



Long Fringe-fingered Lizard *Acanthodactylus longipes* Boulenger, 1918

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Taxonomy: [Sauria](#) | [Lacertidae](#) | [Acanthodactylus](#) | [Acanthodactylus longipes](#)



Acanthodactylus longipes. Merzouga (Morocco). Photo: © Mario Schweiger.



■ *Acanthodactylus longipes*

Distribution map of
Acanthodactylus longipes
in Morocco.

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Taxonomy

Acanthodactylus scutellatus var. *longipes* Boulenger, 1918;

Acanthodactylus longipes Bons & Girot, 1962

Acanthodactylus longipes panousei Bons & Girot 1964 is, following Crochet *et al.*, 2003 not valid.

Description

Acanthodactylus longipes belongs to the *A. scutellatus* group. Over a wide range from Morocco in the west to Libya in the east it shares the same distribution and also nearly the same habitat with [Acanthodactylus dumerilii](#).



Male. Merzouga (Morocco). Photo: © Mario Schweiger.

It is nearly impossible to assign a specimen to one of these two species in field, because they share most of the diagnostic features. Both species only differ in the number of dorsal scale rows, but these counting are hard to do without a magnifier and on a life specimen.

Scalation differences between *A. dumerilii* and *A. longipes* after Crochet *et al.*, 2003.

	A. dumerilii		A. longipes	
Dorsal scale rows at midbody	39 - 51		55 - 57	
Ventrals transversal rows	12 - 17		13 - 19	
Ventrals longitudinal rows	28 - 38		28 - 37	
	1	55.7%	1	7.8%
Supraciliary granules rows	1.5	16.2%	1.5	6.3%
	2	27.0%	2	62.5%
	2.5	1.1%	2.5	0.9%
			3	12.5%

For us, the most easy difference in the field was the coloration of both species. While [A. dumerilii](#) shows some dark brown to black tiny spots on the flanks, these have been lacking in all *A. longipes* specimens. Therefore, *A. longipes* has a much more uniform appearance in coloration.

Ecology and habits

Acanthodactylus longipes is a lizard species of the open, wind blown dunes. We observed them high up in the dunes or in dune valleys, far away from any vegetation. Only a very few specimens have been encountered at the edge of dunes with some more dense vegetation (bushes, halfa grass), where it shares the habitat with [A. dumerilii](#) (own observations at Erg Chebbi, SE Morocco). It hides in self burrowed holes, which are digged every day new.

Like other desert species, it is active during full sunshine on the hot sand. To avoid burnings, it lifts its body or its feet from the hot sand regularly.

Distribution, habitat and abundance in the study area

Acanthodactylus longipes is distributed throughout the Sahara from the Atlantic coast in the west (Mauritania) the Sinai in the east. To the south it lives up to the Sahel zone. In Morocco *Acanthodactylus longipes* lives in the dunes of Erg Chebbi and the dunes of Mhamid. There is no official record for the Western Sahara, although it is known from very close regions in Mauritania (dunes of Ouarane) (Geniez *et al.* 2004).



Habitat. Merzouga (Morocco). Photo: © Mario Schweiger.

We could observe them only on large open dunes with no or just very few vegetation. Near the Erg Chebbi, where it is very common, we didn't find it on smaller dunes, separated by less than 2 kilometers of black Reg desert from the Erg, some kilometres north of Merzouga.

Whole range of species: Lower risk-least concern (LR-Lc).

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