

# Observations on the reproduction biology of *Meriones meridianus* Pallas, 1773 (Mammalia: Rodentia) in Turkey

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**Abstract:** The reproduction biology of *Meriones meridianus* was investigated in the field and laboratory. The distribution in Turkey is confined to a relatively small area in the extreme east of the country. The duration of pregnancy in uncontrolled laboratory conditions was found to last 24–27 days, and average birth weight to be 2.45 g. The litter size was determined to vary between 5 and 7 at birth. The breeding season of this species lasted from May to October. The development of body measurements during the postembryonal period is shown.

**Kurzfassung:** Die Fortpflanzungsbiologie der Rennmaus *Meriones meridianus* wurde im Labor und Freiland untersucht. Die Verbreitung in der Türkei ist auf ein relativ kleines Gebiet im äußersten Osten des Landes beschränkt. Die Trächtigkeitsdauer im Labor unter unkontrollierten Bedingungen betrug 24–27 Tage, das durchschnittliche Geburtsgewicht 2,45 g. Die Wurfgröße variiert zwischen 5 und 7 Jungen. Die Fortpflanzungszeit dauert von Mai bis Oktober. Die Entwicklung der Körpermaße in der postembryonalen Phase wird dargestellt.

**Key words:** Reproduction biology, ecology, postnatal development, Rodentia, Turkey.

## Introduction

According to ELLERMAN & MORRISON-SCOTT (1951), the distribution of *Meriones meridianus* Pallas, 1773 ranges from the Caucasus to Turkmenistan. However, VINOGRADOV & ARGYROPULO (1941), SHIDLOVSKYI (1962), BOBRINSKII et al. (1965), LAY (1967), HEPTNER (1975), and CORBET (1978) reported the possible occurrence of the species in the neighbouring areas of eastern Turkey. YIGIT et al. (1998) first recorded the presence of *M. meridianus* from eastern Turkey. Although VINOGRADOV & AGYROPULO (1941), CHAWORTH-MUSTERS & ELLERMAN (1947), GAMBARYAN & PAPANYAN (1964), HEPTNER (1975) and NAUMOV (after NOVAK & PARADISO 1983) gave some basic ecological observations on this species, detailed studies of the ecology and biology of *M. meridianus* have not been made. The present study aims to contribute to the reproductive biology and ecology of *M. meridianus* in eastern Turkey.