

*Acanthodactylus longipes* BOULENGER, 1918

NT

**Common names:** Long-footed Fringe-fingered Lizard (E), Acanthodactyle à longs pieds (F), Lagartija de la arena (S).

**Range:** Wide distribution across the large eolian dunes (ergs) of the Sahara from Morocco and Mauritania to Egypt through Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Mali and Chad.

**Distribution in Morocco:** Restricted to the large Saharan eolian dunes: Erg Chebbi from Erfoud to Merzouga, Taouz and the Algerian border to the south of this region; small erg 11 to 17 km north of Erfoud, and the ergs of Mhamid–Iriki. Unknown from the Atlantic Sahara but probably occurs in the southwestern extension of the Erg Makteir entering in the southeastern corner of the Atlantic Sahara.

**Altitude:** 500–900 m.

**Identification:** A medium-sized lizard usually a little larger than *Acanthodactylus dumerilii* (reaching 6 cm SVL at a total length of 20 cm) with which it is frequently confused. This is the most adapted lacertid to the large eolian mobile dunes in the Western Palearctic, and some features of morphology and colouration attest to this adaptation. Elongated and pointed snout, the rim of the eyes particularly thickened (to better protect eyes against the



Fig. 465: Portrait of an *Acanthodactylus longipes*. Erg Chebbi.

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sand). Scales more numerous than in all the other *Acanthodactylus* on all body parts of the animal: 4<sup>th</sup> supraocular strongly divided, dorsal scales tiny and very numerous (57–88 rows at midbody, against 40–60 in *A. dumerilii*), ventral plates also very numerous (15–19 longitudinal rows *versus* 12–14 (15) in *A. dumerilii*). One good criterion to identify *A. longipes* is the shape of the dorsal scales: they are smooth or weakly keeled, minute and extremely numerous but along the vertebral column (3–7 scales in width),

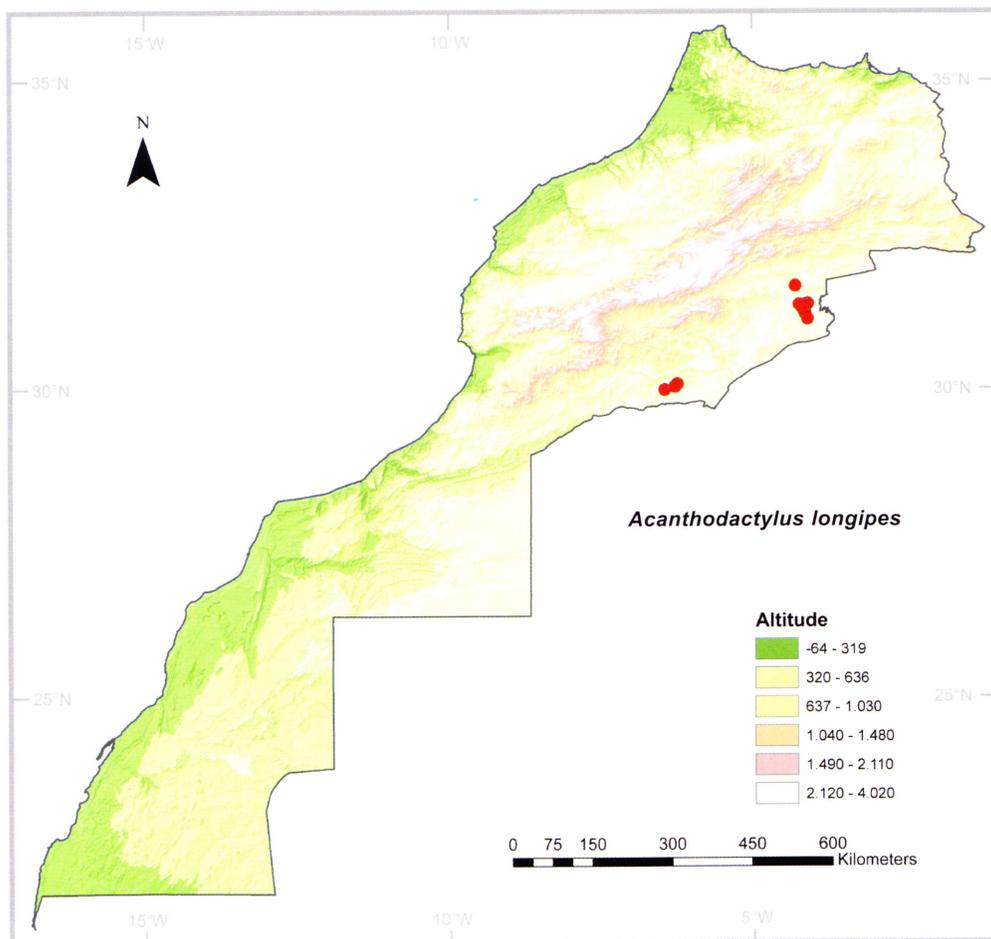




Fig. 466: *Acanthodactylus longipes*, adult. Jardin d'Eden (Mauritania).

