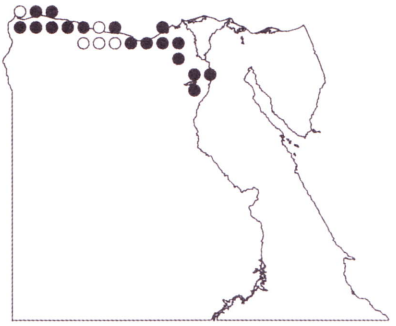
Acanthodactylus pardalis (Lichtenstein 1823) **Egyptian Leopard Lizard** (Fig. 50)

Lacerta pardalis Lichtenstein 1823: 99. Type locality: "Egypt." Lectotype: ZMB 1077, designated by Moravec et al. 1999.

Acanthodactylus pardalis Boulenger 1887 (part), Anderson 1898, Flower 1933, Salvador 1982, Moravec et al. 1999

Acanthodactylus pardalis pardalis Marx 1968, Arnold 1983, Saleh 1997

Arabic: *sihliyat jild al-nimr*



Egyptian Leopard Lizard
(Acanthodactylus pardalis)

Taxonomy: Monotypic. Other taxa regarded by Boulenger (1920) as subspecies of *A. pardalis* have been elevated to species status by Salvador (1982) and Arnold (1983), except for *A. bedriagai* Lataste 1881, which the latter author regarded as a subspecies of *A. pardalis*. The status of this taxon still remains unclear. A small population found in the northern Negev, which has traditionally been regarded as conspecific with *pardalis*, has recently been recognized as a separate taxon, *A. beershebensis* (Moravec et al. 1999). The name *Lacerta deserti* Milne-Edwards 1829, potentially available for the Negev taxon, was deemed a *nomen nudum* by Moravec et al. (1999) because of confusion over the collection locality of its types. Another small population from Jordan, formerly referred to *pardalis* has been described recently *(A. ahmaddisii)* by Werner (2004) based on a single specimen.

Diagnosis: A medium-sized fringed-toed lizard. Adults up to 60 mm SVL. Second and third supraoculars entire, the first broken into 2–3 parts and the fourth fragmented. Dorsals small and smooth, 61 in longest transverse row. 14 transverse rows of ventrals. Dorsum with sandy background lined with 8 rows of interspersed black and light blotches. Pattern becomes duller in older animals. Adult males with bright yellow infusion on flanks and on throat, at least during the breeding season. Juveniles have more contrasting colors and pattern, with a dorsal pattern consisting of dark and light stripes, and blue tails.

Habitat and ecology: The least common *Acanthodactylus* species known from Egypt. Found in flat open semi-deserts under Mediterranean influence, receiving 50–150 mm of rain annually, preferring areas of hard clay substrates with scattered stones and moderate vegetation cover, most prominently *Thymelaea hirsuta*. As with most diurnal desert lacertids this species has a bimodal activity pattern in the hottest months of the year, reverting to a unimodal pattern in autumn and spring. Activity is minimal in winter.

Range: Restricted to northwest Egypt and northern Cyrenaica, Libya. In Libya *A. pardalis* is found in a narrow band across northern Cyrenaica from the Egyptian borders, as far west as Agdabia (Scortecci 1934, Salvador 1982, Arnold 1983). The species has not been recorded from Gebel Akhdar (Resetar 1983, Schleich 1987) and appears to be absent from that part of Cyrenaica.

Distribution in Egypt: The status of *Acanthodactylus pardalis* and delineation of its range in Egypt has been subject of many inaccuracies, primarily because of misidentification and confusion with other congeners. The species has been confused with *A. scutellatus*, *A. longipes*, and *A. boskianus* in Egypt.

Anderson (1896 and 1898) and Boulenger (1920) reported on specimens from Maryut near Alexandria and from Alexandria only. Flower (1933) stated that the species is known only from the neighborhood of Alexandria and Maryut extending as far west as Daba. Marx (1968) and Salvador (1982) listed specimens mostly from the Mediterranean coastal desert between Salum and Alexandria and from the general vicinity of Wadi El Natrun, Giza, and Fayoum, as well as from localities in South Sinai and from the hinterland of the Western Desert. The re-examination of much of the material referred to *A. pardalis* from Egypt indicates that the species has a fairly restricted range along the Mediterranean coast from the Libyan borders to Alexandria, extending south along the western edge of the Nile Delta and Valley to the Fayoum Depression. Almost all reports of the species outside this range in Egypt are erroneous.

Marx (1968) mistakenly reports the species from El Gamil Beach, Port Said (FMNH 152619-20, 152623-24 all referable to *A. boskianus*), Abu Rawash (FMNH 82874 referable to *A. longipes*), and reports a single specimen from St. Katherine, which was referred to *A. boskianus* by Werner (1982). Salvador (1982) also erroneously reported the species for Egypt from Wadi Prince, Gebel Uweinat (locality actually in Libya) (FMNH 167872 referable to *A. scutellatus*), Bahariya Oasis (FMNH 1678763, 69, 78 referable to *A. scutellatus* and FMNH 167866, 83, 84 referable to *A. longipes*), and Wadi Nasim, Qena (NMNH 134985 referable to *Mesalina guttulata*). Saleh (1997) reiterated many of the erroneous records of Marx (1968) and Salvador (1982) on his distribution map for the species.

Acanthodactylus scutellatus (Audouin 1829) **Nidua Lizard** (Fig. 51)

Lacerta scutellata Audouin 1829: 172. Type locality: "Egypte." Holotype not located (Salvador 1982, Crochet et al. 2003)

Acanthodactylus scutellatus Boulenger 1920, Bons and Girot 1964, Salvador 1982, Arnold 1983, Crochet et al. (2003)

Arabic: *sihliyat al-raml*

Taxonomy: Monotypic. *A. hardyi* Haas 1957, inhabiting northern Arabia and long treated as a subspecies of *A. scutellatus*, has been shown to deserve treatment at the specific level based on molecular evidence (Harris and Arnold 2000). There is plenty of other justification for this based on its distinct morphology, preference of harder substrate (than *A. scutellatus*), and an apparent gap in distribution in Jordan. More recently Crochet et al. (2003) acknowledged *A. s. audouini* Boulenger 1918 as a valid subspecies based on the conclusions of Bons and Girot (1964). However, the great overlap in morphological characters and intergradation between the nominate form and *A. s. audouini* type animals makes it difficult to define these taxonomic units with consistency at the moment.