

*Psammodromus algirus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

LC

**Common names:** Algerian *Psammodromus*, Large *Psammodromus* (E), *Psammodrome algire* (F), *Lagartija colilarga* (S).



Fig. 528: Adult male *Psammodromus algirus* of the form “*algirus*” from Boumia. P. GENIEZ

**Range:** North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) and southwestern Europe (Portugal, Spain and southern France). The insular population of Conigli Islet near Lampedusa (Italy) is probably the result of a recent human introduction from Morocco (CARRETERO *et al.* 2009).

**Distribution in Morocco:** Mediterranean regions of central and northern Morocco, from Agadir and the Jebel Sirwa to Oujda, including the Atlas and Rif Mountains. From the eastern High Atlas to Rissani it reaches the northern edge of the Sahara via the Oued Ziz Valley. It has been recorded at Sidi Ifni by R. TAPIADOR (1963, *in* MELLADO & MATEO [1992]) but the species has not been found there since then.

**Altitude:** 0–2,600 m.

**Identification:** Slender, medium-sized lizard with a total length of 30 cm, SVL up to 9 cm and tail about three times longer than SVL. Dorsal scales large, keeled, pointed and strongly imbricated. The indistinct collar and the rounded, unkeeled and strongly imbricated ventrals allow distinction from *Psammodromus microdactylus* and *P. blanci* which have a visible collar and weakly imbricated ventrals. Dorsal colouration brown, from bronze to olive, typically with two longitudinal whitish to yellow stripes along the flanks. In the form “*nolli*” from the arid Hauts-Plateaux of eastern Morocco and western Algeria considered by some authors to be a subspecies, two additional broad light stripes appear on the dorsum. In the monochromatic form “*ketamensis*” inhabiting the Rif, these stripes are absent, and all the body is olive

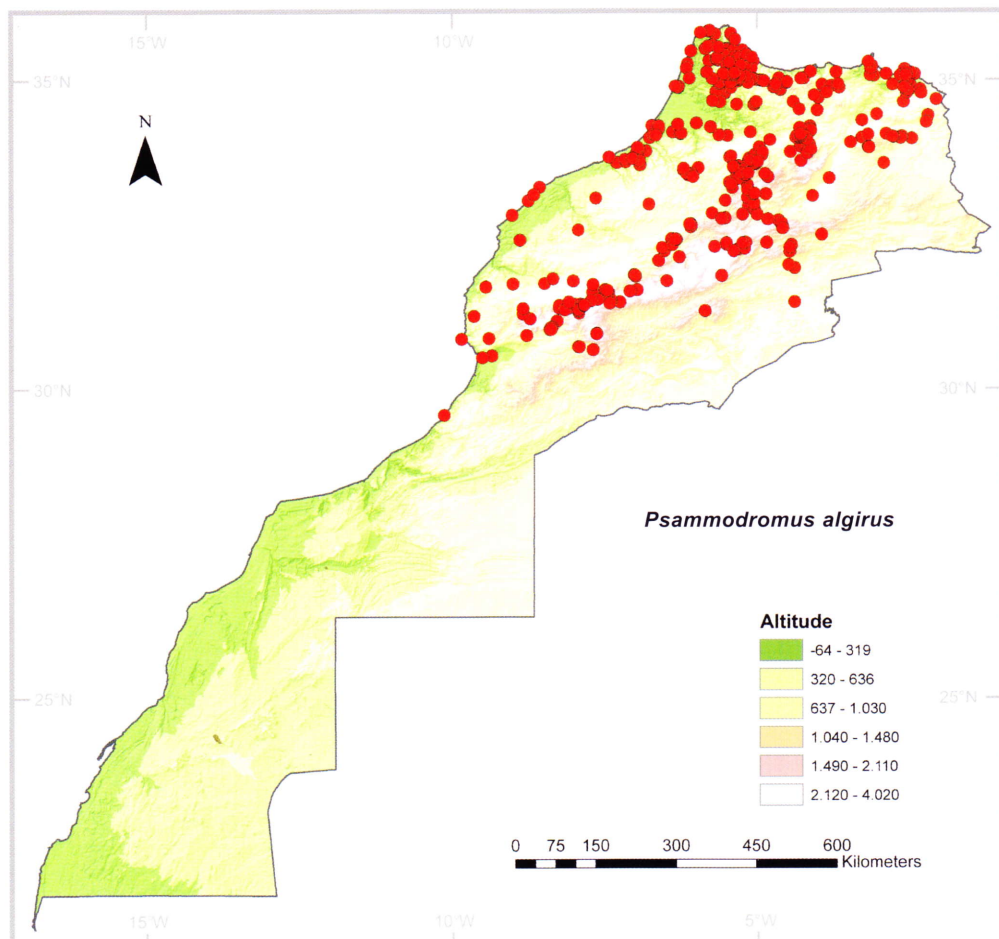




Fig. 529: Portrait of male *Psammodromus algirus* of the form “ketamensis” in the breeding season. Ketama.

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brown to bronze. Males of all three “taxa” have a brilliant orange or red throat and temples during the breeding season and pale blue ocelli above the shoulder.

**Habitat:** Found in a variety of non-desertic biotopes, including bushes and shrubland, open pine forests with some undergrowth and less frequently in coastal dunes and beaches. Also occurs in

fields and gardens around rural villages, and in the southeast of the country, in palmeries. Present also in Esparto Grass (*Stipa tenacissima*) steppes.

**Biology:** *Psammodromus algirus* is a thermophilic species with extreme heat tolerance. Hibernates at high altitude. Although normally ground-dwelling, it also climbs in shrubs and trees. The



Fig. 530: *Psammodromus algirus*, female of the form “algirus.” Ifrane.

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Fig. 531: *Psammodromus algirus*, individual of the form “algirus.” Azru.

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◁ Fig. 532: Adult male *Psammodromus algirus* of the form “*ketamensis*” photographed during the breeding season. Chaouen.

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mating season starts in April, and during this period couples living together have been observed. Females lay 3–11 eggs that hatch in July. A second clutch is possible in late summer. The wide food spectrum of the species includes spiders, insect, caterpillars, and even small lizards. During fights, males squeak loudly, as will individuals when handled.

**Remarks:** Two previously described subspecies, *Psammodromus algirus nalli* (FISCHER, 1887) and *P. a. ketamensis* GALAN, 1931 from eastern Morocco and the Rif, respectively, are now considered chromatic variants of the nominal subspecies.

◁ Fig. 533: Close-up of the right flank of a male *Psammodromus algirus* showing the keeled, pointed and strongly imbricated dorsal scutes. Boumia.

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Fig. 534: A juvenile from Jebel Tazzeke. Note the light orange colour of the hind legs and the tail, typical of the young of *Psammodromus algirus*.

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