

Algyroides nigropunctatus (DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1839)
Dalmatian algyroides or Blue-throated keeled lizard (Lacertidae)

A. nigropunctatus has received one of its common names due to the rather large and strongly keeled dorsal scales and from the blue throat and neck displayed by males during the mating season. One of its Greek names, Kérkyra lizard, comes from the fact that it was originally described from the island, i.e. the type locality, or terra typica, is Corfu. It was described by DUMÉRIL and BIBRON in 1839 as “Le lézard ponctué de noir. *Lacerta nigro-punctata*” with a comment on its origin: “*Cette espèce a été trouvée dans L’île de Corfou. Elle nous est connue par un exemplaire fort bien conservé qui a été donné au Muséum par M. Soubeiran*”. The lizard is frequently seen and is the most common and widespread reptile species on the islands. This small lizard is important since it may well be a key prey item for the majority of the snake species, especially juvenile specimens, on the islands.

The dorsal colour is usually a dark greyish or reddish brown with irregularly distributed small black spots and the dorsal scales are strongly keeled and overlapping. Males have an orange belly whereas females have a light grey or greenish underside and a more uniformly dark brown dorsal colour. The colour and pattern vary considerably and the lizards also become much darker during the colder months. We have seen males with moss green heads and bellies, and in very rare cases specimens can be a uniform



Fig. 193: Typical male *Algyroides nigropunctatus* during the mating season (Corfu town, mid-May).



Fig. 194: Male *Algyroides nigropunctatus* from Ereikousa (late May).



Fig. 195: Male *Algyroides nigropunctatus* from Paxos (late May).



Fig. 196: Male *Algyroides nigropunctatus* from Ereikousa in late May. The males of the population on this small island do not show the blue chin and throat normally found in this species.



Fig. 197: Large male *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Corfu town, mid-February).



Fig. 198: Male and female *Algyroides nigropunctatus*. The strongly keeled and pointed scales on the back are typical for the species (Corfu town, mid-April).



Fig. 199: Young *Algyroides nigropunctatus* feeding on a snail.



Fig. 200: The green morph of *Algyroides nigropunctatus* is quite rare (Corfu town).

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Fig. 201: Female *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Corfu town).



Fig. 202: Female *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Corfu town).



Fig. 203: Melanism is extremely rare in *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Corfu town). A. UROŠEVIĆ

dull green. *A. nigropunctatus* is the second reptile species on the islands that can appear in a melanistic form, but this is extremely rare and in the order of one in 5,000 or less. The population on Ereikousa differs from those of all the other islands in that mature males lack blue head colour. We visited the island on two occasions, late May and early June during a time when males normally have an intense blue head and throat colour (April to June), but all adult males observed lacked the blue colour. The general coloration of the body also differs as the back is darker with no distinct spots and the belly is more or less uniformly orange.

Males reach a total length of about 18–20 cm, which is slightly larger than in females, tail being $\frac{2}{3}$ of the length, and the body mass varies from four to seven grams. There is not any similar lizard species on the islands, but see the extremely localized Wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) for comparison.

We have seen this species all year around and even after a night with frost you can on a sunny morning find it basking on bushes, tree trunks or stone walls. Even if it is found in a variety of habitats it prefers places rich in vegetation with shade and shelter, but we have found it from open sunny cliffs in phrygana vegetation on Othoni to dark pine-tree stands on Vido.

Food consists of a variety of insects, spiders and other small invertebrates including molluscs and it may also possibly eat soft fruit and berries. Mating takes place in April

