

## AFRO-ASIAN LIZARDS

**BELOW** | Busack's Fringe-toed Lizard (*Acanthodactylus busacki*) is an arid-habitat lizard occurring in Morocco and Western Sahara.

The Eremiadinae is primarily an African subfamily, with 15 of the 22 genera confined to the continent. However, the most widely distributed genus, *Eremias*, is absent from Africa, being distributed from the northern coast of the Black Sea, across Central Asia to the Korean Peninsula. It contains 40 species of Eurasian racerunners, alert, fast-moving, terrestrial lizards of arid habitats. The largest genus, with 44 species,

**ACONTINAE****DISTRIBUTION**

Africa, Iberia, Arabia, and Western, South, Central, and East Asia

**GENERA**

*Acanthodactylus*, *Adolfus*, *Atlantolacerta*, *Australolacerta*, *Congolacerta*, *Eremias*, *Gastropholis*, *Heliobolus*, *Holaspis*, *Ichnotropis*, *Latastia*, *Meroles*, *Mesalina*, *Nucras*, *Omanosaura*, *Ophisops*, *Pedioplanis*, *Philochortus*, *Paromera*,

*Pseuderemias*, *Tropidosaura*, and *Vhembelacerta*

**HABITATS**

Desert, semidesert, grassland, steppe, woodland, sand dunes, tropical forest, mountains, rocky outcrops, and coastal islands

**SIZE**

SVL 1½ in (35 mm) Elba Snake-eyed Lizard (*Ophisops elbaensis*) to 4¾ in (120 mm) Delalande's Sandveld Lizard (*Nucras lalandii*)



**ABOVE** | The Western Blue-tailed Gliding Lizard (*Holaspis guentheri*) is a brightly colored arboreal lizard that glides to safety when it feels threatened.

are the fringe-toed lizards (*Acanthodactylus*), occurring from North Africa to the Middle East and northwest India. They have fringes of scales along their toes to aid in running across loose sand dunes.

The Steppe Runner (*E. arguta*) occurs in Ukraine and Crimea, while the European Fringe-toed Lizard (*A. erythrurus*) inhabits Spain and Portugal. There is also a third European representative of this subfamily, the Elegant Snake-eyed Lizard (*Ophisops*

*elegans*), found in Turkey and Greece, which possesses snake-like spectacles over the eyes, in lieu of eyelids.

The sub-Saharan eremiadines contain some unusual species, including two species of blue-tailed gliding lizards (*Holaspis*). These unique and highly specialized lizards, which exhibit brilliant blue spots down their tails, can expand their ribs and leap into the air, gliding from branch to branch, or tree to ground, their landing being cushioned by the fusion of joints in the third and fourth fingers. Probably the most stunning African species is the vivid green, arboreal Green Keel-bellied Lizard (*Gastropholis prasina*), from coastal Kenya and Tanzania.

Most Eremiadinæ are oviparous, only *Eremias* containing any viviparous species, and some, such as the Common Rough-scaled Lizard (*Merops squamulosus*), are extremely short-lived, hatching, breeding, and dying inside a single year.

#### **ACTIVITY**

Terrestrial, arboreal, saxicolous, or semi-fossorial; diurnal and heliophilic

#### **REPRODUCTION**

Most genera and species are oviparous, producing leathery-shelled eggs, but *Eremias* also contains at least seven viviparous species

#### **DIET**

Invertebrates, including insects and spiders, although large species (*Gastropholis*) prey on smaller lizards