Additions to the herpetofauna of the Wadi Wurayah National Park, Fujairah

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Situated in the Emirate of Fujairah, Wadi Wurayah lies within a priority WWF Global 200 Ecoregion (Ecoregion 127, Arabian Highlands and Shrublands). On account of its rich diversity of rare and endangered mountainous and freshwater habitats and species it was granted protection on March 15th, 2009, following the issuance of Law No. 2 of 2009 by His Highness Hamad bin Mohammad Al Sharqi, the Ruler of Fujairah. The safeguarded area covers a total of 219 km², comprising a core zone of 118 km², a buffer zone of 92 km², and an ecotourism zone of 9 km² and reaches an elevation of 1080 m a.s.l. In January 2013, Fujairah Municipality and Emirates Wildlife Society–World Wide Fund for Nature signed a three-year agreement to transform the newly created preserve into a national park of outstanding importance, the Wadi Wurayah National Park (WWNP; Tourenq et al. 2009, Judas 2016). Due to these developments the WWNP received considerable attention from conservationists. Tourenq et al. (2009) recorded nine reptile species—*Pseudotrapelus sinaitus* (all UAE populations are now allocated to *P. jensvindumi*, see Tamar et al. 2016), *Pristurus celerimus*, *Pristurus rupestris*, *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii*, *Bunopus spatulurus* (ssp. *hajarensis*), *Omanosaura cyanura*, *Omanosaura jayakari*, *Platyceps rhodorachis*, and *Echis omanensis*—from the WWNP but failed to confirm the occurrences of three species—*Hemidactylus* sp. (later identified as *H. flaviventris*), *Psammophis schokari*, and *Echis carinatus* (ssp. *sochureki*)—previously documented from the area (WWF United Arab Emirates Project Office 2006). Since then, following the discoveries of *Asaccus gallagheri* (Pierson 2014), *Mesalina adramitana*, *Chalcides ocellatus* (ssp. *ocellatus*), and *Trachylepis tessellata* (Judas 2016), the total number of reptile species raised to 15, with nine being endemic to the Hajar Mountains. We here wish to report the presence of yet another lizard and a snake species as well as to correct the taxonomic assignment of fan-footed geckos inhabiting the WWNP.

*Asaccus caudivolvulus* Arnold & Gardner, 1984

Mandalum leaf-toed gecko

One specimen photographed on November 6th, 2017 at 19:16 hrs., 25°23.845’ N, 56°16.184’ E, at ± 195 m altitude (Figure 1) and another on December 12th, 2017 at 18:46 hrs. on boulders in the vicinity of the celebrated freshwater pools, 25°23.847’ N, 56°16.186’ E, at ± 190 m a.s.l. Unfortunately, our permit did not allow the actual capture of individuals and we were thus not able to take measurements and count scales of either lizard. However, *A. caudivolvulus* is easily distinguished from *A. gallagheri*

Figure 1. Photographic voucher specimen of *Asaccus caudivolvulus* from the Wadi Wurayah National Park (photo by Valér Farkas).

Figure 2. An *Asaccus gallagheri* encountered close to the entrance gate of the WWNP in 2016 (photo by Balázs Buzás).
(Figure 2) by having enlarged tubercles on the back extending to the upper arms, clearly visible in our photo as small white dots (Gardner 2013). In comparison, both microendemic species—*A. gardneri* and *A. margaritae*—recently split off from *A. caudivolulus* chiefly on the basis of molecular data have smooth brachia (Carranza et al. 2016). Even though it may be locally abundant within its restricted coastal range, urban development seriously threatens the continued existence of *A. caudivolulus* (Carranza et al. 2016). Gardner (2013) recorded it from “the rocky wadis draining west into the Gulf, around Khasab; Harf, Khawr Niad, Jiddat Sahasa, Rawdah, Wadi Bih, Wadi Khabb Shamsi, Tayibah, Wadi Uuyaynah, Khabb, Wadi al Qulaydi, and in the isolated rocky headland of Jebel Ras south of Khawr Fakkan.” Meanwhile, the Wadi al Helo (Sharjah) population has been shown to represent a distinct species, *A. margaritae*, whereas the Musandam Peninsula as a whole is believed to be occupied by *A. gardneri* (Carranza et al. 2016). *Asaccus caudivolulus* occurs in sympatry with a fan-footed gecko of dubious identity within the limits of the WWNP (see below).

**Ptyodactylus orlovi**

_Nazarov, Melnikov & Melnikova, 2013_

Orlov’s fan-footed gecko, وزغة أورولف مروحية الأقدام

One specimen photographed on November 6th, 2017 at 19:45 hrs and a second one on December 12th, 2017 at 18:07 hrs on rock slabs, 25°24’ N, 56°16’ E, at ± 180 m a.s.l., at a few metres’ distance from the spots where our *Asaccus caudivolulus* were located. Whilst we were regrettably not permitted to manipulate and thoroughly examine them, our images reveal these lizards to have had non-contrasting head patterns, which challenges their identification as *P. hasselquistii* (Figures 3–4). Alas, the low resolution of our digital pictures makes a detailed comparison with the two species consistent with this feature—*P. orlovi* and *P. ruusaljibalicus*—impossible. However, while *P. ruusaljibalicus* seems to be restricted to the Dibba region of Fujairah (Simó-Rudalbas et al. 2017), *P. orlovi* is known from numerous locations in the Hajar Mountains between the Masafi/Dibba Depression (UAE) and Al Ashkarah (Oman) so we tentatively reassign the WWNP fan-footed geckos to the latter taxon.

**Telescopus dhara dhara** (Forsskål, 1775)

_Arabian cat snake, حية القطط العربية_

One specimen photographed in rocky terrain close to the entrance gate of the WWNP on December 12th, 2017 at 19:42 hrs, 25°23.335’ N, 56°18.659’ E, at ± 80 m a.s.l. (Figure 5). According to Gardner (2013), this unmistakable opisthoglyphous colubrid snake has a large distribution range stretching along “the peripheral mountains of Arabia, from the Gulf of Aqaba, southwards through the Hijaz to the Yemen mountains [and] the mountainous and rocky areas of Oman,” with scattered records from “northern central Arabia including the Riyadh area.” Within UAE territory, the species has been found at Ain al Ghamour and Al Aqah (both in Fujairah), as well as in Wadi al Helo and Kalba (both in Sharjah; Gardner et al. 2009, Gardner 2013). Unfortunately, we were not allowed to handle and examine this individual in greater detail either but its general appearance matched that of a Jiddat as Sahasa (Musandam Governorate, Oman) conspecific figured by Gardner et al. (2009).

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Figure 4. The second individual of Ptyodactylus orlovi clinging to an overhanging rock surface (photo by Balázs Buzás).

Figure 5. Photographic voucher specimen of Telescopus d. dhara from the WWNP (photo by Balázs Buzás).


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