

First record and range extension of Sistan racerunner, *Eremias fasciata* (Blanford 1874) (Sauria: Lacertidae) from Hormozgan Province, southern Iran

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Abstract: The genus *Eremias*, Fitzinger, 1834, with 35 species of mostly sand, steppe, and desert dweller lizards, is one of the most specious genera of the diverse family of Lacertidae. Here, we record *E. fasciata* from Hormozgan Province, a new location in southern Iran, and describe the specimens morphometrics. Previously published localities for *E. fasciata* in Iran lie between 450 and 1700 m elevation, while the elevation of this new locality is at about 15 m a.s.l.

Key words. Lacertidae, *Eremias fasciata*, range extension, Hormozgan Province, Iran, *Eremias*, Lacertidae.

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Introduction. The genus *Eremias*, Fitzinger, 1834, with 35 species of mostly sand, steppe, and desert dweller lizards, is one of the most specious genera of the diverse family of Lacertidae, Bonaparte, 1831, (Rastegar-Pouyani and Nilson 1997; Uetz and Hošek 2014). The racerunners of the genus *Eremias* are small, medium-sizes and, more rarely, comparatively large lizards that are distributed from northern China, Mongolia, Korea, Central and southwest Asia to southeastern Europe (Rastegar-Pouyani and Nilson, 1997). Together with *Phrynocephalus spp.* Kaup, 1825 (Agamidae), the genus *Eremias* represents a nucleus of the Palearctic lizard fauna of deserts (Ananjeva et al. 2006).



Figure 1. Adult male of *Eremias fasciata* (RUZM-LE60.2), photographed in captivity after the collection showing a distinctive bluish tail. Image A. Gholamifard.



Figure 2. Map of Iran showing previous records of *Eremias fasciata* in Eastern (Anderson, 1999) and Central Iran (Mozaffari and Parham 2007) (yellow and red circles). The green circle indicates the new record in Hormozgan Province. Source of map is the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF.) (<http://www.gbif.org>).

Basic information on the morphology and taxonomy of *Eremias spp.* are readily available from the literature (e.g. Szczerbak 1974, Rastegar-Pouyani and Nilson 1997, Anderson 1999). Iran hosts 19 species of *Eremias* (Rastegar-Pouyani et al. 2008, Rastegar-Pouyani et al. 2013, Uetz and Hošek 2014). Among them the Sistan racerunner, *Eremias fasciata* Blanford, 1874, Fig 1, has been reported from Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Blanford, 1874, Leviton 1959, Anderson 1999, Khan 2004, Rastegar-Pouyani et al. 2008).

The type specimen of *E. fasciata* is from Kerman (Blanford 1874), and *E. fasciata* is restricted to Saidabad, southwest of Kerman in Kerman Province, Iran by Smith (1935). In Iran, *E. fasciata* has previously been reported from several habitats in Kerman, Sistan and Baluchestan, North Khorasan, Razavi Khorasan, South Khorasan, Semnan Provinces (Blanford 1874, Anderson 1999, Rastegar-Pouyani et al. 2006, Darvish and Rastegar-Pouyani 2012), and Esfahan Province (Mozaffari and Parham 2007) (Fig. 2).



Figure 3. New habitat of *Eremias fasciata* in Hormozgan Province, about 30 km from the Bandar Abbas. Image A. Gholamifard.

Museum number	Sex	Snout-Vent length	Tail length	Scale rows		Gulars	Upper labials (R/L)	Lower labials (R/L)	Femoral pores (R/L)	Author(s)
				Dorsal	Ventral (L)					
RUZM-LE60.2	Male	48.14	108.47	44	13 L/32 T	24	10/9	6/6	17L	Present study
-	-	-	-	-	14-16 L/32-35 T	-	-	-	16-19	Blanford 1874
CAS 84684-88	3 Male *1 Female	42, *62	83, *99	46, *52	14-17 L	-	11-12/11-13	-	16-19/15-19	Leviton 1959
-	-	60	-	46-53	14-16 L/29-36 T	21-32	-	-	15-22	Baig and Masroor, 2006

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) and counts for the examined specimen of *Eremias fasciata* and its comparison with previous records. (R/L) Right/Left, L longitudinal, T transverse. CAS = California Academy of Sciences.

