

Evading the coast. The most continental record of *Tarentola chazaliae*

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RESUMEN: *Tarentola chazaliae* es un endemismo de la costa atlántica noroeste de África que raramente se encuentra a más de 25 km hacia el interior continental. En esta nota describimos un registro de *T. chazaliae* en la región de Smara, 144 km alejado de la línea de costa. Este hallazgo representa la localidad más continental conocida para la especie. La colonización hacia esta localidad pudo estar favorecida por la presencia de la cuenca del río Saguia el-Hamra.

Tarentola chazaliae (Moquard, 1895) is the most morphologically distinct species of its genus, due to the partially lack of toe and finger lamella, and the presence of a helmet-shaped head and short tail (Moquard, 1895). This distinctiveness lead Moquard to emplace the species in the monospecific genus *Geckonia* Moquard, 1895, which later was synonymized with the genus *Tarentola* Gray, 1825, based on phylogenetic analysis (Carranza *et al.*, 2002). A recent molecular study places *T. chazaliae* as a sister taxa of the clade formed by *T. annularis* and *T. ephippiata* (Rato *et al.*, 2012).

It is an endemic element of the Atlantic coast between Inezgane in Souss Valley (Morocco) and Cap Blanc (Mauritania), where it occurs in sandy soils as dunes and hammada (Bons & Geniez, 1996; Willms *et al.*, 2013) and shows a strictly terrestrial behavior. Nevertheless it climbs bushes when threatened (the authors, unpublished data). It occurs along the coastline, and rarely it is found more than 25 km from the coast, with one record at 50 km from the Atlantic Ocean in Abatteh (Bons & Geniez, 1996). However, it has been found as far as 115 km from the coastline in the Saguia el-Hamra

(Geniez *et al.*, 2000, 2004). The distribution area of this species is characterized by an oceanic climate (Schleich *et al.*, 1996).

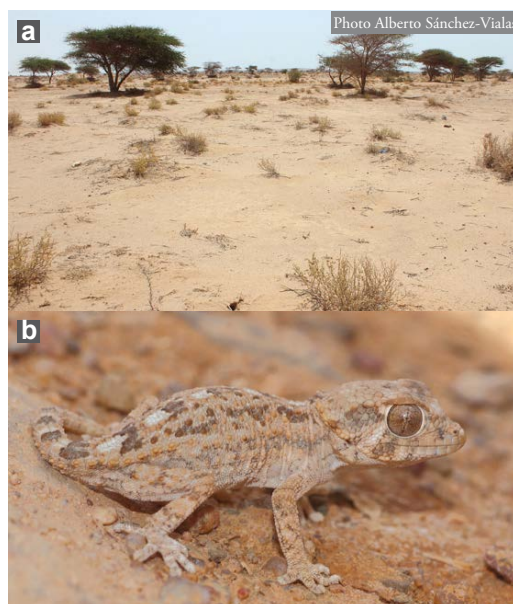


Figure 1: (a) Habitat where *T. chazaliae* was found around Smara (coordinates: 26°49'38.53"N, 11°45'6.38"W). (b) Juvenile of *T. chazaliae* from Smara population.

Figura 1: (a) Hábitat donde fue encontrado *T. chazaliae* en los alrededores de Smara (coordenadas: 26°49'38.53"N, 11°45'6.38"W). (b) Juvenil de *T. chazaliae* de Smara.

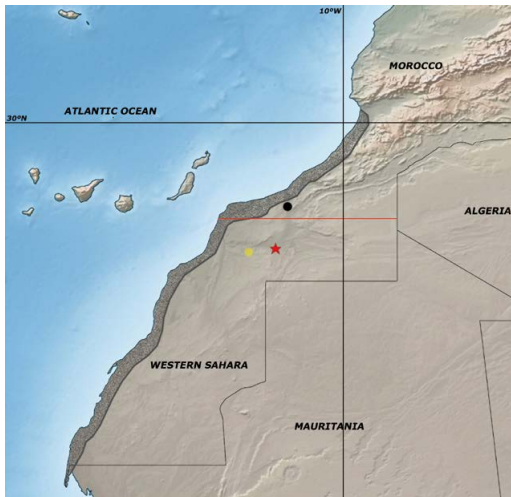


Figure 2: Geographic distribution of *T. chazaliae*, based in Bons & Geniez (1996). Black dot represents the Abatteh record; yellow dot represents the previous record from Saguia El-Hamra; red star corresponds to the new record from Smara region.

Figura 2: Distribución geográfica de *T. chazaliae*, basada en Bons & Geniez (1996). El punto negro representa la cita de Abatteh; el punto amarillo representa el registro previo de Saguia El-Hamra; la estrella roja corresponde al nuevo registro en la región de Smara.

In this note we report a notable record, 144 km inland, representing the most continental sighting of *T. chazaliae*. During a field expedition to the Western Sahara carried out during July 2016 (on 24 July 2016), a juvenile of *T. chazaliae* was observed resting under a plastic waste during day time (Figure 1), around Smara (Sidi Ahmed Laaroussi; coordinates: 26°49'38.53"N, 11°45'6.38"W) (Figure 2). This is a region of oceanic climate, located near wadi Saguia el-Hamra, a drainage basin that allows the establishment of more abundant vegetation, and flows into the Atlantic Ocean, close to Laayoune. The habitat where *T. chazaliae* was found is formed by *Acacia* trees and shrubs on a sandy soil with scattered stones (Figure 1a).

A similar distribution pattern is showed by *Acanthodactylus aureus*, a lacertid with a coastal distribution that reaches Smara surroundings in its most continental population (Bons & Geniez, 1996; Geniez *et al.*, 2000). It is likely that Smara region exhibits special conditions that allow the presence of coastal taxa in a more continental land. The colonization of this continental area by *T. chazaliae* was probably undertaken through the river basin that provides more humid conditions in comparison to the surrounding grounds. However, the possibility of unintentional introduction should not be rejected.

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