

Further Records of the Plateau Snake Skink *Ophiomorus nuchalis* Nilson and Andren, 1978 (Sauria: Scincidae) from Isfahan Province, Iran

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Two specimens of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* from the northern part of Isfahan province were collected, one of them on June 6, 2010, and the other one on June 9, 2011. The new records were collected in southern part of the type locality. The habitat of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* in this region varies greatly from the previous records.

Ophiomorus nuchalis is a rare scincid lizard which has already been collected from two localities. The first record is from Andren and Nilson and Andrén (1978). They described this skink as a new species by two specimens collected from N52°11' ,E34°44' in the northern slope of "Siah Kooch", near "Cheshmeh Shah", "Kavir National Park", Iran (Fig. 1, Black (Diamond)). The next two specimens were found in type locality, one in 1999 and the other one in 2000 by Mozaffari. In 2009, Mozaffari recorded this lizard from a new locality, N35°6'42.1", E51°46'14.5". This study, presents two new records of this species and their habitat in Isfahan Province for the first time.

Two specimens of *Ophiomorus nuchalis*, one of them collected from "Arisman" village (ZMGU.2579 (Zoological Museum Gorgan University)) N33°39'27.66", E52°0'11.67" on June 6, 2010, collected by Seyed Mahdi Kazemi, which is about 120 kilometers away from type locality and the other one (ZMGU.2580), was taken on June 9, 2011, from the village Abouzeid Abad, N33°54'52.13", E51°45'30.18", collected by Masood Farhadi Qomi, which is about 100 kilometers away from the type locality.

The two specimens are also about 36 kilometers away from each other.

The specimens collected were found in the morning (under the soil, at 9:00 AM).

Average annual precipitation is 170.69 mm at the nearest meteorological station in Kashan, about 30 km to the northwest of the specimen ZMGU.2580 locality. During the hot summer months the mean temperature was 40.39°C and the minimum temperature mean was 0.54°C in winter in the last 10 years.

General descriptions: Long, cylindrical and snake-like body, conical snout, small eyes with movable eyelids, lower eyelid with large transparent scales, non-pierced ears, reduced limbs, fingers 4, toes 3.

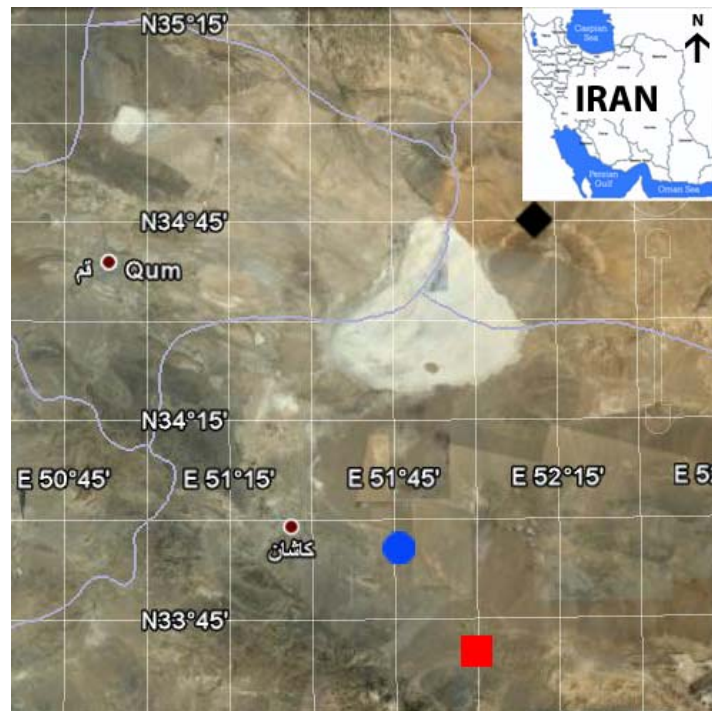


FIGURE 1. Localities of collected specimens of *Ophiomorus nuchalis*, black (diamond), type Locality (Nilson and Andren, 1978); red (squares), specimen from Arisman (ZMGU.2579); blue (circle), specimen from Abouzeid Abad (ZMGU.2580).

Coloration

Body light brown in the dorsal surface, milky white in the ventral surface, head, body and tail.

It has two dark parallel stripes from its backbone to the end of hindlimbs connection point. After that it becomes smaller and continues as dark spots on the tail (Fig. 2).

The back stripe starts from the nostrils and continues to the end of the tail. A spot like an arrow can be seen on the head (Fig. 2).

There are a number of irregular spots on the interparietal region. The third eye in the posterior half of interparietal is in the shape of a circle in light brown color.

Measurements (in millimeter) and counts

The main metric and meristic characters of the studied specimens are presented in Tables (1-2).

Habitat

We found the lizards in agricultural areas, a habitat different from the last two records.

The ZMGU.2579 specimen was collected in a cucumber farm, on June 6, 2010, and the ZMGU.2580 specimen was collected in a plowed farm near a peach garden, on June 9, 2011 (Fig. 3).



FIGURE 2. *Ophiomorus nuchalis* (ZMGU. 2580). Photograph by M. Farhadi.



