



Fig. 146: *Ophisops elegans*, Samaria.

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Ophisops elegans MÉNÉTRIÉS, 1832

Snake-eyed lizard

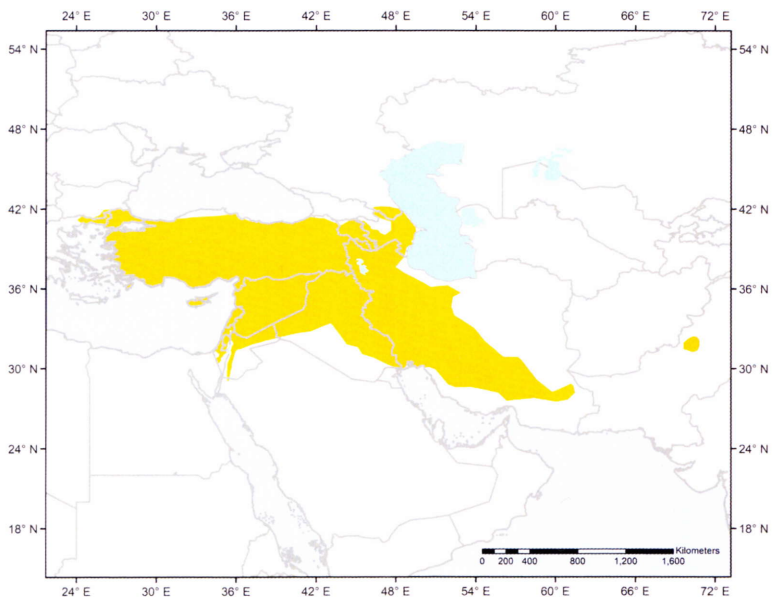
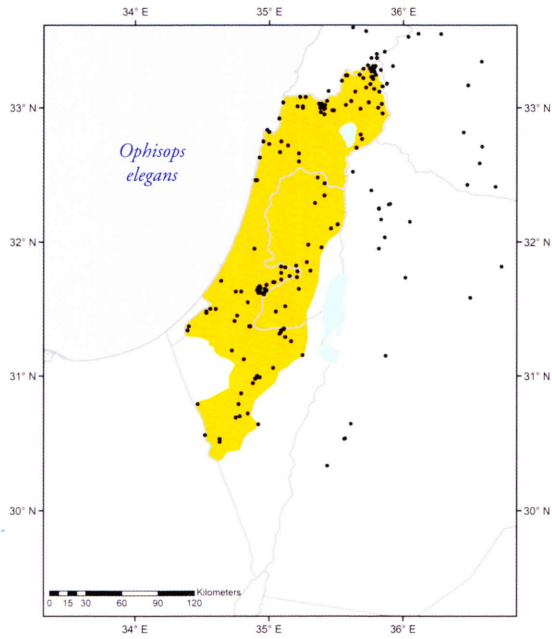
Hebrew name: *Ein Nahash Adina* ("fragile snake-eyed")

Recent taxonomic changes: None.

Size: Up to 195 mm total length, SVL 21–60 mm; weight 0.1–4.5 g. Males and females attain similar dimensions.

Description: The body is brown, with four light stripes along the back and sides. Two stripes extend from the head to the tail, the other two from the ear openings to the hind legs. Between the stripes are rows of dark spots, sometimes merging to form dark stripes. Young individuals exhibit alternating yellow and black stripes. The skin texture is rough. A key characteristic is this species' inability to move its eyelids, which are fused open, similarly to snakes, hence the name. The ear openings are large. The tail is detachable.

Similar species: *Acanthodactylus boskianus* (p. 161). Juvenile *A. boskianus* can be confused with *O. elegans* due to the colored dorsal stripes.



Natural history and behavior: A delicate lizard that is found in high densities in areas rich in low vegetation. Activity is diurnal and takes place on the ground, mostly during the morning and early evening. When not active, it hides in burrows at the base of shrubs. Its diet consists of small arthropods. Females deposit 1–4 clutches of 1–8 eggs, beginning in the early spring, and active young are seen as early as June.

Distribution in Israel: Found in Mediterranean habitats in Israel, and also penetrates desert habitats in the Negev Mountains.

World distribution: From Pakistan (one record, not shown on the map) and Iran in the east through the Caucasus to Turkey, extreme northwestern Greece, southeastern Bulgaria, Cyprus, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, northwestern Saudi Arabia, and Israel. We follow several authors in ascribing isolated populations in northern Egypt, Libya, and Algeria to *Ophisops occidentalis*.

Conservation: IUCN Status: In Israel: Least Concern; Global: Not Evaluated. This species has a large global range, most of it in desert and semi-desert areas with potentially relatively little disturbance. In Israel, it is especially abundant in the Mediterranean region, where it probably suffers from habitat loss and degradation because of urbanization and population growth, etc. However, given its large range in Israel it is probably relatively safer than other strictly Mediterranean species.



Fig. 147: *Ophisops elegans*, Golan Heights.

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