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Figure 1: Lateral view of adult *Darevskia defilippii* from the Qarchaq Protected Area.

(Photograph by Masoud Yousefi)

## Easternmost record of *Darevskia defilippii* (CAMERANO, 1877) from Qarchaq Protected Area, Kopet Dagh Mountains, northeastern Iran

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### Abstract

During field survey on September 2009 in the northern part of Khorasan Razavi province, inside the Qarchaq Protected Area, near Bajgiran city, one adult specimen of *Darevskia defilippii* was found and recorded as easternmost record. (for Iran and globally).

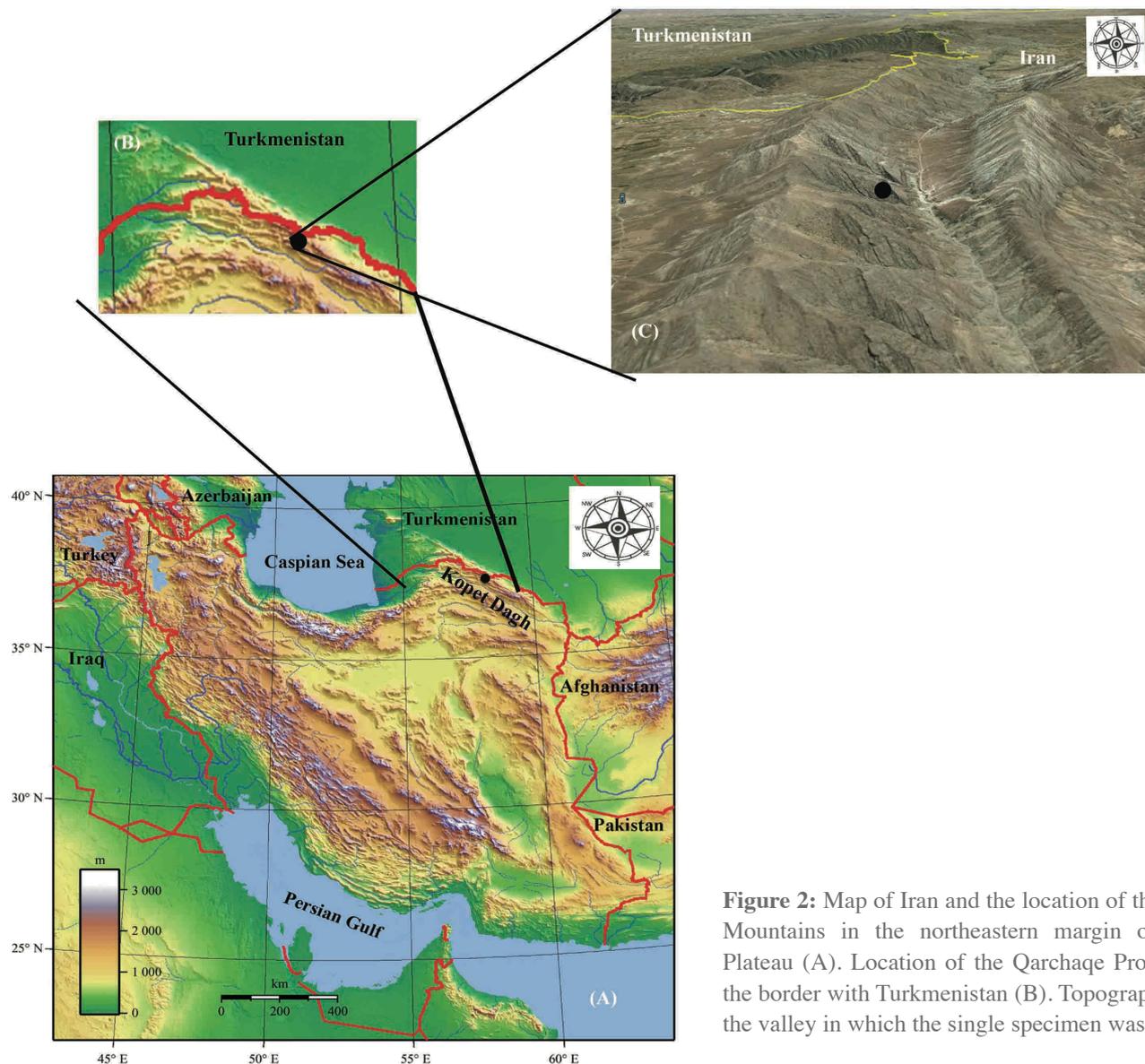
**Keywords:** Khorasan Razavi province, Lacertidae, easternmost record, *Darevskia defilippii*.

