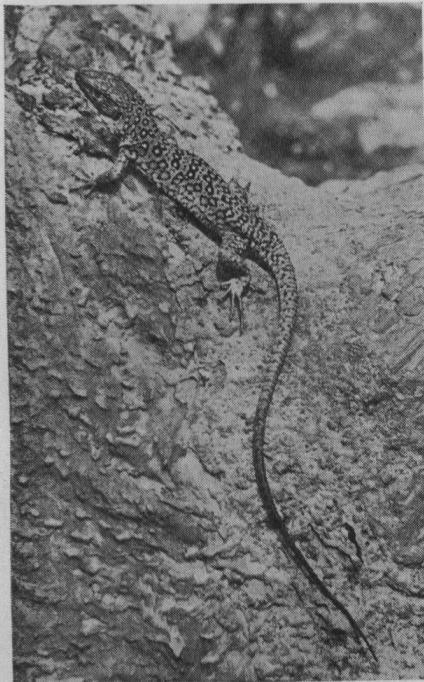


Field Notes on the Eyed Lizard

By JOHN ARMITAGE

DURING the course of my wanderings as a naturalist in the south of France, Portugal, Southern Spain, and Morocco, it has been my good fortune to meet with various forms of the Eyed Lizard (*Lacerta ocellata*), living undisturbed in a wide range of habitats. This fine intelligent reptile is

u n i q u e among European lizards, both for size and colour, often attaining a length of 2-ft., while the colour is green above and yellowish below, with pretty blue spots ringed with black on the sides. A d u l t males in spring are gorgeous creatures, and, as may be seen from the illustration of a youngster from the Algarve, S o u t h Portugal, richly spotted juveniles are even more attractive than their parents. Some African forms, however, are much less ocellated, the more uniform green of



[Photo: J. Armitage, A.R.P.S.]
Young Eyed Lizard from the Algarve

the body and blue throat of an adult male reminding one of an outsize in green lizards.

In a wild state, the Eyed Lizard eats various ground-haunting lizards and sand-runners, small rodents, including very young rabbits, and the contents of birds' nests. Some appear to infest burrows and scarcely travel beyond easy running distance of their retreats; but others undoubtedly travel far and have few enemies to check them. When disturbed by a human intruder out in the open, the Eyed Lizard usually stands in defiance, but only for a fraction of a second. The next moment, it has turned tail and crashed off through the sunbaked herbage at top speed. Once I saw a domestic cat successfully stalk and kill an adult lizard, and the same day I dislodged one from a tree and caught it.

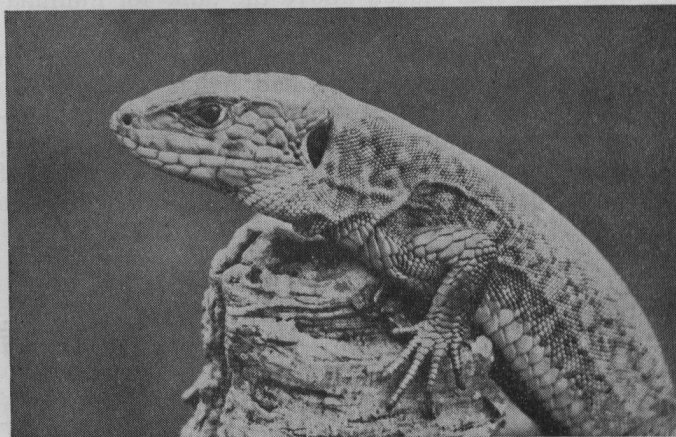
Near the Rio Tinto copper mines in Southern Spain there are some barren hills sparsely dotted with old ilex trees, where Woodchat Shrikes have their lookout posts and build their nests of Cudweed. Approaching one of these trees, I noticed a big Eyed Lizard at the foot, intently peering into a hole, possibly attracted by a Lobe-footed Gecko, which are numerous in such places. On seeing me, it darted up the tree and along a slender branch. Out there I pictured its little brain turning over a very awkward situation. Some clods

were speedily kicked up, and following a few wides, a better-directed tuft swept the reptile from its perch. I rushed towards it as it struck the ground, grabbing it well forward, and holding it in spite of furious scratchings and bitings. Bearing it in triumph to the house where I stayed, I discovered that my friends were absent, but being anxious to exhibit my prize to someone, I ambled into the kitchen.

Two Spanish servants were at work. They looked up together, screamed simultaneously, dropped their utensils and fled. Later, when they returned, I noticed that their fingers were crossed: an attempt to remain immune from the evil influence of the great *Lagarto*. My captive was so ill-tempered and caused so much consternation, that I was glad to release it in a nearby dried-up watercourse where others of its kind had been seen.

In the Spanish sierras beyond Ronda and Grazalema, Eyed Lizards were abundant, and while their haunts proper were in shady, bushy places, with lush vegetation and running water, many were seen on scrub-clad and stony hillsides, where esparto grass mingles with low, aromatic scrub. In spring I spent several days among the mountains searching for nests of Rock Buntings, and quite frequently Eyed Lizards were disturbed and noted in noisy, headlong retreat.