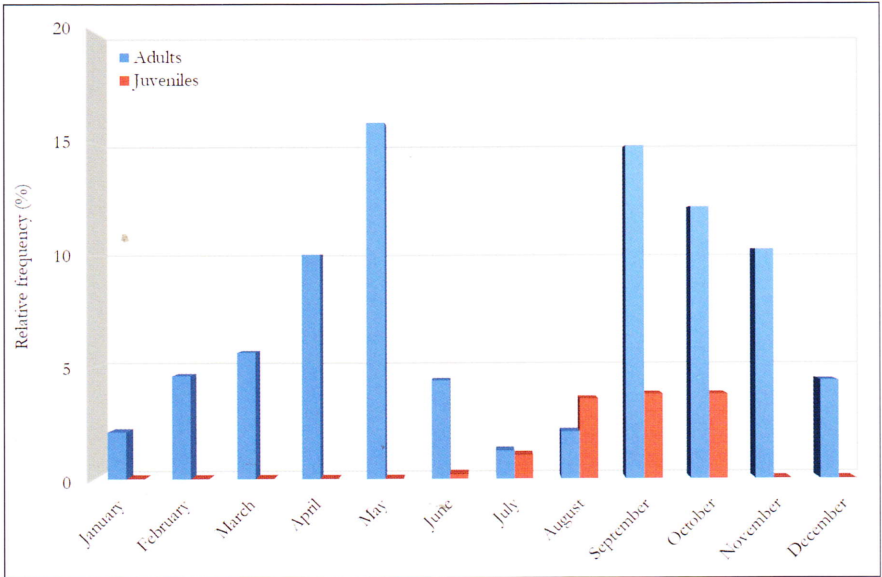
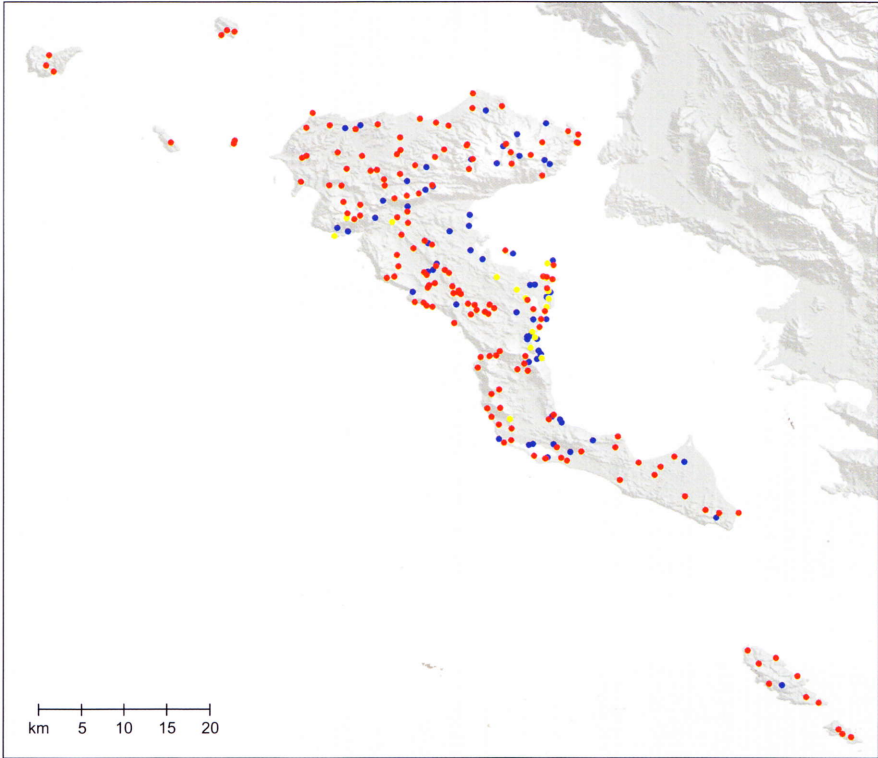


Fig. 204: Relative monthly observation frequency (%) for *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (n = 477+).

and May, a period when males defend territories and display a deep blue throat and neck and an orange belly and sometimes orange flanks with blue spots. Females lay one or more clutches of up to four eggs that hatch after 5–7 weeks. It is possible that this also is the case on the islands treated here but we have no data supporting this. Considering that the species can be found in a variety of habitats there may be local differences in breeding pattern.

Newly hatched lizards appear from late June to late August and have a total length of 6–8 cm with a body mass of only a gram or less. They grow quickly and juveniles measured in October have a total length of 11–12 cm. Of the three small lacertid lizards found on the islands it is the only one found on all eight visited. It often occurs in places where one would normally not expect to encounter climbing species like *Podarcis muralis*. These two species are seen as direct competitors, *A. nigropunctatus* is in general considered to be the stronger, and the extremely limited distribution of *P. muralis* on Corfu may be caused by competitive exclusion, but could also be due to a recent introduction. The subspecies in the area is *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus* (DUMÉRIEL & BIBRON, 1839) originally described from Corfu.



Map 20: Localities for *Algyroides nigropunctatus*.