

***Ophisops elbaensis* Schmidt and Marx 1957 Mount Elba
Snake-eyed Lizard (Figs. 61 and 62)**

Ophisops elbaensis Schmidt and Marx 1957: 20. Type locality: Wadi Kansisrob, Gebel Elba, Egypt. Holotype: FMNH 73601.

Ophisops elbaensis Marx 1968, Saleh 1997

Arabic: *sahliya 'ilba thu'baniyat al-'ayn*



Mount Elba Snake-eyed Lizard
(*Ophisops elbaensis*)

Taxonomy: *Ophisops elbaensis* was thought to be endemic to Gebel Elba; however, the species was found in several localities in southwest Arabia in Yemen and Saudi Arabia (Schätti 1989, Schätti and Gasperetti 1994).

Diagnosis: A small slender lizard, maximum SVL 35 mm. Tail proportionately long, average tail/SVL ratio = 2.7 (n=2). Supraciliaries in contact with

supraoculars; tympanum exposed, tympanic shield small; supratemporals small, not distinct from other temporals; occipital and interparietal large and in contact. Dorsals large (17–19) imbricate, strongly keeled; 6 ventrals; 9–10 femoral pores (based on 3 Egyptian specimens). Dorsal pattern striking, composed of black and buff stripes; color and pattern has the same intensity and contrast along the entire back; head and tail olive-brown; limbs pinkish brown with dark marbling; venter grayish white.

Variation: Male slightly larger than female with more contrasting colors and a small reddish patch under the axilla. Schätti and Gasperetti (1994) depict an animal from southwest Arabia with an extensive bright red patch on the ventral side of the neck and throat.

Habitat and ecology: On Gebel Elba the species is found on the middle altitudes of the mountain, above 400 m. It inhabits well-vegetated microhabitats, strewn with boulders and rocks. Climbs readily into vegetation and on rocks. Very active but secretive.

Range: Known from southeast Egypt and southwest Arabia north to about 21°N. It almost certainly occurs south through eastern Sudan, Eritrea, and possibly Djibouti.

Distribution in Egypt: Known only from Gebel Elba. Specimens have been collected from Wadi Kansisrob (Type), Wadi Akau, Wadi Akwamtra, and Wadi Aideib.

Status and conservation needs: Uncommon and localized. All the Egyptian population falls within the Elba Protected Area. In Egypt it is Near Threatened. Classified as Data Deficient by IUCN (2005).