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A NEW SPECIES OF *Eremias* (SAURIA: LACERTIDAE) FROM FARS PROVINCE, SOUTH-CENTRAL IRAN

Nasrullah Rastegar-Pouyani[1] and Göran Nilson[1]

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A new species of the lacertid genus and subgenus *Eremias* is described based on material collected by the senior author from 150 km northeast of Shiraz, Fars province, south-central Iran at about 1800 m elevation. It differs from all other Iranian species of the typical subgenus (*E. persica*, *E. strauchi*, *E. velox*, and *E. lalezharica*) in that it has a very distinctive and unique color pattern, unmistakable in this character: the wide dorsolateral stripe is uniformly black without light spots and there is no ocelli on the upper surface of limbs; the third pair of submaxillary shields are separated by 4 granular scales; and the tympanic shield is rudimentary and almost absent. The new species is sympatric with *Eremias persica* and apparently restricted in distribution to the steppes and open plains in the northern regions of Fars province, south-central Iran.

Key words: *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, *E.* (*Eremias*) *persica*, Lacertidae, New species, Shiraz, Fars province, South-central Iran.

INTRODUCTION

The lacertid genus *Eremias* Fitzinger, 1834, encompasses about 32 species distributed throughout the desert and semi-desert regions from northern China, Mongolia, Korea, Central and southwest Asia to southeastern Europe. According to Anderson (in press), 14 species of the genus *Eremias* occur on the Iranian Plateau. These species mainly occur on the northern, central, and eastern parts of the Plateau. However, the knowledge of the Iranian Plateau *Eremias* is, to a great extent, anecdotal and there are still large gaps in available material from various parts of the Plateau. Szczerbak (1974) revised *Eremias* and distinguished two distinct genera based on several important morphological characters (see under *taxonomic account*).

In this paper we describe a new species of *Eremias* belonging to the typical subgenus from the steppes and open plains of Fars province, south-central Iran at about 1800 m elevation. This province is one of the largest provinces of Iran, extending in a northwest – southeast direction (Fig. 1) and a major part of it is occupied by the Zagros Mountains (in the west) as well as steppes and open plains (mainly in the central and eastern regions).

The type locality of *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis* (sp. nov.) is an open plain of silt and gravel with steppe and desert vegetation (e.g., *Artemisia*, *Astragalus*, and *Zygophyllum*), 150 km northeast of Shiraz (53°9′ E, 30°52′ N), Fars province, south-central Iran (Figs. 2 – 3).

[1] Department of Zoology, Göteborg University, Medicinaregatan 18, S-41390, Göteborg, Sweden.

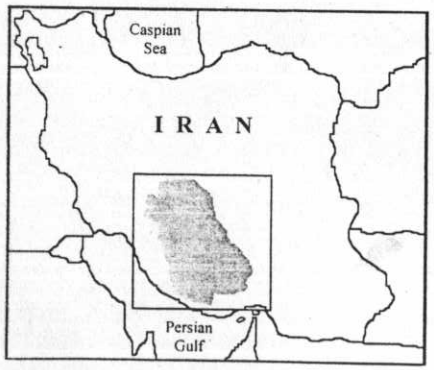

Fig. 1. Location of Fars province on the Iranian Plateau.

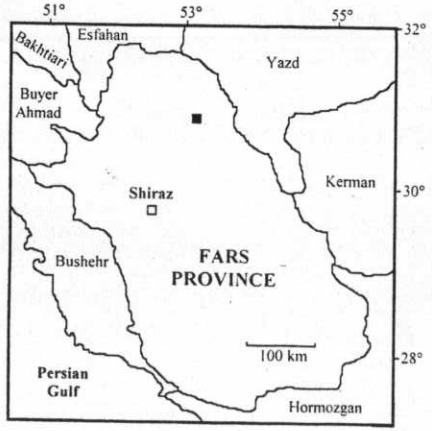

Fig. 2. Type locality of *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, 150 km northeast of Shiraz, Fars province, south-central Iran. (■) Type locality.

***Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis* sp. nov.**
(Figs. 4 – 8)

Holotype and type locality. An adult female, GNHM Re. ex. 5147, collected by the senior author on 16 August 1996, from 150 km northeast of Shiraz (53°9′ E, 30°52′ N), Fars province, south-central Iran, at about 1800 m elevation.

Paratypes. An adult male, GNHM Re. ex. 5148, other informations as for the holotype.

Diagnosis and comparison. A large-sized lacertid, maximum Snout-vent length (SVL) = 84 mm, tail length (TL) = 127 mm, with 14 – 17 longitudinal and 31 – 32 transverse rows of ventral plates, converging posteriorly; 64 – 69 scales across middle of dorsum.

