

EUROLIZARDS

Eremias arguta - Steppe Runner



RO / Vadu, 26.05.2013 - These lizards are alert and quite fast. If necessary.

The big genus of *Eremias* comprises about 36 species, most of them in Central Asia. Besides of *Eremias arguta* another species occurs in Europe: *Eremias velox*, which can be found in the European part of Russia.

The Steppe Runner inhabits open sandy areas with sparse vegetation at the Romanian Black Sea Coast. The Romanian population belongs to subspecies *deserti*.

Eremias arguta is a remarkable species with a somehow 'archaic' appearance: They have short tails, massive bodies and deep heads. The head and neck scalation of older males may consist of "tubercles" which make them look like small dragons. Besides of that, there seem to be no prominent differences between males and females.

When disturbed, these lizards escape by running over long distances until they are out of sight. So, you may not notice those well-camouflaged Lacertids before it's too late. However, when carefully approached, they can be easily observed.

Within its European distribution range, only two other small lizard species occur: *Lacerta agilis* and *Podarcis tauricus*. With these, *Eremias arguta* can hardly be confused. Female *Lacerta agilis* may look similar somehow but they have significantly thicker tails - compared to the rather spiny tails of *Eremias arguta*.



Distribution range of *Eremias arguta* within our area.



RO / Vadu, 26.05.2013: Old male with massive head and 'tubercle'-like scales.



RO / Vadu, 26.05.2013: Note the rather spiny tail.



RO / Vadu, 26.05.2013 - specimen with yellow lateral dots.



RO / Vadu, 26.05.2013 - Although being shy, Eremias arguta is also nosy, as this one demonstrates.



Habitat of *Eremias arguta* at the Romanian Black Sea coast.

