

On the occurrence of *Blanus strauchi aporus* Werner, 1898 and *Chalcides guentheri* Boulenger, 1887 (Reptilia) in the Mediterranean ecozone of Syria

by Bayram Göçmen, Ahmad M. Disi and Mehmet Zülfü Yıldız

Abstract. The amphisbaenian *Blanus strauchi aporus* has been rediscovered in Matn Abu Rayya, Tartous, with a voucher specimen, after approximately 125 years. The distribution area of Günther's Skink *Chalcides guentheri*, recorded from Syria for the third time, is extended some 140 km to the north-east (Al Wardiyat, Hims) of its previous northernmost locality of Mazbud (Saida), Lebanon.

Key words. *Blanus strauchi aporus*, *Chalcides guentheri*, Syria, distribution, Middle East.

Introduction

Studies on the Syrian fauna have become more numerous during the last two decades and several short-term herpetofaunistic studies, usually restricted to limited parts of Syria, have been conducted (e.g. DISI & BÖHME 1996, LYMBERAKIS & KALIONZOPOULOU 2003, SINDACO et al. 2006). Many species of the Syrian herpetofauna have been found for the first time only recently. Two comprehensive studies with additional new records, including both a complete herpetofaunal list and the zoogeography of Syria, have been published by DISI & BÖHME (1996) and MARTENS (1997). Nevertheless, as also indicated by MORAVEC (1988), a number of questions regarding the distribution and taxonomy of Syrian reptiles still remain to be resolved, such as the possible occurrence of additional species that are already known from neighbouring countries.

During a field trip to the Mediterranean ecozone of Syria (23-26 April 2007), covering the provinces of Latakia, Tartous, Hims (Homs), Hama and Aleppo, new data on the Syrian herpetofauna were found.

Methods

Specimens were fixed with a 96% ethanol injection into the body cavity and were placed in 96% ethanol. This method was selected in order to allow the possibility of utilizing specimens for DNA studies in the future. They were subsequently coded and deposited in the Zoology Department of Ege University, Turkey (ZDEU). Pholidotic features were determined under a stereomicroscope and morphological measurements were taken using digital calipers (Mitutoyo 500-181 U) with an accuracy of 0.01 mm. Snout-vent length and tail length were measured to the nearest millimetre using a ruler. For bilateral pholidotic features, counts taken on both left and right sides (L/R) were used. The colour and pattern characteristics of specimens were recorded while they were still alive; colour photos were taken of the living animals. The geographic position of each sampling site was located by GPS (Fig. 1).