

Additions to the herpetofauna of Syria

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Abstract. New information on the herpetofauna of Syria is provided, based on a collection made during a field trip from the Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC) in April 1999. We collected 391 specimens of 43 species at 30 different localities. The results expand our knowledge of the distribution of several species. The systematic position of four taxa (*Rana bedriagae*, *Ptyodactylus* sp., *Lacerta kultzeri*, *Mabuya aurata*) is discussed in the light of recent revisions of the Syrian herpetofauna.

Kurzfassung. Anhand der Ergebnisse einer Sammelreise des Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC) im April 1999 werden neue Ergebnisse zur Herpetofauna Syriens vorgestellt. Wir sammelten an 30 Lokalitäten insgesamt 391 Exemplare in 43 Arten. Die Ergebnisse erweitern unser Wissen über die Verbreitung mehrerer Arten. Die systematische Stellung von vier Arten (*Rana bedriagae*, *Ptyodactylus* sp., *Lacerta kultzeri*, *Mabuya aurata*) wird im Lichte neuerer Revisionen der syrischen Herpetofauna diskutiert.

Key words. Amphibia, Reptilia, Middle East, *Rana*, *Ptyodactylus*, *Lacerta*, *Mabuya*.

Introduction

Two recent publications on the herpetofauna of Syria (DISI & BÖHME 1996, MARTENS 1997) provide essential data for a long-overdue list of the amphibians and reptiles of this zoogeographically important country. During a field trip from the Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC) in April 1999, covering a large area and various ecosystem types, new information on the herpetofauna of the country was collected which expands our knowledge of the distribution of extant reptiles and amphibians. As the authors of the two papers mentioned above disagree on the status of certain taxa in the area, we attempted to provide data for resolving some of the faunistic ambiguities.

Material and methods

The expedition took place 4–15.4.1999. Most of the material was collected by one of us (P.L.), using a rubber band to stun the animals. Other members of the expedition collected reptiles and amphibians only by chance along with other field activities. All animals were chilled and kept in 95% alcohol. The geographic position of each station was located by GPS. All specimens were deposited in the NHMC collections. Depending on the taxonomic and zoogeographic characteristics, we made identifications of certain taxa down to subspecific level.

Collecting sites. We sampled at 30 sites. The names are taken from the “Freytag & Berndt” road map of Syria. Names with an asterisk were provided by locals and are not on the map. 1- Buraq, 60 km S of Damaskus (33°10', 36°29'): 4.4.99. – 2- cone of Shi-Chan, 20 km N of As Suwayda (32°53', 36°37'):