

Acanthodactylus aegyptius BAHÁ EL DÍN, 2007
Egyptian fringe-fingered lizard

Hebrew name: *Shnunit Mitzrit* (“Egyptian fringe-fingered lizard”). Because the species was only distinguished from *A. longipes* in 2007 (see below) the official Hebrew name endorsed by the Academy for the Hebrew Language is still *Shnunit Arukat Kaf* (“long-footed fringe-fingered lizard”).

Recent taxonomic changes: The Egyptian fringe-fingered lizard was not recognized as a distinct species in Israel until the end of the 20th century. Until then, individuals were considered juveniles of the Nidua fringe-fingered lizard (*Acanthodactylus scutellatus*). It was then identified as the long fringe-fingered lizard (*A. longipes*) until that species was found to be restricted to west of the Nile, and *Acanthodactylus aegyptius* was described in 2007.

Size: Up to 160 mm total length, SVL 23–50 mm; weight 0.4–4.1 g.

Description: A delicate fringe-fingered lizard. The tail is detachable and twice as long as the body, and there is a Y-shaped spot on the upper side of its base. In juveniles the tail is yellow. The males attain larger dimensions than the females.

Similar species: *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* (p. 168) is very similar but does not have a Y-shaped patch at the base of the tail, and during the cold hours of the day, adults of *A. scutellatus* have black dots on the back. Besides, young of this species have a bluish tail (juveniles of *A. aegyptius* have yellow tails). *Acanthodactylus scutellatus* is larger and more robust but young animals are very similar to *A. aegyptius*.



Fig. 121: *Acanthodactylus aegyptius*, northern Negev.

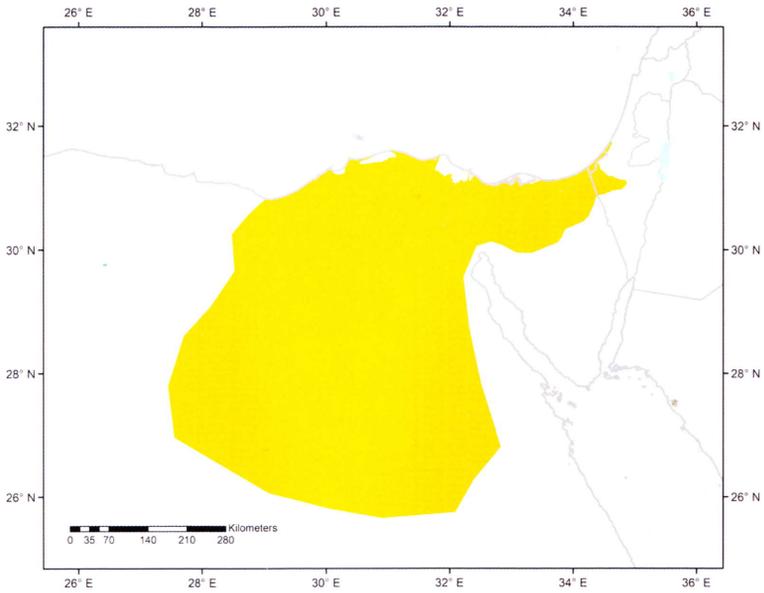
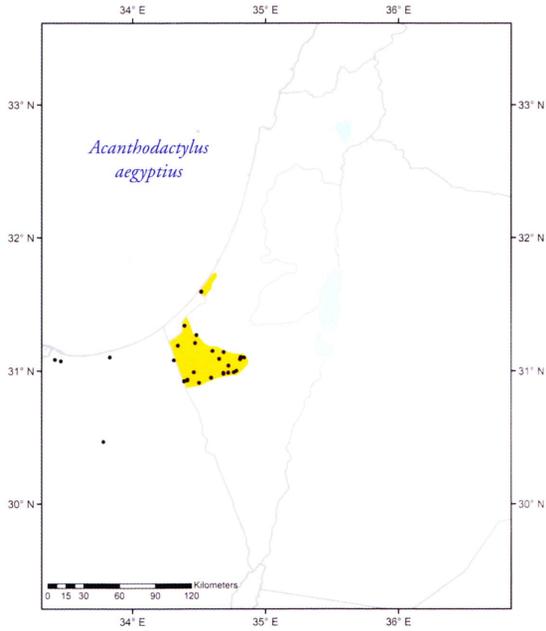




Fig. 122: *Acanthodactylus aegyptius*, northern Negev.

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Natural history and behavior: Characteristic of shifting and semi-stabilized sands. It is a diurnal heliotherm. Activity takes place on the ground during the morning and early evening. There is a partial temporal and spatial separation between it and the *Nidua* fringe-fingered lizard: the former is usually active during hotter hours than the latter and favors open sandy areas with little vegetation. Its diet consists of small arthropods. The female lays eggs around May–July in a nest that it digs. Each season two or three clutches are laid, each comprising 1–3 eggs. The first young may appear as early as June. Most individuals survive only a single breeding season.

Distribution in Israel: Northwestern Negev dunes and the southern parts of the Mediterranean coastal plain to about Ashqelon.

World distribution: Egypt east of the Nile and Israel.

Conservation: IUCN Status: In Israel: Vulnerable (B) (as *A. longipes*); Global: Non-Evaluated. Like most *Acanthodactylus* species, *A. aegyptius* is abundant and conspicuous in the regions it inhabits. However, it is endemic to sands and thus, at least in Israel, has a highly threatened habitat that suffers from myriad threats, including habitat loss to agriculture, solar farms, sand mining, etc. as well as off-road activity, making it highly threatened overall.