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REPORT ON A COLLECTION OF REPTILES FROM RUMAILA DESERT, SOUTH OF IRAQ.

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ABSTRACT

This study includes a list of reptiles collected from Rumaila desert, south of Iraq, with a redescription of snake *Eryx jayakari* were given.

INTRODUCTION

The reptiles of Iraq have not been very well investigated and mostly known in the past from a few faunal lists, such as Hass (1952) and Reed and marx (1959). The most extensive work was made khalaf (1959).

During a field trip lasted for eight months to Rumaila desert 80km., west of Basrah, south of Iraq, a small collection of reptiles was made. the collection comprised of 209 different specimens which have been studied and discussed throughout the present paper. The trip started on April 1986 and lasted toward the end of October of the same year. During the last month of the trip only one snake representing *Malpolon moilensis* and two *Eremias brevirostris* were seen in the area.

The mentiond desert has a very variable wether sometimes temperature was very high followed by a srong dry storm coming from west carrying out soft sands from a place to another, after two to three days or a week the wind changes its direction and becomes eastern carrying a lot of humidity.

With this severe weather there are scattered low bushes, most parts of which are dry. Most reptiles of that area are active at night or in early morning, all the animals at the middle of the daytime when the temperature is morethan 60 c hide under soft sands or small bushes to avoid sun light heat.

Reptiles were found the most successful animals in such enviroments, most of them can live at daytime or at night. All of them are predators

living on insects, rodents and even somtimes attacking each other, except *Uromastix microlepis* wich feeds mostly on plants.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Most of the materials collected in April, May and September were made at daytime because tempraure was not so high, but during June, July and August most of the specimens were collected during night time because of the heat. In a daytime animals were found resting under small bushes or hiding under soft sands.

Special sticks were used for collecting snakes, ground traps were also made by digging in the ground and placing jars with their tops up to ground level. 8% formaldehyde was used for preservation. The specimens were kept in Iraq Natural History Museum (I.N.H.M.) under numbers 86-320-z6 to 86-529-z6.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This list contains 19 species and subspecies of reptiles belonging to nine families and three orders these are:-

Class : Reptilia

Order : Amphisbaenia

Family: Trogonophidae

Genus : *Diplometopon* (Nikolsky)

Diplometopon zarudnyi (Nikolsky, 1997)

Material examined : One specimen, No. 418 I.N.H.M.

Remarks : The measurments of our specimen fits with the description given by Anderson (1974) and (1979).

Order : Squamata

Sub Order : Sauria

Family : Gekkonidae

Genus : *Stenodactylus* (Fitzinger)

Stenodactylus slevini (Hass, 1972)

Material examined : Sixteen, No. 396-411 I.N.H.H.

Remarks : This gekko is easily recognized by an inverted "V" shaped mark on the head. Its measurments fits with a discription provided by Aronoff 1980).

Stenodactylus doriae (Blanford, 1872)

Material examined : Three, No. 396-411 I.N.H.M.

Family : Agamidae

Genus : *Uromastix* (Merrem)

Uromastix microlepis (Blanford, 1874)

Material examined : Four an adult and a juvenile, with two skeletons of dead *Uromastix*, No. 361-364 I.N.H.M.

Measurments : Total length of the adult 60 cm, upper labial 14 scales, back without tubercles.

Remarks ; This Uromastix found usually between small bushes. Skeleton of dead specimens can be seen morethan alives.

Genus : *Agama* (Daudin)

Agama blanfordi (Anderson, 1966)

Material examined : Two, Kspt in I.N.H.M. 365-366

Remarks : Mostly seen in evening on rocky hills.

Agama pallida (Reuss, 1833) ,

Material examined : Four, No. 367-371 I.N.H.M.

Family : Scincidae

Genus : *Scincus* (Laurentl)

Scincus conirosris (Blanford, 1881)

Material examined : Three, No. 372-374 I.N.H.M.

