

Mesalina simoni (BOETTGER, 1881)

LC

Common names: Simon's Small Lizard (E), Erémiás de Simon (F), Mesalina de Simon (S).

Range: Endemic to Morocco.

Distribution in Morocco: Steppic vegetation in the Atlantic region from the western High Atlas to the coastal plains, southwards to Paradis Plage (15 km northwest of Agadir; Philippe GENIEZ), northwards to Ben Slimane (Jacques BONS) and eastwards to Sidi Daoui (6 km northwest of Oued Zem; Pascal ESCUDIÉ), from the lowlands to over 1,100 m a. s. l. (Oued Ourika Valley; Philippe ROUX). Apparently allopatric with *M. olivieri*.

Altitude: 0–1,020 m.

Identification: A small lizard, up to about 50 mm SVL. Very similar to *Mesalina olivieri* from which it can be distinguished by the weakly marked longitudinal dorsal stripes, usually strongly pigmented (in adult males dark grey) ventral and gular scales, a palpebral disc with 7–8 scales that are opaque or translucent and never bordered with black. The base of the tail is thick in males.

Habitat: Arid, rocky plateaus with sparse vegetation.



Fig. 512: Portrait of a male *Mesalina simoni*. 10 km past Chichaoua towards Marrakech. P. GENIEZ

Biology: Likely similar to that of *M. olivieri*, although exact data on the biology of this species are lacking.

Remarks: Initially considered a subspecies of *Mesalina olivieri* but later given species rank based on morphological differences. A recent genetic study suggests that *M. simoni* falls in a clade also comprising several populations previously assigned to *M. olivieri*, outside of the known range of *M. simoni* (KAPLI *et al.* 2015). Therefore, *M. simoni* seems to be not endemic to the plateau north of the High Atlas but occurs also in southeastern Morocco (regions of Goulmima and Bouarfa).

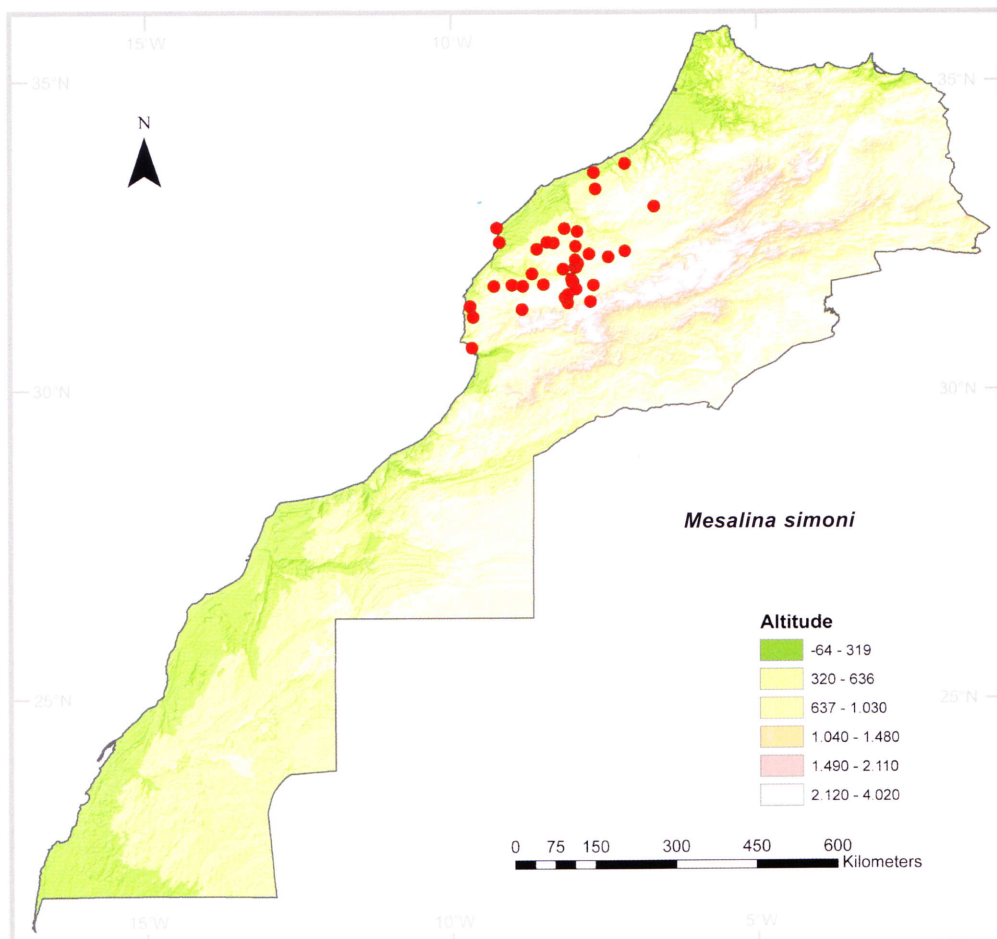




Fig. 513: *Mesalina simoni*, male. 10 km past Chichaoua towards Marrakech.

P. GENIEZ



Fig. 514: *Mesalina simoni*, female. Between Marrakech and Essaouira.

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