A species belonging to the subgenus *Eremias* [subocular bordering mouth, only one frontonasal, two supraoculars, femoral pores separated by a very short space (Szczerbak, 1974)]. It differs from all other species of its relevant subgenus based on having

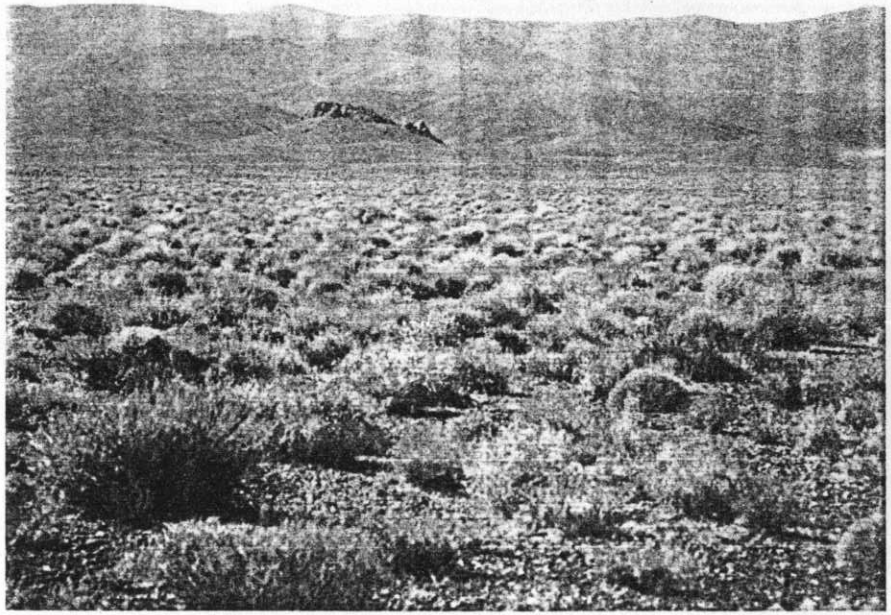

Fig. 3. Habitat of *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, an open plain with steppe vegetation (e.g., *Artemisia*, *Astragalus*, *Zygophyllum*, *Euphorbia*), 150 km northeast of Shiraz, Fars province, south-central Iran.

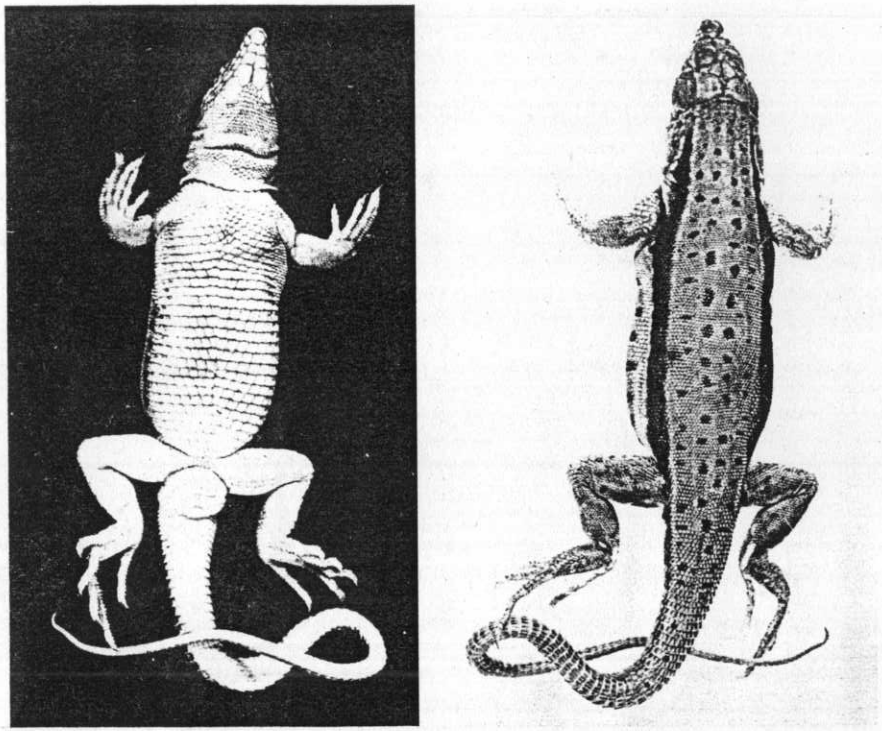

Fig. 4. *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, holotype. Dorsal view (right); Ventral view (left).

several species-specific characters; the color pattern is unique and it is easily distinguishable from all other species in this character, i.e. a wide and uniformly black dorsolateral stripe strongly in contrast with dorsum and lack of ocelli on the body and limbs; the third pair of submaxillary shields are separated by a series of 4 narrow granular scales; the tympanic shield is rudimentary and almost absent; the two series of femoral pores just fail to reach the knee.