FIGURE 3. Habitat of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* (the specimen ZMGU.2580).

TABLE 1. Measurements of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* from Iran.

	SVL	HL	SL	HW	HH	FLL	HLL	DHF	TL
Abouzeid Abad (ZMGU.2580)	87.9	7.5	4.2	6	5	8.7	15.1	64.4	89.3
Arisman (ZMGU.2579)	80	5.5	2.9	3.3	3.1	6	10	-*	-*

* The Arisman specimen has been halved and we do not have the back of the body.

SVL, Length of snout to vent (from tip of snout to anterior edge of cloaca); HL, Head Length (from end of snout to angle of jaw). SL, Snout Length (from tip of snout to anterior corner of eye); HW, Head Width (widest point of head); HH, Head Height; FLL, Forelimb Length; HLL, Hindlimb Length; DHF, Distance between hind limbs and forelimbs; TL, Tail Length (from posterior edge of cloaca to tip of tail).

TABLE 2. Meristic characters of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* from Iran.

	SPL	IFL	SPO	PtO	PO	LOR	SQ	IP-V
Abouzeid Abad (ZMGU.2580)	7-7	6-6	4-4	2-2	1-1	1-1	22	114
Arisman (ZMGU.2579)	7-7	6-6	4-4	2-2	1-1	1-1	22	-

SPL, supralabials. IFL, infralabials. SPO, supraoculars. PtO, postoculars. PO, preocular. LOR, loreal. SQ, Scales round the middle of the body. IP-V, Scales between interparietal at the level of vent (in left and right respectively) (Fig. 2)

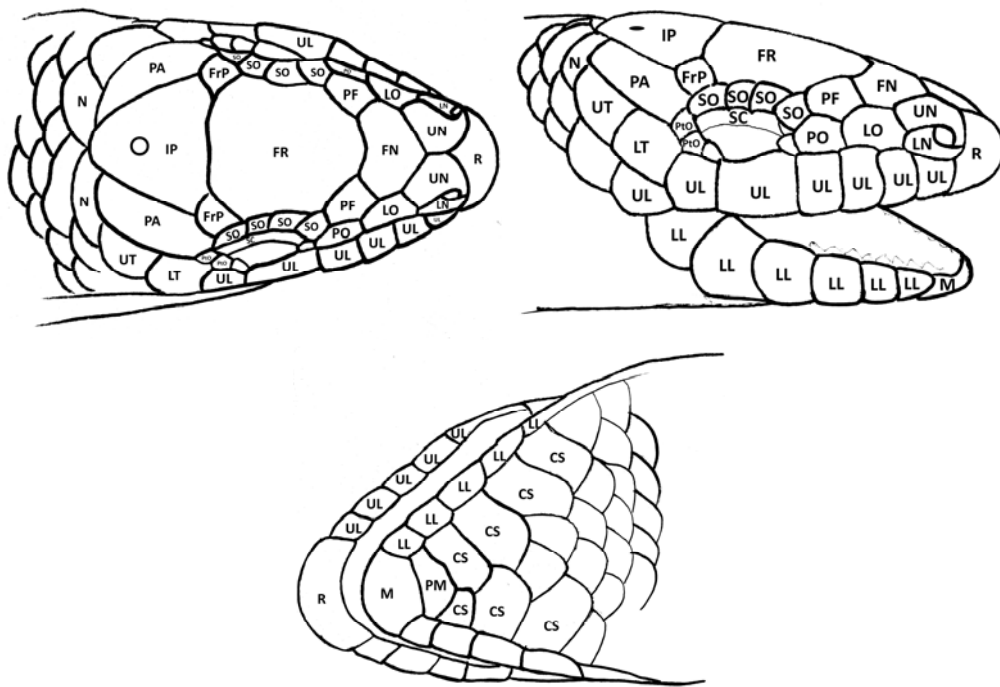


FIGURE 4. Head of *Ophiomorus nuchalis* (The specimen ZMGU.2580)

Vegetation

These lizards can be found in regions with cucumber and tomato farms and in areas with trees such as peach and other vegetation.

Other sympatric reptiles include:

Eumeces schneideri princeps, *Ophisops elegans*, *Trapelus agilis*, *Phrynocephalus scutellatus*, *Cyrtopodion scabrum*, *Varanus griseus caspius*, *Spalerosophis diadema shiraziana*, *Platycephalus rhodorachis*, *Psammophis schokari*.

According to Nilson and Andren (1978) this lizard was collected under the stones on almost bare gravel ground with little plants and without loose sand. Mozaffari et al. (2011) found their specimen in a different habitat near a dry river with clay topsoil.

Contrary to Mozaffari et al. (2011), our findings show that, due to the presence of great number of foot traces in the region, there is a stable population of *O. nuchalis* in the study area. They are active at nights, not observed during the day and it is difficult and time consuming to catch them. In certain seasons (spring and autumn) their foot traces are observed. That is why it seems that they have a little population.

Also, observations show that there is no sexual dimorphism in color pattern and number of mid-body scales in this lizard.

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