

*Acanthodactylus schmidti* HAAS, 1957  
Schmidt's Fringe-toed Lizard

### Synonymy

*Acanthodactylus cantoris schmidti* HAAS, 1957

*Acanthodactylus schmidti* – SALVADOR, 1982

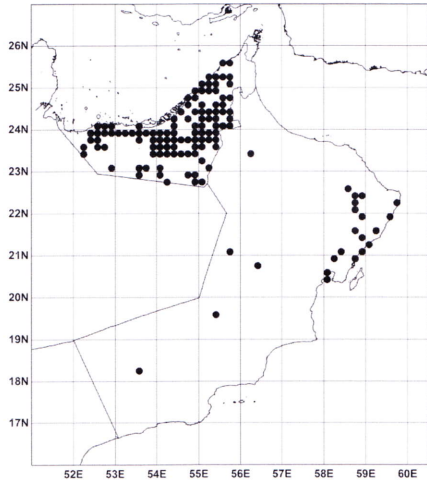
**Range.** Arabian Peninsula including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen, and northwards to Jordan, south-eastern Iraq and south-western Iran. Absent from Bahrain.

**Size.** Up to about 65 mm SVL in this region. Some more northerly Arabian populations are considerably larger, reaching 105 mm.

**Identification.** A medium to smallish fringe-toed lizard, characteristically without a longitudinally striped dorsal pattern, even as a juvenile. The general form is fairly robust, with moderately pointed snout and relatively large ear openings. One row of granules between supraoculars and superciliaries. There are four longitudinal rows of scales along the third and fourth fingers. Pectination on toes strong. Subocular separated from lip. Five upper labials anterior to subocular. Eyelids pectinate. Temporals sharply keeled. Dorsal scales keeled and imbricate posteriorly, 33–51 at mid-body. 13 to 18 ventral scale rows at mid-body. Dorso-lateral body scales in front of hindlegs usually enlarged.

Dorsum ground-colour light brown to grey, spotted with small cream spots which are larger on the flanks. The spotting extends onto the limbs and tail. This spotting occurs on hatchlings, juveniles and adults, with no longitudinal striping. In large adults the spotting may become indistinct. Adults have dark markings on the face. The tail in juveniles is blue or blue-green. Ventral surface cream or white.

**Biology.** A diurnal, sand-dwelling lacertid. These lizards typically have a bimodal activity pattern, in the morning and late afternoon. They may be seen throughout the year. They hunt for insects (particularly beetles, ants and flies) and other invertebrate prey using both passive and active techniques. Small geckos and other lizards may also be taken. During active hunting, they move jerkily, frequently touching the sand sur-





Figs. 225–226: *Acanthodactylus schmidti* near Dubai, UAE.

face with the snout, or chase prey spotted from a distance. While walking, the head is held high and the pelvis low to the sand surface. In passive hunting they tend to use a shaded ambush location.

Burrows are dug within or at the base of small shrubs, and animals are quick to run and take refuge down a burrow when threatened. On hot sand, they raise the toes off the surface, and may alternately lift limbs to reduce the heat intake. Breeding activity takes place from January to May, but particularly in spring. The clutch size is not known but appears to be small (one or two), although apparently larger (three to four) further north in Arabia. Females probably lay multiple clutches.

**Habitat.** Aeolian sands, including areas of sandsheets, plains and dunes.

**Distribution.** Widespread in almost all sandy areas of the UAE from western Abu Dhabi to Ras al Khaimah. In Oman it occurs in the sandy areas fringing the Rubh al Khali from the UAE border to Dhofar, as well as in the Wahiba Sands and adjacent sandy areas.

**Pertinent references.** AL-JOHANY & SPELLERBERG 1988, AL-SADOON & ABDO 1991, ARNOLD 1983, 1984, HAAS 1957, ROSS 1989a, SALVADOR 1982.



Fig. 227: *Acanthodactylus schmidti* male, Wahiba Sands, Sharqiyah, Oman.

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Fig. 228: *Mesalina adramitana* near Dubai, UAE.