

New data on the Syrian herpetofauna, with a newly-recorded species of snake

by Roberto Sindaco, Gianluca Serra and Michele Menegon

Abstract. New data on Syrian amphibians and reptiles collected between 1990 and 2004 are given. The most important findings are the Elapid snake *Walterinnesia aegyptia*, here reported for the first time from Syria; *Zamenis hohenackeri* and *Vipera xanthina*, previously known only from Mount Hermon; and the very rare and poorly known *Telescopus nigriceps* and *Lytorhynchus kennedyi*. Other species were previously known from only a very few Syrian localities.

Kurzfassung. Es werden neue Daten über syrische Amphibien und Reptilien mitgeteilt, die zwischen 1990 und 2004 gesammelt wurden. Die wichtigsten Funde stellen *Walterinnesia aegyptia* dar, die hier zum ersten Mal aus Syrien gemeldet wird; *Zamenis hohenackeri* und *Vipera xanthina*, die bisher nur vom Mount Hermon bekannt waren, und die sehr seltenen und wenig bekannten Arten *Telescopus nigriceps* und *Lytorhynchus kennedyi*. Für andere Arten waren bisher oft nur Einzelnachweise bekannt.

Key words. Reptiles, Amphibians, *Walterinnesia aegyptia*, *Zamenis hohenackeri*, *Vipera xanthina*, Syria, faunistics.

Introduction

Syria is one of the zoologically least known countries of the Mediterranean, and many species of its herpetofauna have only recently been recorded for the first time (MARTENS & KOCK 1991; MARTENS 1993; BISCHOFF & SCHMIDTLER 1994; MORAVEC & MODRÝ 1994a, 1994b; MORAVEC & BÖHME 1997; MORAVEC 1998). A first checklist of the Syrian herpetofauna was given by DISI & BÖHME (1996), although this attempt to give a comprehensive overview has provoked criticism (MARTENS 1997).

During surveys carried out between 2000 and 2004, one of the authors (G. SERRA) made a small collection of specimens and some clear photographs, which provide interesting new data on Syrian amphibians and reptiles. In this paper we present these data. We also report on a collection made by the senior author in 1990 and a few other observations provided by other workers.

Materials

The bulk of the data is represented by the specimens collected by G. SERRA (GS), now in the collections of the "La Specola" Museum (MZUF), Florence University, Italy; the collection made by R. SINDACO (RS) is preserved in the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Carmagnola (Torino, Italy; MCC); other data are represented by photographs taken by G. SERRA and Claudia CORTI (Florence, Italy), filed in the MCC digital archive.