia including the Riyadh area.” Within UAE



Figure 3. *Ptyodactylus orlovi* photographed on a rock in the WWNP, within a few metres from the spot where the *A. caudivolvulus* were observed. Note the loss of a fingertip and the tail in response to attempted predation (photo by Valér Farkas).

territory, the species has been found at Ain al Ghamour and Al Aqah (both in Fujairah), as well as in Wadi al Helo and Kalba (both in Sharjah; Gardner *et al.* 2009, Gardner 2013). Unfortunately, we were not allowed to handle and examine this individual in greater detail either but its general appearance matched that of a Jiddat as Sahasa (Musandam Governorate, Oman) conspecific figured by Gardner *et al.* (2009).

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Figure 4. The second individual of *Ptyodactylus orlovi* clinging to an overhanging rock surface (photo by Balázs Buzás).



Figure 5. Photographic voucher specimen of *Telescopus d. dhara* from the WWNP (photo by Balázs Buzás).

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Balázs Farkas

Valér Farkas

Artibeus Publishing

Bercsényi St. 21

2464 Gyúró

Hungary

Email: farkasbalazs@yahoo.com

Balázs Buzás

Al Mayya Sanctuary

P.O. Box 666

Fujairah

United Arab Emirates

Email: bbuzas@gmail.com