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Fig. 467: *Acanthodactylus longipes*. Northeast of Ouadane (Mauritania).

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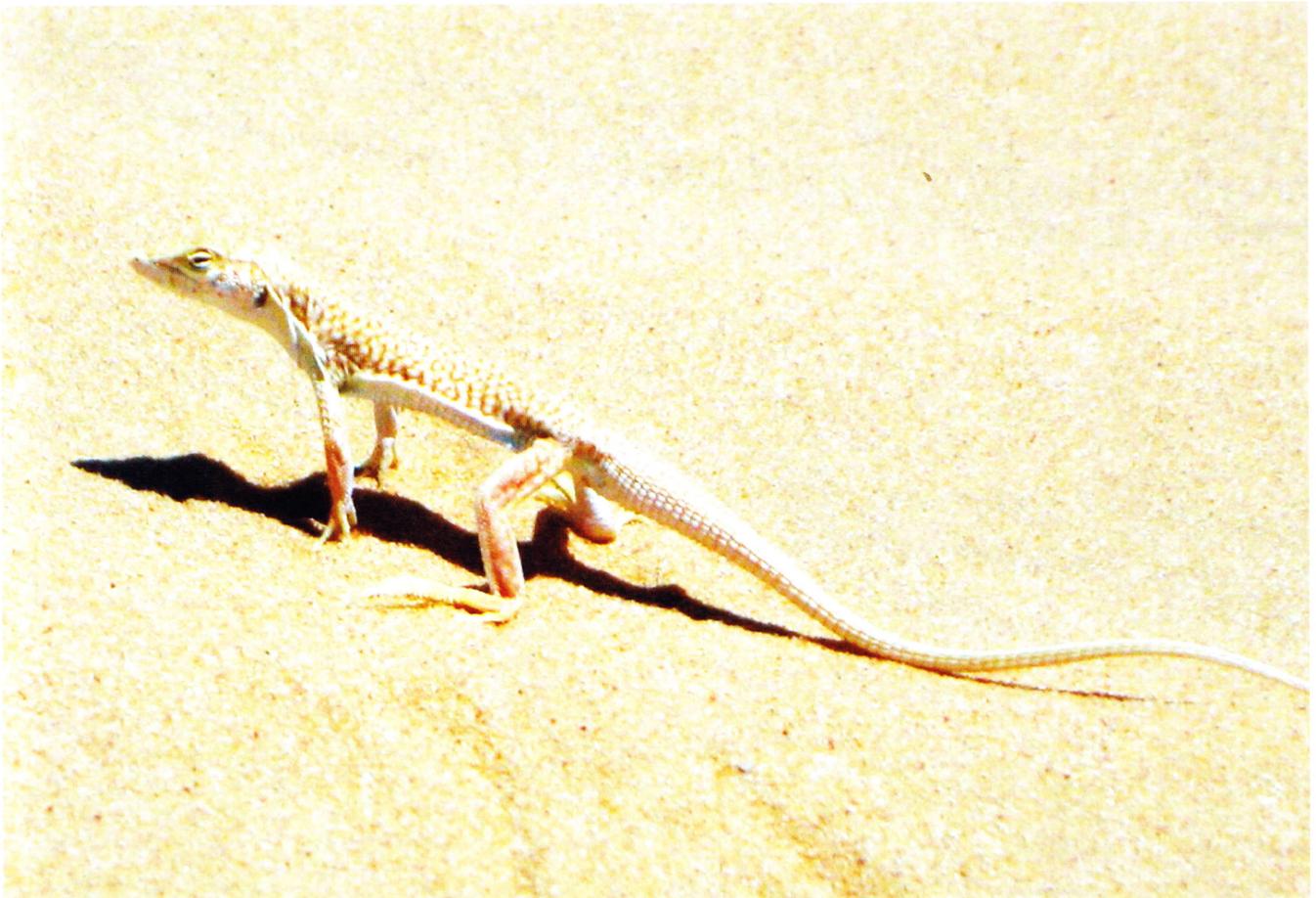


Fig. 468: *Acanthodactylus longipes*. Erg Admer (Algeria).

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scales are slightly enlarged and usually distinctly keeled. Hind legs relatively very long, fingers and toes enlarged and flattened, toe pectination well developed. Sandy-cream or sandy golden colouration with an indistinct reticulated pattern on the body and numerous small white ocelli which are larger on flanks than on the dorsum. Flanks are often darker than the dorsum. When they are present, red or reddish punctuation on the body and reddish vermiculation on the pileus are diagnostic for *A. longipes* within the *A. scutellatus* complex.

**Habitat:** Only present in the large dune formations.

**Biology:** Diurnal species. Spends most time basking and around bushes, moving quickly to capture prey and escape predators. Uses small holes in the sand as a refuge.

**Remarks:** A member of the *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* group, easily confused with *A. dumerilii*.



Fig. 469: *Acanthodactylus longipes*, detail of the toes adapted to the life in sandy environments. Ouadane (Mauritania).

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