

# ON A SMALL COLLECTION OF REPTILES FROM AGEDABIA, LIBYA

## MALÁ SBÍRKA PLAZŮ Z AGEDABIE, LIBYE

JIRÍ MORAVEC



zoologie

Moravec, Jirí (1995 12): On a small collection of reptiles from Agedabia, Libya. – *Časopis Národního muzea, Rada přírodovědná*, Vol. 164, pp. 51–54, Praha. ISSN 0139-9497.

Eleven reptile species collected in the surroundings of Agedabia (Cyrenaica, Libya) are reviewed. Infrasubspecific status is assigned to the taxon *Lytorhynchus kennedyi* K. SCHMIDT, 1939.

■ *Lytorhynchus kennedyi*, Reptilia, taxonomy, Libya, zoogeography

Jirí Moravec, zoologické oddělení, Národní muzeum, 115 79 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Received March 28, 1995

### INTRODUCTION

Through the kindness of Dr. O. Kodym, the National Museum (Nat. Hist.), Prague has obtained a small collection of reptiles from Libya. The collection comprises a total of 15 specimens of eleven reptile species collected in the surroundings of the town of Agedabia (30°45' N, 20°18' E; SW Cyrenaica). Besides rather common North African reptile species, the collection also includes one specimen of a snake of genus *Lytorhynchus*. The specimen corresponds to the taxon *Lytorhynchus kennedyi* K. SCHMIDT, 1939, reported so far only from the Near East. This paper presents a brief description of this specimen and a list of the other reptile species contained in the collection. The nomenclatural status of *L. kennedyi* is discussed.

### LIST OF SPECIES

#### Gekkonidae

*Stenodactylus stenodactylus* (LICHTENSTEIN, 1823)

Material (2): NMP6V 34928/1–2, adult males, 12–15 February 1982.

*Tarentola mauritanica* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

Material (1): NMP6V 34929, strongly damaged adult specimen, 25 April 1982.

*Tropiocolotes tripolitanus* PETERS, 1880

Material (1): NMP6V 34930, adult male, 12 February 1982.

#### Chamaeleonidae

*Chamaeleo chamaeleon* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

Material (3): NMP6V 34931/1–3, semiadult specimens, 12 February and 3 June 1982.

#### Lacertidae

*Acanthodactylus boskianus* (DAUDIN, 1802)

Material (1): NMP6V 34932, juvenile specimen, collected about 100 km S of Agedabia, 10 March 1982.

*Acanthodactylus scutellatus* (AUDOUIN, 1829)

Material (1): NMP6V 34933, semiadult specimen, 15 February 1982.

*Mesalina rubropunctata* (LICHTENSTEIN, 1823)

Material (2): NMP6V 34934/1-2, semiadult specimens, 5 March and 5 April 1982.

Scincidae

*Sphenops sepsoides* (AUDOUIN, 1829)

Material (1): NMP6V 34935, semiadult specimen, 12 February 1982.

Remarks: 24 scales around midbody. Colouration very pale, a narrow dark stripe extends from the nostril across the eye on the temporal region; no other dark pattern except for very weak traces of fine dark dots (or dotted lines) on the dorsal side of the tail and hind legs.

Colubridae

*Lytorhynchus diadema* (DUMÉRIL, BIBRON et DUMÉRIL, 1854) ab. *kennedyi* K. SCHMIDT, 1939

Material (1): NMP6V 34936, semiadult specimen found dead and partly damaged in a concrete pool in a dump site with sparse vegetation on the outskirts of Agedabia, April 1982. Pholidosis: Upper labials: 8/-. Lower labials: 10/-. Preoculars: 3/3. Dorsal scale rows: 19. Ventrals: about 161 (skin damaged on neck). Subcaudals: 35.

Measurements: Snout-vent length: about 255 mm. Tail length: about 39 mm.

Colouration: The body is uniformly pale with 25 narrow intense dark crossbars (including the nuchal one which is not fused with the spot on the head). The tail with 7 dark crossbars (Fig. 1).

Remarks: So far, the form *kennedyi* has been rarely reported only from the Near East (central and NE Syria and the adjacent regions of Iraq and Jordan, see Martens 1993). It differs from very close *Lytorhynchus diadema* only in colour pattern (Leviton et Anderson 1970) and is considered to be either a full species (e. g. Leviton et Anderson 1970, Martens 1993) or a subspecies of *L. diadema* (Leviton et al. 1992). Our record lying over 1500 km to the W in the range of *L. diadema* casts doubt on the second alternative (see also Martens 1993).

The wider occurrence of *kennedyi* form in the region of Cyrenaica is indicated by the note in Kramer et Schnurrenberger (1963), pertaining to a differently coloured specimen of „*Lytorhynchus diadema*“ from Cirene (32° 50' N, 21° 52' E): „Das Ex im MSNM aus Cirene fällt allerdings mit seinen nur 25 Rumpfflecken aus der Variation der übrigen heraus. Es wäre möglich, dass sich in der östlichen Cyrenaika zwei Subspecies treffen, ...“.