Measurments : Snont-vent length 70-85mm., tail 49-50mm., 9 upper labials.

Remarks : Study of this lizard is intresting since its Measurments was out of the range given for this species by Anderson (1974). Alan E. Leviton of Calif. Acad. of Scices (personal communication) thought that these specimens are intermediate between *Scincus conirostris* and *S. mecensis* from the region between Al-Laith on Red sea coast and Hail.

Genus : *Ablepharus* (Fitzinger)

Ablenharus brandtir (Strauch, 1865)

Material examined : one specimen No. 275 I.N.H.M.

Family : Lacertidae

Genus : *Acanthodactylus* (Fitzinger)

Acanthodactylus schmiditii (Hass, 1957)

Material examined : Fifteen, No. 376-390, I.N.H.M.

Remarks: This lizard feeds mostly on insects, it has intresting way for eating large beetles. First thy cut the head and making a hole from which the body contents is sucked.

Acanthodactylus scutellatus (Audouin, 1829)

Material examined : one No. 392 I.N.H.M.

Measurments : Snout-vent length 53mm., tail 27mm., upper labials 8 scales.

Acanthodactylus boskianus (Duadin, 1802)

Material examined : One, No. 391 I.N.H.M.

Genus : *Eremias* (Fitzinger)

Eremias brevirostris (Blanford, 1874)

Material examined : Three, No. 393-395 I.N.H.M.

Suborder : Ophidia

Family : Boidae

Genus : *Eryx* (Daudin)

Eryx jayakari (Boulenger 1888)

This is the first record of this snake in Iraq, since the only Boidae *Eryx jaculus* (Linnaeus, 1758) was known in our country (Norman, 1932; Khalaf, 1959; Mahdi and Georg, 1969).

Material examined : Two, No. 320-321 I.N.H.M. Fig : 1.2

Measurments : Female attains total length of 40cm., its measurements fits with the description of the type given by Boulenger (1888). Ventrals to scales, subcaudals 20, 11 upper labials, the 3rd is the deepest, extending to the loreal. Rostral large and broad with angular horizontal edge. The rostral, internasal and a small sheild meet their angles forming X-shape structure. Tail ending with a claw like horney scute. Vestigeal hind limbs occur as spurs on each side of cloacal opening.

Male has greater length of 48cm., but shorter tail as 15mm., 10 subcaudals colour of alivespecimens bright orange with transverse black and with strips venteral side white.

Family : Colubridae

Genus : Lytorhynchus (Peters)

Lytorhynchus diadema (Dumeril and Bibron, 1954)

Material examined : One male, No. 322 I.N.H.M.

Measurements: Total length 38cm, tail 36mm. ventrals 173, subcaudals 33, 8 upper labials, 44 dorsal blotches and each is widerthan interspace.

Remarks: This harmless snake seem to be intermediate between *L. diadema* and *L. gaddi* (Nikolsky). Leviton and Anderson (1973) beleved that *L. diadema mesopotamicus* (Hass, 1952) is a synonym of *L. gaddi.* But we beleved that all diadema group is one species.

Genus : *Malpolon* (Fitzinger)

*Malpolon moilen*sis (Reuss 1837)

Material examined : 10 specimens, No. 323-332 I.N.H.M.

Measurements : The longest male has a total length of 112cm., tail 11cm., 9-10 upper labials.

Remarks : This snake with tow grooved phangs in the back of the maxillary teeth. Some times it seems like a hooded cobra in the field, raising the head and flattening both throat and neck.

Genus : *Coluber* (Linnaeus)

Coluber cliffordi (Schlegel, 1837)

Material examined : One male, No. 334 I.N.H.M.

Measurments : Total length 82 cm., tail 19.5 cm., ventrals 223 scales, subcaudals 27, upper labials 12., Dorsals white in colour, with green blotches and regular lateral blotches.

Family : Viperidae

Genus : *Cerates* (Linnaeus)

Cerastes cerastes gasperretti (Liviton and Aaderson 1967) Horned sand viper.

