

# A taxonomic comparison of the Hardun, *Laudakia stellio* (Reptilia, Agamidae), populations of southern Turkey (Hatay) and Cyprus

by Bayram Göçmen, Murat Tosunoğlu and Ertan Taşkavak

**Abstract.** The *Laudakia stellio* population in the Hatay region, on the southeast Mediterranean strip of Turkey, was investigated in detail by mapping morphometric and meristic characters as well as colour and pattern features. On the basis of the morphometric characters present in the population sample examined, we conclude that the Hatay population should be included in the subspecies *Laudakia stellio stellio*. Comparison of the Hatay population with *L. s. cypriaca* from Cyprus showed that these two populations represent two separate subspecies.

**Kurzfassung.** Im Hatay, dem mediterranen Gebiet in Südostanatolien, wurde die Population des Harduns, *Laudakia stellio*, detailliert im Hinblick auf morphologische Merkmale, Färbung und Zeichnungsmuster untersucht. Aufgrund von morphometrischen Eigenschaften folgern wir, dass die Hatay-Population am besten der Nominatform zuzurechnen ist. Der Vergleich dieser Population mit *Laudakia stellio cypriaca* von Zypern ergab, dass beide Populationen zwei separate Subspezies darstellen.

**Key words.** Morphology, taxonomy, systematics, Middle East, eastern Mediterranean.

## Introduction

The Starred Agamas or Hardun, *Laudakia stellio* (Linnaeus, 1758), formerly *Agama stellio*, have long been known from southern Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East. In Turkey they inhabit suitable habitats, whether arid or vegetated, such as sand-dunes to ruins, crevices of terraces, stone walls and stones, the underside of large rocks, and crevices in tree-trunks. Except for the Black Sea coast, the distribution covers the western, southern, central and south-eastern regions of Turkey, including the islands on the Aegean strip in Anatolia (BARAN et al. 1989).

A number of subspecies, which differ in their pattern, colouration, body size, number and order of scales, are known from Europe, Anatolia and northern Africa. DAAN (1967) found a considerable amount of variation within the Levantine *Laudakia stellio*, especially in the southern part of the range where variation in colour pattern and scale arrangement appeared to be high. DAAN (1967) claimed that the species may be divided into five subspecies (*stellio* in Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan; *picea* in the black lava desert of Jordan; *cypriaca* on Cyprus; *brachydactyla* in the Negev, southern Sinai, Jebel'Aja; *vulgaris* in north-western Egypt), and considered the Anatolian population to represent *L. s. stellio*.