Furthermore, it differs from each species of the typical subgenus in the following character combinations (Bischoff and Böhme, 1980; Böhme and Szczerbak, 1991; Szczerbak, 1974):

From *Eremias persica* Blanford, 1874, in separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by granular scales (100% versus 1.8%), in having a much smaller and rudimentary tympanic shield (100% versus 3%), higher count of gulars (41 – 42 vs. 28 – 38), numerous scales (more than 125) on each temporal region (100% vs. 14%), the absence of distinctly keeled upper caudal scales (100% vs. 75%), fail of femoral pores to reach the knee (100% vs. 9%), and distinct differences in color pattern.

From *E. velox* (Pallas, 1771) in a higher count of gulars (41 – 42 vs. 19 – 33), separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by granular scales (100% vs. 0%), rudimentary tympanic shield (100% vs. 3%), the absence of distinctly keeled upper caudal scales (100% vs. 0%), and in color pattern.

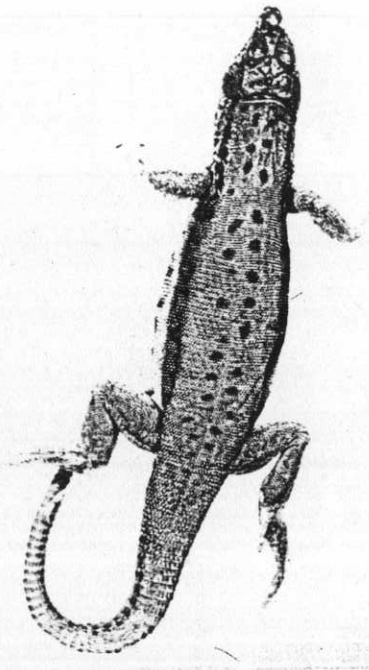

Fig. 5. *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, paratype.

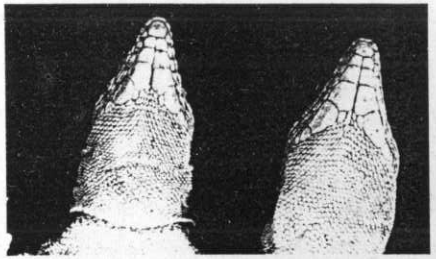

Fig. 6. *Eremias* (*Eremias*) *nigrolateralis*, the gular regions of holotype (left) and paratype (right). Note the separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by elongated granular scales.

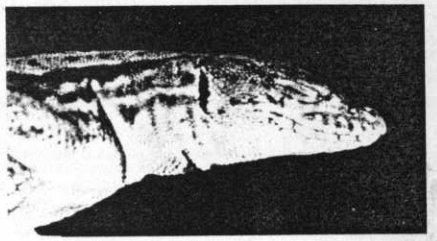

Fig. 7. *Eremias* (*Eremias*) nigrolateralis, side view of the holotype head. Note the rudimentary tympanic scale and numerous scalation of the temporal region.

From *E. strauchi* Kessler, 1878, in a higher number of gulars (41 – 42 vs. 21 – 33), the absence of distinctly keeled upper caudal scales (100% vs. almost 0%), separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by granular scales (100% vs. 2%), and in color pattern.

From *E. lalezharica* Moravec, 1994, in having five pairs of large submaxillary shields (instead of four), higher count of dorsals (64 – 69 vs. 54 – 59), no contact of gulars with the second pair of submaxillary shields, lack of a small scale between prefrontals, rudimentary tympanic shield, and distinct differences in color pattern.

From *E. afghanistanica* Böhme and Szczerbak, 1991, in a much higher count of dorsal scales (64 – 69 vs. 44 – 46), higher count of gulars (41 – 42 vs. 25 – 28), separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by 4 granular scales, and in color pattern.

From *E. nikolskii* Bedriaga, 1905, in a higher count of dorsals (64 – 69 vs. 45 – 59) and gulars (41 – 42 vs. 20 – 28), separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by granular scales, and in color pattern.

From *E. regeli* Bedriaga, 1905, in a higher count of dorsals (64 – 69 vs. 43 – 61) and gulars (41 – 42 vs. 14 – 24), higher number of scales in the 9th – 10th caudal annulus (29 – 31 vs. 17 – 25), the absence of distinctly keeled upper caudal scales (100% vs. 0%), separation of the third pair of submaxillary shields by granular scales (100% vs. 0%), and in color pattern.

Description of the holotype. An adult female preserved in 70% ethyl alcohol in good condition; body stout and distinctly depressed; a species of the subgenus *Eremias* (Szczerbak, 1974) sharing with the other species of this subgenus: subocular bordering the mouth, single frontonasal, two supraoculars, separation of the two series of femoral pores by a very