

First checked arrival of *Tarentola mauritanica* (Linnaeus, 1758) in Salta, Argentina (Squamata; Phyllodactylidae)

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The genus *Tarentola* Gray, 1825 contains around 22 species distributed in North Africa, the coastal regions of the Mediterranean Sea, the Macaronesian archipelagos, Cuba and the Bahamas (Harris et al., 2004). *Tarentola mauritanica* (Linnaeus, 1758) is a very common gecko distributed throughout southern Europe (Iberian Peninsula, France, Italy, the Balkans, and Greece), North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt), and most of the islands of the Mediterranean Sea (Vogrin et al., 2009). The species has a high capacity to adapt to different anthropic environments, which may lead to accidental introductions into new areas (Martínez-Rica, 1997; Arnold and Ovenden, 2002; Hódar, 2002), mainly due to accidental transport with merchandise (Cabana, 2008) or illegal sale as a pet (Arredondo and Núñez, 2014). These factors extended the range of distribution of this species and it was recorded beyond the Mediterranean and North Africa, as for example, in islands from the northern Atlantic Ocean, Madeira (Báez and Biscoito, 1993), Porto Santo (Jesus et al., 2008) and the Azores archipelago (Barreiros et al., 2010; Rato et al., 2015), but also as far as in Montevideo (Uruguay) (Baldo et al., 2008), Buenos Aires (Achaval and Gudynas, 1983; Chebez and Rodríguez, 2014) and Tucuman (Argentina) (Cabrera and Guerra, 2006), Chile (Arredondo and Núñez, 2014; Huerta-Vera, 2016), and California (United States of America) (Vogrin, et al., 2009).

A living specimen of *Tarentola mauritanica* was recorded for the first time in the province of Salta, Argentina (24.8224° S, 65.3753° W; 1,168 m. elevation;

Google Earth) on the 21st of June 2017 in a shipment of merchandise transported by truck from Villa Soldati (Buenos Aires, Argentina), a township located about 1,280 km from the province of Salta. For the determination of maturity and sex, we analysed the physiological state of the gonads following Valdecantos and Lobo (2007). Snout-vent length (SVL) was measured with a digital caliper with a 0.1 mm precision. This juvenile (SVL = 125.0 mm) male specimen (Figure 1) was deposited in the herpetological collection of the Instituto de Bio y Geociencias del Noroeste Argentino (IBIGEO 5790).

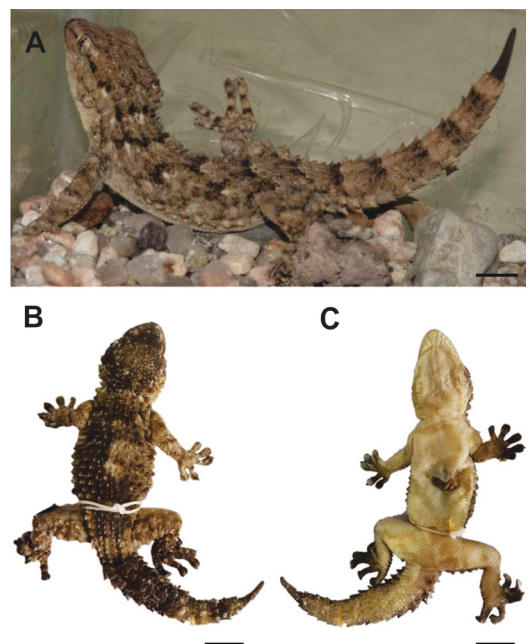


Figure 1. Juvenile male specimen of *Tarentola mauritanica* (IBIGEO 5390) found in a shipment of merchandise in Salta, Argentina. (A) specimen when alive; (B) dorsal and (C) ventral views of the specimen after being fixed. Scale = 20 mm.

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It is evident that the geographical expansion of this invasive species is very quick. In this way, it is essential to highlight the importance of providing new geographic records and monitoring them, with the objective of preventing possible negative impacts, since the introduction of exotic species may lead to the destruction of natural resources and / or displacement of native taxa.

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