

*Acanthodactylus erythrurus* (SCHINZ, 1833)

LC

Common names: Common Fringe-fingered Lizard (E), Acanthodactyle commun (F), Lagartija colirroja (S).

Range: Iberian Peninsula, Morocco and Algeria.

Distribution in Morocco: Very common in the past (at the end of the 20th century) north and west of the Atlas Mountains and in these mountains. Nowadays, in the face of continued land cover change, it tends to disappear from numerous regions of Oriental Morocco. South of the Atlas, only known from a few localities (Sidi Ifni, the mouth of Oued Noun (= Foug Assaka), Jebel Sirwa, Ouarzazate region and Jebel Saghro). The southernmost locality at Foug Assaka, disconnected from the rest of the species' range, is disputed and needs confirmation.

Altitude: 0–2,500 m.

Identification: Medium-sized lizard, SVL up to 8 cm (17 cm including the tail) characterised by the combination of two supraoculars, ten longitudinal rows of ventral plates, dorsal scales not enlarged, six whitish lines along the body usually without ocelli on these lines, and tail vermilion or red in females and juveniles. Males exhibit yellow, green or blue large ocelli along the flanks. In Morocco within the *Acanthodactylus erythrurus* complex, one

subspecies has been raised to the specific rank (*A. lineomaculatus*), and two were recognised as subspecies: *A. e. bellii* and *A. e. atlanticus*. Even if these three taxa are easily recognisable, genetic data point to an extremely complex diversity (see under **Remarks**), so that at present it is better to treat them as “morphotypes,” pending complete genetic and morphological studies.

(1) Morphotype *bellii*: subocular plate in extensive contact with the lip, dorsal scales smooth or weakly keeled, usually no scale(s)



Fig. 458: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, individual of the morphotype “bellii.” Jebel Sirwa.

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Fig. 459: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, morphotype “bellii,” head detail. Fifi, Rif Mountains.

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Fig. 460: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, female of the morphotype “atlanticus.” Boumia, High Atlas Mountains.

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Fig. 461: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, morphotype "lineomaculatus," old male with unusually strong lateral markings. Moulay Bouzerktoun.

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between frontals nor internasals and one row of supraciliary granules edging the supraoculars. Present along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Rif Mountains, the Hauts-Plateaux, eastern and southern parts of the Middle Atlas and the northern edge of the eastern High Atlas (see map). The range continues in Algeria to nearly the Tunisian border. Common Fringe-fingered Lizards of the morphotype "bellii" occur in the High Atlas at high altitudes but morphological and genetic data show that they do not truly belong to "*Acanthodactylus erythrurus bellii*" (unpubl.).

(2) Morphotype "atlanticus:" morphologically like "bellii" but

the subocular is separated from the lip by a small quadrangular scale directly below eyes. Endemic to Morocco, to the western and northern parts of the Middle Atlas. *Acanthodactylus erythrurus* resembling this morphotype are also found in the plain of Marrakech, but they are genetically distinct from those from the Middle Atlas.

(3) Morphotype "lineomaculatus:" easily distinguishable from the other two by its slender proportions, its more pointed snout, the subocular separated from the lip by the 4th and 5th or 5th and 6th supralabials and usually without the small supplementary scale



Fig. 462: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, dorsal aspect of a male of the morphotype "bellii." Ketama, Rif Mountains.

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Fig. 463: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, mating pair of the morphotype "lineomaculatus." Cap Beddouza.

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Fig. 464: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, juvenile of the morphotype “bellii.” 2 km north of the Dayet Ifrah, Middle Atlas Mountains. P. GENIEZ

typical to “atlanticus.” Dorsal scales pointed and more or less strongly keeled (depending on population), one or two scales between frontals and usually between internasals, two rows of supraciliary granules along the supraoculars. Western plains of Morocco (endemic) from Tangier to Essaouira, entering inland to a maximum of 50–100 km.

Habitat: *Acanthodactylus erythrurus* s.l. is linked to Mediterranean climate and vegetation. Present in a wide variety of habitats including beaches, sandy areas, shores of wadis, forests, steppes, extensive cultivations, rocky areas and mountains.

Biology: Diurnal species spends most time basking around bushes, moving quickly to capture prey and escape predators. Uses small holes in the ground, under stones or bushes as refugia.

Remarks: A species complex containing *Acanthodactylus lineomaculatus* DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1839, *A. erythrurus atlanticus* BOULENGER, 1918, *A. erythrurus bellii* GRAY, 1845, *A. erythrurus erythrurus* (SCHINZ, 1833) and *A. blanci* DOUMERGUE, 1901 (FONSECA *et al.* 2009, TAMAR *et al.* 2016).