## Introduction

Kopet Dagh mountains were uplifted around 6 MYA and separated some populations of reptiles from the central part of the Iranian plateau (RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. 2012). Genus *Darevskia* consists of about 7 species from Iran (RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. 2008). The Elburz lacerta, *Darevskia defilippii* (CAMERANO, 1877) is one of the lacertid lizards that are dwelling the rocky and moisture habitat (ANDERSON 1999; RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. 2007; SINDACO & JEREMČENKO 2008). The species has some populations in the central part of the Elburz mountains that are in relationship with other populations along the Elburz mountains till the south of Golestan, where the vegetation and climate changes. In 1993, SCHAMMAKOV et al. reported from a location south of Askabad (Turkmenistan) a lacertid lizard, which they identified as *Darevskia raddei raddei*. This region is close to our present study area in which we didn't find any specimens of *Darevskia raddei raddei*, which homorange is limited to the west of the Caspian Sea. We believe that the record of SCHAMMAKOV et al. (1993) probably have been a misidentified specimen of *Darevskia defilippii*.

## Materials and Methods

Field work was carried out during September 2009 in the Qarchaq Protected Area, near Bajgiran, about 50 km south of Ashkabad. The region is one of the mountainous zones in Kopet Dagh and has a varied species of animals and plants. Qarchaq Protected Area is one of the most biologically diverse regions in the Kopet Dagh mountains, encompassing an elevational span of 1600-2700 m on 23037 hectares (MUSAVI 2011).



**Figure 2:** Map of Iran and the location of the Kopet Dagh Mountains in the northeastern margin of the Iranian Plateau (A). Location of the Qarchaq Protected Area at the border with Turkmenistan (B). Topographic view from the valley in which the single specimen was captured (C).

The Protected Area is one of the most important breeding bird habitat for mountain birds in northeast Iran, adjacent to the border of Turkmenistan on the north side (Fig. 2).

One adult lacertid lizard specimen (Fig. 1) was captured from this region at coordinate N 37° 38' ; E 058° 16', on an altitude of about 2015 m, and carried to the Sabzevar University Herpetological Collection (SUHC) and identified by reliable references (ANDERSON 1999; RASTEGAR-POUYANI et al. 2007) as *Darevskia defilippii*. The single specimen was fixed and deposited in 96% ethanol in good condition in the collection with number SUHC 436.

## Results and Discussion

In this communication we introduce the new easternmost record of *Darevskia defilippii* from the Central Part of the Kopet Dagh Mountains (Fig. 3), which is situated 100 km to the east from the previous known easternmost record in Turkmenistan in the western Kopet Dagh Mountains territory. *Acanthophyllum* and *Juniperus sp.* are the most common plants in this region. In the area between this new record and the other records in Iran (Golestan province), there are no reports from this taxon. We assume that the Kopet Dagh population is isolated from the populations in Central Elburz by geological events, also some drying seasons in recent years. We propose that this population needs more consideration to biosystematics field and should be compared with Central Elburz populations by molecular methods.



**Figure 3:** Habitat of *Darevskia defilippii* in the Qarchaq Protected Area, near Bajgiran. (Photograph by Masoud Yousefi)

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