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**FOOD SPECTRUM OF THE VIVIPAROUS LIZARD *Zootoca vivipara* (LICHTENSTEIN, 1823)
(REPTILIA: LACERTIDAE) FROM ITS SOUTHERN RANGE OF DISTRIBUTION**

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The Viviparous lizard is the reptile species with the widest distribution in Eurasia (from Ireland to Japan and from South Europe to north of the Arctic Circle). In the southern parts of its distribution range such as in Bulgaria, this species is a glacial relict, restricted to mountainous areas. In Bulgaria, *Zootoca vivipara* is known from isolated populations in the mountains of Stara Planina, Vitosha, Rila, Pirin, Osogovo and Western Rhodopes, where it inhabits open humid areas from 1200 to 2900 m a.s.l. In spite of its wide distribution, there is still lack of knowledge on its dietary habits, especially from the southern part of the range. The study area embraced three sites in Bulgaria (Vitosha Mt, Rila Mt and Stara Planina Mt.). There were visited in 2016 and 2017 during the active season (May–September) and 343 Viviparous lizards were captured by hand. To investigate the food preferences faecal samples were used. A total of 166 faecal samples were collect that could be inividually attached to specimen, age, sex and

occupied habitat. In addition, to investigate the use of food resources, invertebrates were collected from the field using pit-ful traps. The most preferred invertebrates groups were Auchenorrhyncha, Araneae and Coleoptera, followed by Formicidae, Opiliones, Orthoptera and Heteroptera. In spring (May and June) the diet were dominated by beetles and spiders, while the summer diet were more diverse and dominated by cicadas, spiders, ants, opiliones and grasshoppers.

Keywords: food niche, lacertid lizard, mountain habitats