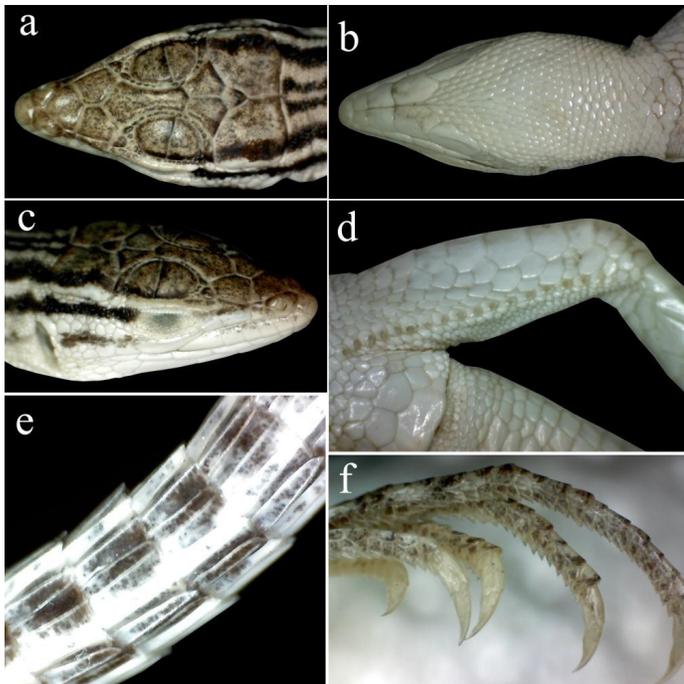


Figure 4. *Eremias fasciata*: Dorsal (a), ventral (b) and dorsolateral views of the head (c), femoral pores (d), dorsal view of the tail (e), and lateral view of the toes (f). Image A. Gholamifard.

Here, we record *E. fasciata* from a new location in southern Iran. In March 2013, during field work on the herpetofaunas of Hormozgan Province, a single specimen of *E. fasciata* was collected by the first author from a sandy habitat with semi-dense cover of halophilic bushes and low scattered *Acacia* and *Tamarix* spp. (Fig. 3), about 30 km from Bandar Abbas to Minab (27°17'N, 56°29'E; alt. 16 m a.s.l.), near the Shur River (Fig. 1) This specimen of *E. fasciata* is now deposited at the Razi University Zoological Museum, Kermanshah (RUZM) under museum number RUZM-LE60.2. Counts and measurements for this specimen are given in Table (1).

This new record of *E. fasciata* in Hormozgan Province is about 350 km away from the type locality (Saidabad), and about 250 km from the nearest previously published record located from amun-e Jaz Murian in Kerman Province (Anderson, 1999). Our new record of *E. fasciata* in South Central of Hormozgan Province is the southernmost record of this species in its distribution range. According to Anderson (1999), previously published localities for this lacertid in Iran lie between 450 and 1700 m elevation, while the elevation of this new locality is at

about 15 m, thus has the lowest elevation among the habitats of *E. fasciata*.

Morphologically, *E. fasciata* is distinguished from its congeners by having the frontal and frontoparietal shields that are separated from the supraoculars by uninterrupted rows of granules (Fig. 4a,c); the subocular bordering mouth (Fig. 4c); presence of three nasals, lower in contact with 2 or 3 anterior supralabials (Fig. 4c); 21-30 gular scales in straight median series, and usually only single median collar scale distinctly larger than adjacent gulars (Fig. 4b); two series of femoral pores separated by space not greater than one-fourth length of each (Fig. 4d); distinctly but obtusely keeled upper caudal scales (Fig. 4e); the 4th toe with two complete rows of subdigital scales and a complete row of sharply pointed lateral scales (Fig. 4f) (Boulenger 1890, Leviton and Anderson 1970, Anderson 1999, Darevsky and Shcherbak 1978), and 46-53 dorsal scales (Baig and Masroor 2006). Adult *E. fasciata* also have 5-8 dark stripes as none of the stripes containing light ocelli or spots, and head is uniformly brown (Fig. 1., Anderson 1999).

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Ali Gholamifard earned his B.S. in Animal Biology from the Shahed University of Tehran, Iran, in 2005 and his M.Sc. in Animal Biosystematics from Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran in 2009, where his previous researches were focused on the freshwater fishes of Iran (his thesis was on the reproductive biology of the endemic Iranian cyprinid, *Cyprinion tenuiradius*). Ali is currently a Ph.D. student at Razi University of Kermanshah, Iran under the advisement of Prof. Nasrullah Rastegar-Pouyani. His PhD thesis concerns systematics of the tiny gecko, *Microgecko helenae*, populations in Iran. His scientific interests focus on systematics, biodiversity, biology and ethology of Amphibians and reptiles of Iran.



Nasrullah Rastegar-Pouyanai received his Ph.D. in 1999 working on taxonomy and biogeography of Iranian Plateau agamids, specifically *Trapelus*. Since 1996, he has described numerous new taxa of lizards (mainly geckonids, agamids, and lacertids) from the Iranian Plateau. His research interests include taxonomy and biogeography of the herpetofauna of the Iranian Plateau, and in general the Middle East and Central Asia. Nasrullah is currently Head of the Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Razi University, and co-manages the Conservation Breeding Program for two species of Critically Endangered newts in Iran, the Kurdistan newt (*Neurergus microspilotus*) and the Loristan newt (*N. kaiseri*).