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Nomenclature of African species of the genus *Stenodactylus* (Squamata: Gekkonidae)

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Abstract

The statuses of proposed nomina of the North African species of the genus *Stenodactylus* have been revised based on the study of their original descriptions and the examination of their name-bearing types. Important nomenclatural actions proposed include the designation of a lectotype for the nomen *Stenodactylus guttatus* ensuring continuity of the prevailing usage of *S. petrii*, and the proposal of maintaining prevailing usage of *Stenodactylus sthenodactylus* by applying to the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature to set aside the existing name-bearing type and replace it with a neotype corresponding with that usage.

Key words: Reptiles, Gekkonidae, *Stenodactylus*, North Africa, taxonomy, lectotype, neotype

Introduction

The gekkonid genus *Stenodactylus* Fitzinger, 1826 comprises 12 currently recognized species distributed across Northern Africa, Arabia and the Middle East, extending around the Arabian Gulf to coastal southwestern Iran (Arnold 1977, 1980; Metallinou *et al.* 2012; Sindaco & Jeremčenko 2008). They are ground-dwelling, nocturnal geckos with naked toes, and often constitute one of the most conspicuous elements in the reptile fauna of arid habitats where they are distributed. The North African species are medium-sized, reaching 64mm snout-vent-length [female specimen of *S. petrii* from N. Sinai (Baha El Din 2006)]. Metallinou *et al.* (2012) showed that all North African species share a common ancestor, but are not monophyletic, as the Yemen endemic *S. yemenensis* forms a clade with *S. sthenodactylus* and *S. mauritanicus*.

Despite the low number of species of North African *Stenodactylus*, their systematics and nomenclature have long been controversial. Current systematic hypotheses recognize four species: *S. sthenodactylus* (Lichtenstein, 1823), *S. mauritanicus* Guichenot, 1850, *S. petrii* Anderson, 1896 and *S. stenurus* Werner, 1899, but the systematics of the *petrii-stenurus* complex was shown to be in need of a thorough revision, while high genetic variability was observed in *S. sthenodactylus* and *S. mauritanicus* (Metallinou *et al.* 2012). Several additional nomina (see Dubois 2006 for use of this term) have been proposed in the past, and two out of the four currently recognized species regained their specific status only in the last twelve years.

This work aims to complement the recent molecular systematics study of Metallinou *et al.* (2012), ensuring nomenclatural stability through revision of the current status of the nomina, type locality clarification and lectotype designation, where pertinent.

Material and methods

The information and respective interpretation of the original descriptions of the nomina studied here are based on