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## Easternmost locality of *Eremias lalezharica* MORAVEC, 1994 with description of habitat details, in Kerman province, Iran

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### Abstract

*Eremias lalezharica* MORAVEC, 1994 was until recently known only from its terra typica near Lalezhar village in the Lalezhar Mountains, in the center of Kerman province, Iran. During a recent survey, a new locality was found for *Eremias lalezharica* on the road from Jiroft to Darb-e Behesht, in the Babgorgi region, 100 km to the south-east of the terra typica along the Lalezhar Mountains, with coordinates 29° 05' N and 57° 32' E, and an elevation of 2890 m (8670 ft). This new locality is also mountainous with relatively rich vegetation.

**Keywords:** Kerman, *Eremias lalezharica*, Babgorgi, Lalezhar Mountains.

## Introduction

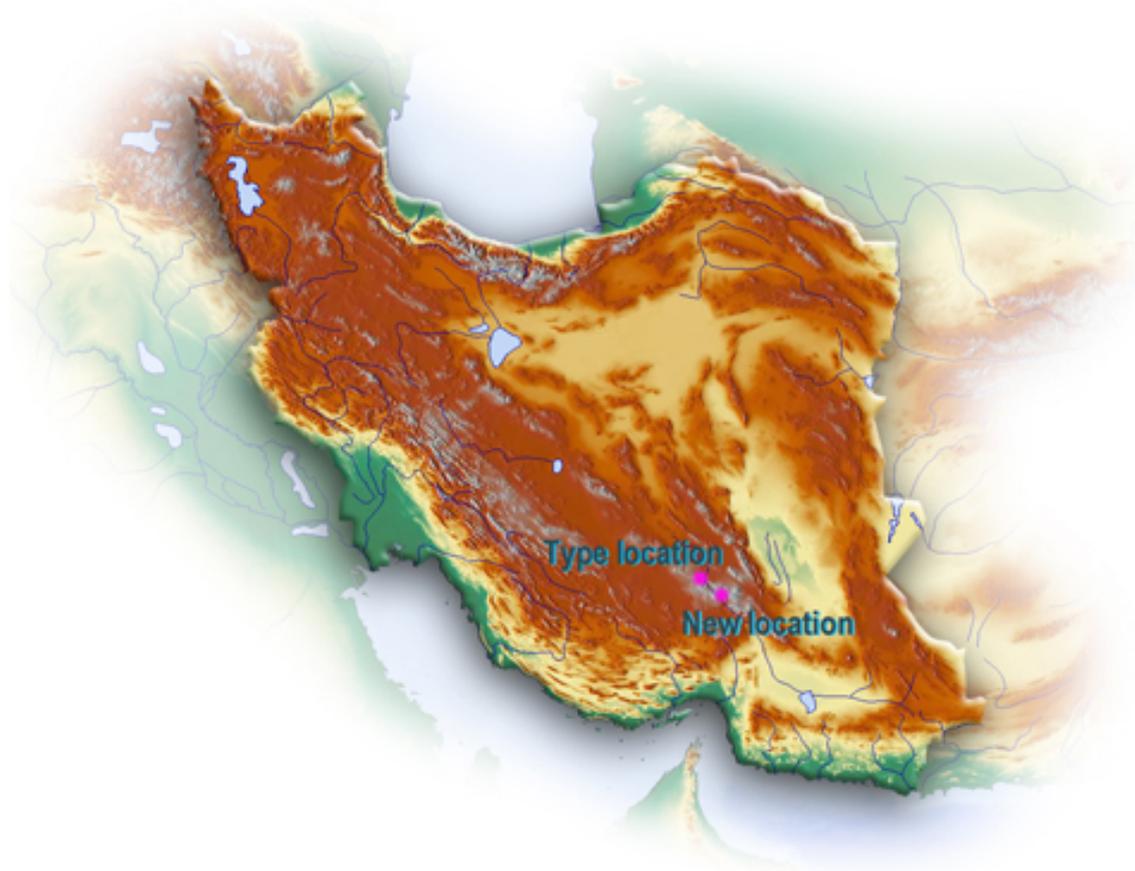
*Eremias lalezharica* is one of the rare endemic lacertid lizards of Iran (ANDERSON 1999; RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. 2008) with a limited distribution range on a mountain plateau in the vicinity of the village of Lalezhar in Kerman province. The species was described by MORAVEC (1994) from the vicinity of Lalezhar village (29° 31' N; 56° 51' E). According to ANDERSON (1999) its habitat consists of rich vegetation with shrubs, and he collected specimens in open fields of soil and stones washed down the slopes of Mount Lalezhar.



**Image 1.** Habitat of *Eremias lalezharica* near Darb-e Behesht, in the Babgorgi region.

## Materials and Methods

Field survey was conducted in Kerman province in May 2012, where we investigated *Eremias lalezharica* habitat around the road from Jiroft to Darb-e Behesht, in the Babgorgi region, 100 km to the south-east of the terra typica along the Lalezhar Mountains, with coordinates 29° 05' N and 57° 32' E, and an elevation of 2890 m (8670 ft). Specimens were seen among the dense vegetation (Image 1) and determined with reliable reference (ANDERSON 1999) in the field, and recognized as *Eremias lalezharica*.



Type- and New locality of *Eremias lalezharica* in Kerman province, Iran.

## Results and Discussion

The new high-altitude locality of *Eremias lalezharica* near Darb-e Behesht has a very cold mountainous climate, with long and cold winters, in contrast to the nearby lower plain of Jiroft, where the climate is much warmer and dryer. The habitat is located on slope hills with lots of stones at the base. There are many sources that originate in these mountains, the relatively wet conditions provides good circumstances for vegetation, with *Orchis*, *Zygophyllum*, and *Astragalus* as examples of some plants that we observed in this region.

During our survey in May 2012, the weather was relatively suitable for lizards, notwithstanding snow was still seen on top of the mountains. Adult specimens of *Eremias lalezharica* were seen foraging and in search to mate (Image 2). Sub-adults were seen less, because they probably leave their shelters later, and most of them were seen basking (Image 3), in order to get their body properly thermoregulated before their daily activities. Besides the abundant presence of *Eremias lalezharica*, the other common lizard in this region is *Laudakia microlepis*.

The species status in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is of Least Concern (LC), although the species is known only from a relatively restricted area, it is somewhat adaptable and there appear to be no major threats (SHAFEIE BAFTI et al. 2009). This is consistent with our findings in the new locality near Darb-e Behesht. This habitat has no attraction for tourism, so it is quite safe from human destruction.

## Acknowledgment

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**Image 2.** Adult specimen of *Eremias lalezharica* searching for a prey. (photo by Saeed Hosseinian).



**Image 3.** Sub-adult specimen of *Eremias lalezharica* basking. (photo by Saeed Hosseinian).