Material examined : 25 specimens, No. 335-360 I.N.H.M.

Measurments: Total length 65-73 cm., tail 7-8 cm., 125 ventrals, 14 upper labials.

Remarks : This snake was found in a large population, hundereds of them wre killed in area of 20 km.sq. some have horns, others without. Mostly one pair of venomous teeth in the front of the maxilla, but somtimes two pairs.

Colour, the young specimens have bright grey spots with some scattered yellow and green cells. but elder specimens have dull brown spots.

They feed mostly on rodents.

Order : Chelonia

Suborder: Sryptodira

Family : Testudinidae

Genus : *Mauremys* (Gray)

Mauremys caspica caspica (Gmelin 1774)

Material examined : Two, No. 416-417 Dep. in I.N.H.M.

Remarks : It was found in a small pond 3 meter below ground level.

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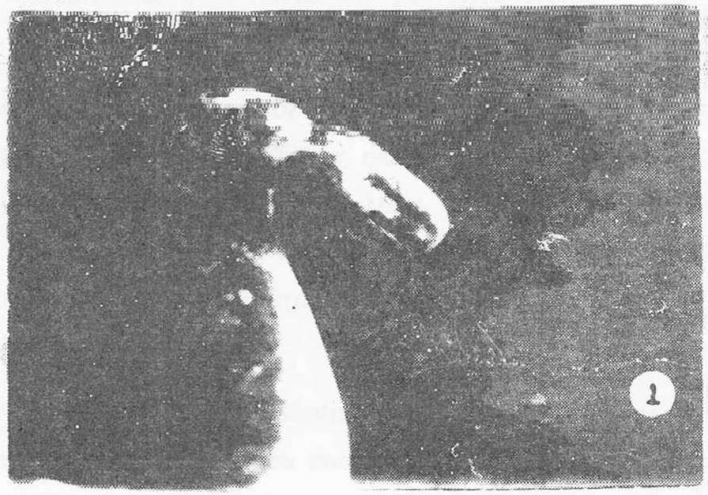
تقرير حول مجموعة من الزواحف من صحراء الرميلة ، جنوب العراق

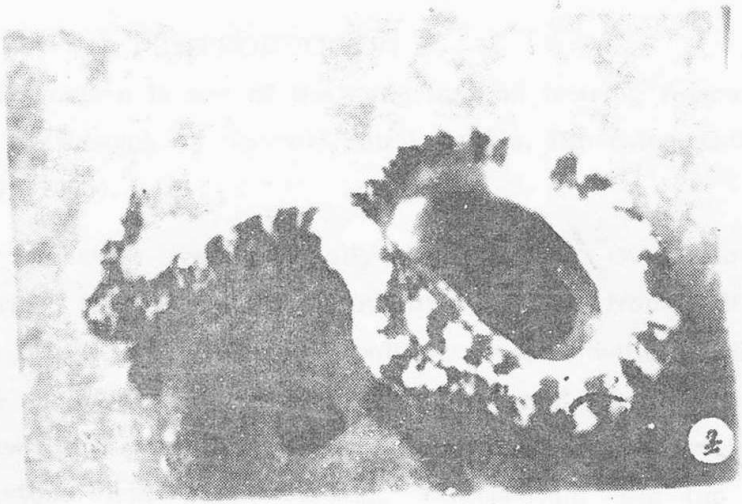
سامان روستم افراسياب وحسين عباس العلي

الخلاصـــة

تحتوي هذه الدراسة على قائمة بالزواحف التي تم جمعها من صحراء الرملية غرب البصرة جنوب العراق مع وصف للحية Eryx jayakari

وقد أعطيت بعض القياسات والملاحظات لاهميتها التصنيفية لبعض الانواع ٠





Figures 1-2 : Eryx jayakari (Boulenger) from Romaila west of Basrah south of Iraq.