The countryfolk in Morocco could never fathom my interest in reptiles; and seeing me lying on a bank or poking about the Palmetto scrub—noosing stick in hand—they were firmly convinced that it was a weak-minded attempt at snaring rabbits! Young Eyed Lizards are not difficult to catch; they are ideal for sending through the post to England enclosed in tubular cylinders; and



[Photo: J. Armitage, A.R.P.S.]
North African Eyed Lizard

as pets they are without equal, taking readily to artificial conditions and a variety of foods, they are quick-witted, and often live for many years.

At large, I have always found adults much too clever for me; but with a cane at least 15-ft. long, something might be done, particularly in early morning before the sun has invigorated them. Of course, a well-infested

haunt must be found, and one of the best and most accessible haunts known to me is by the roadside between La Linea and the village of Campamento, on the Spanish mainland near Gibraltar. Standing with one's back to the Rock, and looking to the right, it will be seen that many parts of the ditch-banking parallel with

the road are full of holes, and here at any time of the day during spring and early summer, Eyed Lizards of all sizes may be seen. It is possible that specimens representing each stage of growth could be collected here by someone endowed with the necessary skill and patience, and with plenty of time on his hands.

Breeding Prize-Winning Goldfishes

By R. J. AFFLECK

LAST November I bought a pair of Blue Scaleless Orandas and decided that I would spawn them this year. They had good colours, but were not particularly fat, so I decided to see if I could improve their figures. Accordingly, they were placed in an unplanted tank, the temperature was raised gradually to 70 degs. by day and 65 degs. by night, and they were given as much food as they could eat. With such heavy feeding the water had to be changed at least once a week. This continued until the beginning of January, when their colours had improved considerably, and their bodies were almost unrecognizable. Instead of their heads being larger than their bodies, when viewed from the top, they now resembled a sausage (*i.e.*, parallel sides with semi-circular ends). By this time the male was showing some interest in the female, and so the temperature was reduced, over a period of three weeks, to that of the unheated tanks, and the fishes were separated.

I decided to spawn them at the end of May, so, three weeks before, the temperature was raised to 70 degs. by day and 65 degs. by night. One Friday night a 24 x 15 x 15-in. concrete tank with glass sides was set up with tap water, and bunches of *Myriophyllum* were placed at one end. The fishes were introduced about 8 p.m. with a temperature of 70 degs., and a 100-watt bulb was placed above the tank for illumination, as the tank was in a dark corner of the room.

The next morning the fishes had spawned, and in two and a half days the fry had hatched, while two and a half days later they were swimming. The temperature after spawning varied from 65 degs. to 74 degs., and I am unable to account for the short period of incubation, as the temperature was taken at the surface

and at the bottom of the water, in different parts of the tank, and the thermometer was tested to see if it was registering properly.

The benefit of care and attention given to the parents was shown by the spawning, because out of several thousand fry that hatched, only fifty-nine were infertile. The fry were fed on yolk of hard-boiled egg, and a non-stop catering service was set up. In a fortnight's time, tummies were beginning to bulge nicely, and some of the fry were much larger than others.

I believe in raising a few hardy exhibition fishes every year rather than a lot of rubbish, so now I decided to kill off some of the stragglers. An old tablespoon was used to catch those that were not very active, while a greater fluctuation in temperature found out other weaker ones, and they were destroyed. At the end of three weeks the fry were picked out one by one and examined under a powerful magnifying glass. Those with double tails, double anals, good dorsals, etc., were picked out from the larger ones, and after another culling at four weeks my thousands were reduced to eighteen fish. All others were destroyed.

Many aquarists will criticize me for such drastic treatment, and say that I ought to have kept them as long as possible in the hope that some of the smaller ones might have developed into prizewinners. If I had had an unlimited supply of tanks, then I might have kept a few more, but a 36 x 15 x 15-in. tank is not large enough for more than eighteen fry when they are a month old and over half an inch long. The ones that were destroyed would have eaten good food and restricted the growth of the good fry. I shall be satisfied if I have four good fishes from this spawning at the end of the season.

Vipers in the Sun

Large crowds have been attracted to the outdoor reptiliary at the London Zoo, where the recent sunshine has lured forth Vipers, Grass Snakes, and Aesculapian Snakes, besides Green Lizards and Wall Lizards. One Viper, lately received from the Zoo's collector in the New Forest, is entirely black. Melanism in these snakes may be due either to a predominance of black pigment throughout the epidermis, or a complete merging of the central zigzag line with the series of blots and blotches on either side. Vipers which owe their blackness to a merging of the markings are always males. When, as

happens, chiefly with females, the black is the result of a gradual darkening of the ground colour, the typical markings can be seen in certain lights, just as the spots may be detected in a black leopard. The Aesculapian Snake of Central and Eastern Europe is of interest, since it is associated with the "God of Healing." Its frequency on the sites of ancient Roman thermal stations has given rise to the suggestion that it was imported to such places when the snake was an object of worship.—*Observer.*