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A new species of the genus *Tropiocolotes* Peters, 1880 from western Iran (Squamata: Sauria: Gekkonidae)

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Abstract

The genus *Tropiocolotes* comprises small, naked toed, ground dwelling and nocturnal desert geckos, ranging from Morocco and Mauritania in northern Africa to south and central Arabia as well as coastal Iran. Herein, we describe a new species of the genus *Tropiocolotes* from western Iran based on five specimens from Nayband region. This new taxon is described with a statistical approach based on 34 meristic, metric and qualitative morphological characters of more than 300 individuals of related species.

Key words: *Tropiocolotes naybandensis* sp. nov., Nayband, Iran

Introduction

The genus *Tropiocolotes* Peters comprises a group of small (rarely exceeding 35 mm snout-vent-length), ground dwelling and nocturnal desert geckos with naked toes. The biogeography of this genus follows a Saharo-Arabian pattern, ranging from Morocco and Mauritania to south and central Arabia. Wilms *et al.* (2010) pointed out that the generic composition of these diminutive desert geckos is still under discussion and preferred the more inclusive interpretation of *Tropiocolotes* by using the name in the broader sense encompassing also the taxa of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Anderson (1961, 1999), Frynta *et al.* (1997) and Torki (2007, 2010) also interpreted *Tropiocolotes* in a wider sense, while others assigned the taxa of the eastern part of the distribution area to *Microgecko* Nikolsky and/or *Asiocolotes* Golubev on a generic (Kluge 1983, Kluge 1991, Gamble *et al.* 2012) or subgeneric level (Golubev 1984, Šzčerbak & Golubev 1996). Sindaco & Jeremčenco (2008) even dissolved the taxon *Asiocolotes* and assigned *T. depressus* Minton & Anderson to *Microgecko* and *T. levitoni* Golubev & Šzčerbak to the genus *Altiphylax* Yermoltschenko & Šzčerbak. These taxonomic changes are supported by the molecular data of Bauer *et al.* (2013).

New molecular data (Fujita & Papenfuss 2011, Metallinou *et al.* 2013) showed a close relationship among *Tropiocolotes*, *Stenodactylus* Fitzinger and *Pseudoceramodactylus* Haas. This Saharo-Arabian *Stenodactylus* / *Tropiocolotes* / *Pseudoceramodactylus* clade was verified by Bauer *et al.* (2013). It was shown that *Altiphylax* and *Microgecko* are only distantly related to *Tropiocolotes* (Gamble *et al.* 2012, Bauer *et al.* 2013) and *Asiocolotes* is considered to be a junior synonym of *Altiphylax* (Bauer *et al.* 2013).

Based on the taxonomic changes outlined above, the following ten species are currently assigned to *Tropiocolotes*: *T. algericus* Loveridge; *T. bisharicus* Baha el Din; *T. nattereri* Steindachner; *T. nubicus* Baha el Din; *T. occidentalis* Parker; *T. scortecii* Cherchi & Spano; *T. somalicus* Parker; *T. steudneri* (Peters); *T. tripolitanus*