

# Morphology and distribution of the Asian Garden Dormouse, *Eliomys melanurus* Wagner, 1840, in Syria

(Rodentia: Gliridae)

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**Abstract.** Five adult specimens of the Asian Garden Dormouse, *Eliomys melanurus* Wagner, 1840, were collected near Deir az-Zor, along the Euphrates river in the north-eastern part of Syria. The external morphology and biometric measurements are discussed. Skull, phallus and baculum shapes are illustrated. The distribution of *E. melanurus* in Syria is mapped based on the recent and previously documented records. Some ecological and biological aspects are discussed.

**Key words.** Asian Garden Dormouse, *Eliomys melanurus*, Gliridae, Rodentia, Syria, Middle East.

## Introduction

Two species of dormouse are known in Arabia: the Forest Dormouse, *Dryomys nitedula* Pallas, 1778, and the Asian garden dormouse, *Eliomys melanurus* Wagner, 1840 (HARRISON & BATES 1991). The Asian Garden Dormouse has been recorded from the neighbouring countries of Syria, including Jordan (QUMSIYEH 1996, AMR, 2000, ABU BAKER & AMR 2003, 2004, AMR et al. 2004), Palestine (FILIPPUCCI et al. 1988a, 1988b, QUMSIYEH 1996, MENDELSSOHN & YOM TOV 1999), Lebanon (LEWIS et al. 1967), Iraq (NADACHOWSKI et al. 1978, 1990) and Turkey (MISONNE 1957, KRYŠTUFEK & VOHRALIK 2005, SÖZEN & KARATAŞ 2006). In Syria, this species has been recorded from several localities. AHARONI (1917) collected it at Dschebé (= Jebel al-Geba), north of Qaryatein; however, the skull of this specimen turned out to be a *Graphiurus* species (NADER et al. 1983). KAHMANN (1981) examined several specimens from Mt. Hermon and from the occupied Golan Heights (1200–2100 m) at Mas'ada Forest (1000 m), Birket Bab el-Haoua (900 m), Ein Qunya, and Dan. AL HUSSEIN (1985) collected specimens from several localities in Daraa governorate in south-western Syria. GOLEMANSKY & DARWISH (1993) reported on endoparasites of *E. melanurus* collected from Damascus. KRYŠTUFEK & KRAFT (1997) recorded it from Halabyieh. OBUCH (2001) reported on dormice in the diet of owls in the Middle East and mentioned the presence of *E. melanurus* at four localities in Syria: Halabyieh, Yabroud, Buransk and Palmyra. Finally, the species was reported from 2 km SW Qal'aat Sukkara, Jebel Abd al-Aziz (SHEHAB et al. 2004).

In this study we revise the published information on the taxonomy and distribution of the Asian Garden Dormouse in Syria and report further new specimens.