

A new species of Semaphore gecko *Pristurus* (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Mauretania, represents a 4700km range extension for genus

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Abstract

A new Semaphore gecko, *Pristurus adrarensis*, is described from the Adrar Atar region of central Mauritania. It is most closely related to the geographically nearest member of the genus, *P. flavipunctatus* of northeast Africa and southwest Arabia. *P. adrarensis* shows an 18% divergence from this species in mitochondrial DNA (cytochrome b) and also differs in being smaller, more depressed and more slender, with the dorsal crest of enlarged scales on the tail not extending forwards beyond the vent. The localities of the new species lie 4700km west of the previously known distribution of *Pristurus* and the phylogenetic topology of the genus indicates that it represents a westward range extension. The degree of genetic divergence suggests *P. adrarensis* separated from *P. flavipunctatus* as much as seven million years ago.

Key words: *Pristurus*, Semaphore gecko, Gekkonidae, range extension, Mauritania, new species, mtDNA

Introduction

Semaphore geckos (*Pristurus*) are distinctive among Gekkonidae in being largely diurnal (ARNOLD 1986a, 1993) with rounded pupils, or ones that are secondarily capable of closing to a vertical slit but lack the notched edges typical of most other gekkonids; the tail is unique among geckos in being laterally compressed at least in males, with a sagittal fringe of elongated scales. The genus is represented by about 22 known species (Arnold, 1986a, 1990, 1993; Kluge, 1991; Rösler and Wranik, 1999), which are distributed in Northeast Africa and Southwest Asia. More specifically, the genus is known to occur in