However, also the specific status of *kennedyi* cannot be entirely accepted. On the one hand, it seems that the colouration type corresponding to the form *kennedyi* can be readily distinguished from the colouration of the North African populations of *L. diadema*. For instance, Kramer et Schnurrenberger (1963) describe the colouration of another 14 Lybian specimens of *L. diadema* (including those of form Cyrenaica; the nearest locality 30 km S of Agedabia). In their case the number of spots on the body (34-47) is distinctly higher and fits well within the variation range given by Leviton et Anderson (1970) for the determination of *L. diadema* (30-52) (*kennedyi*: 23-27). For the Egyptian material of *L. diadema*, Anderson (1898) also gives a distinctly higher number of spots (33-41). According to Werner (1931) the Northeast African specimens have 40-50 dorsal spots. While Leviton et Anderson (1970) have pointed out the marked colour polymorphism of the Egyptian specimens (from the vicinity of Abu Rawash), they nevertheless do not mention the presence of a form corresponding (or transitive) to *L. kennedyi*.

Moreover, from the zoogeographical point of view Cyrenaica has a specific position. The undoubted influence of immigrants from southern and southwestern Asia on Cyrenaican terrestrial fauna is visible at least from Miocene (see e. g. Kodym 1985). Recently, an example of distribution pattern similar to distribution of *kennedyi* is known, e. g., in the voles of the genus *Microtus*: in Africa they occur only in the region of Cyrenaican Plateau and the adjacent coastal plain, the nearest localities then lying as far as the Near East and Turkey. Their occurrence in Cyrenaica is considered to be an example of a Pleistocene relict of intrusion of Eurasian rodent fauna into North Africa (Ranck 1968).

Nevertheless, on the other hand, the apparent lack of records of *kennedyi*, the absence of pronounced morphological differences between *kennedyi* and *diadema*, the possible existence of intermediate individuals in the Near East (e. g. Disi et al. 1988, mention a finding a specimen



Fig. 1. *Lytorhynchus diadema* ab. *kennedyi* from Agedabia (SW Cyrenaica, Libya).

that „indicated the similarity between *L. diadema* and *L. kennedyi*“ in Jordan; Martens 1993, reports an individual with 29 spots on the body from Syria) indicate that *kennedyi* is only a rare colour aberration of *L. diadema*.

Therefore, I suggest to assign an infrasubspecific status to the nominal taxon *Lytorhynchus kennedyi* K. SCHMIDT, 1939 and place it in the synonymy of *L. diadema*.

*Macroprotodon cucullatus* (GEOFFROY St. HILAIRE, 1827)

Material (1): NMP6V 34937, adult specimen, 24 February 1982.

#### Viperidae

*Cerastes cerastes* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

Material (1): NMP6V 34938, juvenile specimen, 12 February 1982.

Remarks: Horned form.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. O. Kodym, CSc. and Dr. P. Kodym for the submission of the underlying material and for helpful information concerning paleobiogeography of Cyrenaica, Doc. Dr. V. Hanák, CSc. for valuable comments on the zoogeography of North Africa and for loan of literature and last, but not least Dipl. Biol. H. Martens for his helpful comments on the manuscript.

#### REFERENCES

- ANDERSON, J. (1898): Zoology of Egypt, vol. 1. Reptilia and Batrachia. - Bernard Quaritch, London, lxx + 371 pp.
- DISI, A. M., AMR, Z. S., DEFOSSE, D. (1988): Contribution to the herpetofauna of Jordan III. Snakes of Jordan. - *The Snake*, 20: 40-51.
- KODYM, O. (1985): Explanatory booklet for the geological map of Libya 1:250,000. Sheet: Sabkhat Ghuzayil NH 34-10. - Industrial Research Centre, Tripoli, 104 pp.
- KRAMER, E., SCHNURRENBERGER, H. (1963): Systematik, Verbreitung und Ökologie der Libyschen Schlangen. - *Rev. Suisse Zool.*, 70: 453-568.
- LEVITON, A. E., ANDERSON, S. C. (1970): Review of the snakes of the genus *Lytorhynchus*. - *Proc. California Acad. Sci.*, ser. 4, 37: 249-274.
- LEVITON, A. E., ANDERSON, S. C., ADLER, K., MINTON, S. A. (1992): Handbook to Middle East amphibians and reptiles. - Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. Oxford, Ohio, vii + 252 pp.
- MARTENS, H. (1993): Three species of snake new for Syria. - *Zoology in the Middle East*, 9: 49-58.
- RANCK, G. L. (1968): The rodents of Libya: taxonomy, ecology and zoogeographical relationships. - *U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull.*, 175: vii + 1-264.
- WERNER, F. (1931): Ergebnisse einer zoologischen Forschungsreise nach Marokko. III. Amphibien und Reptilien. - *Sitzungsb. Akad. Wiss. Wien Mathem.-naturw. Klasse*, 140: 272-318.