

Acanthodactylus taghitensis
GENIEZ & FOUCART, 1995

LC

Common names: Taghit Fringe-fingered Lizard (E), Acanthodactyle de Taghit (F), Lagartiya de Taghit (S).

Range: Algeria and Mauritania.

Distribution in Morocco: *Acanthodactylus taghitensis* has an allopatric distribution with respect to *A. aureus*. It has apparently never been recorded from Morocco with certainty. However, in April 2017, the species was observed in Mauritania between Fderik and Bir Moghreïn at four localities along the Moroccan border, the nearest ones within 5 kilometres of the border, in a habitat similar to that seen with binoculars on the other side. Based on this, the presence of the Taghit Fringe-fingered Lizard is highly likely in the Moroccan Atlantic Sahara.

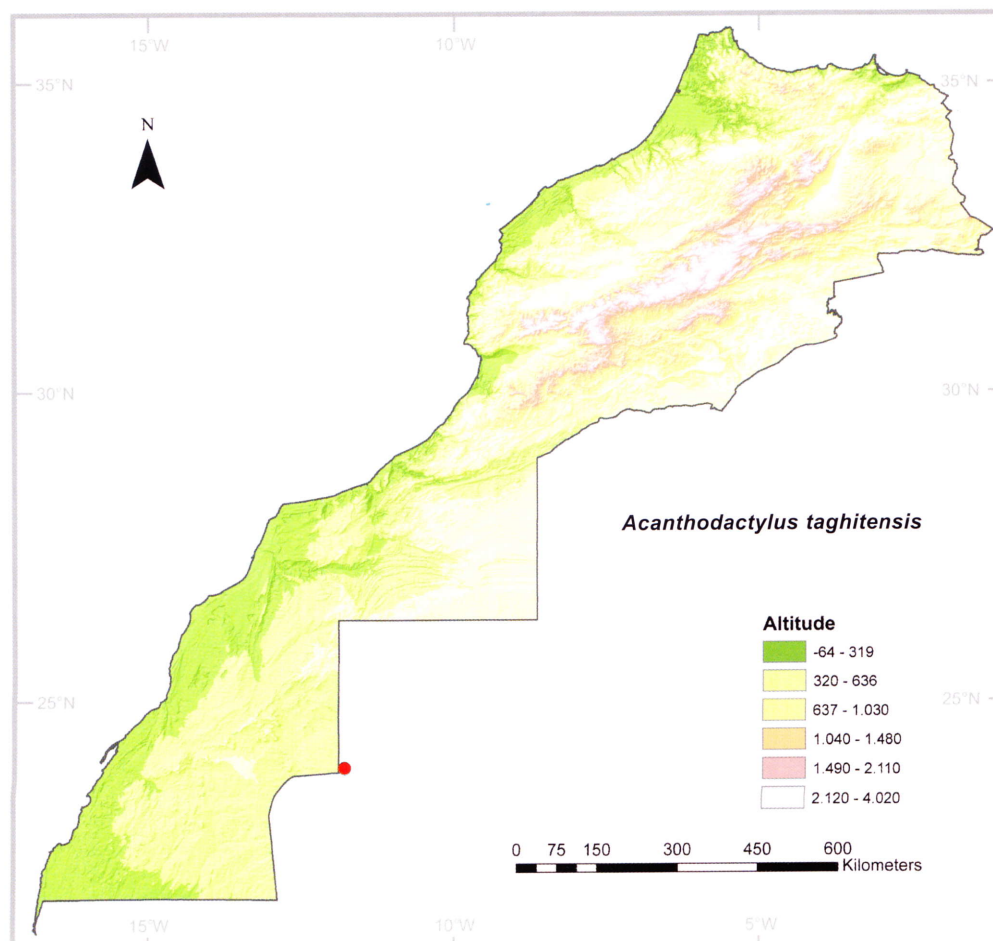
Altitude: About 220–250 m.

Identification: A medium-sized lizard (reaching 7 cm SVL and approximately 22 cm total length) strongly resembling *Acanthodactylus aureus*, especially by possessing greatly elongated 4th supralabials resulting from the fusion of the 4th and 5th ones, and the front slightly concave. Like in *A. aureus*, there are 4 or 6 interrupted lines of whitish dashes superimposed on the longitudinal



Fig. 478: *Acanthodactylus taghitensis*, male. Northeast of Fderik, 5 km from the Atlantic Sahara border, Mauritania. P. GENIEZ

dark dorsal stripes. This pattern disappears in old individuals and is replaced by reddish brown reticulation or isolated dots. The snout is a little less pointed than in *A. aureus*. Unlike in the latter species, the dorsal scales are enlarged and strongly carinated, twice as big on the back as on the flanks, with an abrupt transition between the large dorsal scales and the small flank scales. The juvenile pattern of *A. taghitensis* is still unknown.





Figs. 479–480: Male *Acanthodactylus taghitensis* from northeast of Fderik, 5 km from the Atlantic Sahara border, Mauritania.

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Habitat: *Acanthodactylus taghitensis* appears to be the least sand-dwelling member of the *A. scutellatus* group. It has been found on hard soils with coarse sand forming small mounds. In such cases, *A. taghitensis* may be sympatric with *A. dumerilii*. In larger dunes, *A. taghitensis* seems to be completely replaced by *A. dumerilii* or *A. longipes*.

Biology: A rarely observed diurnal species known from about 15 localities. At each of these, most often only one specimen was seen. During a trip to Mauritania in April 2017, we (Pierre-André CROCHET, Olivier PEYRE and Philippe GENIEZ) counted 19 *A. dumerilii*, 15 *A. boskianus*, 3 *A. longipes* and 4 *A. taghitensis* along the Moroccan Atlantic Sahara border between Choum and Bir Moghreïn.

Remarks: *Acanthodactylus taghitensis* is the sister species of *A. aureus*. However, while the two species were thought to be closely related, they are genetically very different, with a divergence time estimated at 10 million years (TAMAR *et al.* 2016).



Fig. 481: *Acanthochelys taghitensis*, close-up of dorsal scales. 100 km southwest of Bir Moghreïn, Mauritania. P. GENIEZ



Fig. 482: *Atlantolacerta adreanskyi*, female of the “*adreanskyi*” clade. Oukaimeden.

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