

# On the type locality and North-east African distribution of *Latastia l. longicaudata* (REUSS, 1834) (Squamata: Lacertidae)

Zur Typuslokalität von *Latastia l. longicaudata* (REUSS, 1834)  
und Verbreitung der Art im nordöstlichen Afrika  
(Squamata: Lacertidae)

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## KURZFASSUNG

Das Typenmaterial von *Latastia l. longicaudata* (REUSS, 1834) stammt höchst wahrscheinlich aus der Umgebung von Mitsiwa in Eritrea. Die Verbreitungsgrenze von *L. longicaudata* im nordöstlichen Afrika wird diskutiert. Bislang fehlen Nachweise dieser Echse aus Gebieten nördlich des Jabal Elba im äußersten Südosten von Ägypten.

## SUMMARY

The type material of *Latastia l. longicaudata* (REUSS, 1834) most probably originates from the vicinity of Mitsiwa in Eritrea. The distribution limit of *L. longicaudata* in north-eastern Africa is discussed. So far, this lizard has not been recorded from north of Jabal Elba in extreme south-eastern Egypt.

## KEY WORDS

Reptilia: Squamata: Lacertidae: *Latastia l. longicaudata*, type locality, distribution, Eritrea, Egypt, Jabal Elba

## INTRODUCTION

Lacertids of the genus *Latastia* BÉDRAGA, 1884 are found from subsaharan Africa south to Zimbabwe and Mozambique (*L. johnstoni* BOULENGER, 1907), and in Yemen (*L. longicaudata andersonii* BOULENGER, 1921). The distribution of the most widespread species, *Latastia longicaudata*

(REUSS, 1834), extends from Senegal to the Red Sea area, and south to central Tanzania (BROADLEY & HOWELL 1991). However, the reported type locality is situated on the Sinai Peninsula, outside the known range of the species.

## TYPE LOCALITY

*Latastia longicaudata* was described on the basis of an adult specimen originally stated to come from the vicinity of "Tor im peträischen Arabien" at 28°13'N / 33°37'E (Sinai Peninsula) and three juveniles collected in "Abyssinien" (REUSS 1834a). BOETTGER (1893) erroneously reported the type series deposited in the Senckenberg Museum, Frankfurt (SMF), to consist of four adult specimens from "Arabien".

MERTENS (1967) designated the adult male (SMF 13601) from "Tor" as lectotype. Information regarding the date of its acquisition is contradictory. According to REUSS (1834a), this specimen was collected dur-

ing RÜPPELL's first expedition to the Red Sea region in 1826 and 1827 ("von seiner ersten Reise ins nördliche Afrika .... überschickt"). MERTENS (1922) indicated 1826 as year of registration of the lectotype, but later stated that it was received in 1832 (MERTENS 1967).

Probably, the whole type series was obtained between September 1831 and April 1832, i.e., during RÜPPELL's second expedition to the Red Sea region. Definitely, the paralectotypes were sent to Europe from Alexandria by his servant, the game hunter MARTIN BRETZKA, together with other natural history items collected prior

to RÜPPELL's setting out for the interior of Ethiopia in 1832 (see MERTENS 1949). This shipment arrived at Frankfurt on Main in October 1832 (SÖMMERRING in RÜPPELL 1834b).

MERTENS (1922) questioned the reported Arabian origin of the lectotype. Considering the distribution of the species (see below) and RÜPPELL's itinerary, the type locality of *L. l. longicaudata* is most likely situated in Eritrea as stated by SCHMIDT & MARX (1957: "Ethiopia") and MERTENS (1967: "wahrscheinlich Abessinien").

### DISTRIBUTION IN NORTH-EAST AFRICA

Based on the reported origin of the lectotype, various authors (e.g., ANDERSON 1896, 1898; BOULENGER 1921; PARKER 1942; ARILLO et al. 1967; LANZA 1990; BISCHOFF 1991) considered the Sinai Peninsula to be part of the range of *L. longicaudata* (SCHÄTTI & DESVOIGNES 1999: footnote 35).

ANDERSON (1898) noted that the species "has never been recorded from Asia since REUSS's day". WERNER (1982: 157) stated that records of *L. longicaudata* from Sinai are either "erroneous" or based on "introduced" specimens. ARNOLD (1989) did not include the Sinai Peninsula as part of the range of this species.

Following a brief statement in BOULENGER (1921) concerning the occurrence of the "forma typica" on the "African Coast of the Red Sea", ARILLO et al. (1967) reported that the distribution of *L. longicaudata* includes the Red Sea littoral in Egypt ("la zona costiera dell'Egitto" and "tutta la costa africana del Mar Rosso", respec-

To conclude from the available evidence, RÜPPELL and his companions presumably collected the lectotype at or near Mitsiwa (Massawa). Most probably, it was dispatched together with the juvenile type specimens which completely agree with the lectotype ("welche Beschreibung vollkommen bestätigen", REUSS 1834a). Therefore, I rectify the obviously wrong type locality of the lectotype ("Tor im peträischen Arabien") and designate the vicinity of Mitsiwa, Eritrea as terra typica of *Latastia l. longicaudata* (REUSS, 1834).

tively). BISCHOFF (1991) noted "Ägypten" as part of the range of the species. However, published records appear to be restricted to extreme south-eastern Egypt, i.e., around Marsa Halaib (22°13'N / 36°38'E) and from "2 ½ miles north of Bir Kansisrob", a well at 22°15'N / 36°22'E (STEINDACHNER 1900; SCHMIDT & MARX 1957).

*Latastia longicaudata* is well documented from the Red Sea littoral of Sudan (e.g., ANDERSON 1896, 1898; WERNER 1907; BOULENGER 1921; ARILLO et al. 1967) but it seems that the species has never been reported from coastal Egypt north of the Jabal Elba area (Bir Kansisrob). This may also be the northern distribution limit of African populations of the Semaphore Gecko *Pristurus flavipunctatus* RÜPPELL, 1835. Noteworthy, published records of the lacertid *Ophisops elbaensis* SCHMIDT & MARX, 1957 are restricted to the Jabal Elba range (type locality: Wadi Kansisrob, c. 4000 feet a.s.l.) and south-western Arabia (SCHÄTTI & GASPERETTI 1994).

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Zeitschrift/Journal: [Herpetozoa](#)

Jahr/Year: 2001

Band/Volume: [14\\_1\\_2](#)

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Artikel/Article: [On the type locality and North-east African distribution of \*Latastia l. longicaudata\* \(Reuss, 1834\) \(Squamata: Lacertidae\). 5-7](#)