Under certain circumstances, this would enable a number of lizards with otherwise divergent territories to include in them a common local area with some periodic advantage. An obvious example could be a rock face which catches the sun at a certain time of day, or even some local and temporary source of food such as winged ants emerging from a nest or caterpillars dropping from a tree. This suggestion can be put forward all the more readily because it fits in with many observations of wall lizards of various species in the wild. It is in fact quite normal to find that a given rock or wall is visited by a number of lizards each day at about the same time, and this is often what gives the impression of large local populations. It is exceptional, however, to find two male lizards really close to each other, even though many may be present in a small area.

Since these conclusions were based largely on the behaviour of only two lizards, I have endeavoured to check them against behaviour of wall lizards in the wild. The best opportunities were with *Lacerta hispanica* and *Psammodromus algirus* in north-east Spain, and the results confirmed that a given lizard could be seen about the same time each day at precisely the same spot. In three cases (two *L. hispanica* and one *P. algirus*) it was possible to work out at least part of a regular individual route by plotting the places in which a recognisable lizard appeared repeatedly. Most significant of all was the possibility of confirming that certain small areas were used regularly by more than one lizard, without their ever coming into close contact. The best-observed example involved three specimens of *P. algirus* which could be seen on most mornings on a group of isolated rocks on a steep slope facing east. The lizards were easily identifiable as individuals—one had a large scar on the back, one had very distinct dorsolateral stripes, and the third was a particularly large specimen with a re-grown tail. The locality was visited on nine days out of fourteen in August/September, 1962, between 7 and 8.30 in the morning and on six days out of the same fourteen at some time during the afternoon. Out of the nine morning visits, on six occasions all three lizards were seen among the group of rocks, on two occasions two were seen, and on one occasion one. In each instance each lizard was occupying the same individual spot —the scar-backed lizard on top of a large boulder, the bright-striped one on a small flat rock about two feet from the boulder, and the very large specimen in a patch of dead grass at the foot of a bush roughly three feet from both the boulder and the flat stone (see Sketch 2). The lizards were watched from a distance through binoculars and not disturbed. On four occasions the first lizard was seen to approach or leave the boulder, three times along a route leading from the boulder to the south-west and once directly north, passing between the flat rock and the bush. The second lizard was twice seen to arrive on the flat rock from the north-west. The third lizard moved twice into the bush but no route could be worked out. During the afternoon visits, only once was one of the lizards seen in position, this being the large lizard by the bush. The general area was carefully searched on several other afternoon visits, but only once was one of the lizards sighted in another spot. This was when the scar-backed lizard was seen basking on a patch of granulated limestone among low vegetation some 35 feet south-west of the boulder, almost exactly in line with the route it took when leaving and approaching it. No other lizards of any kind were at any time seen within 100 feet of the small group of rocks.

In another place, some dozen lizards (*P. algirus*) were present each afternoon in a small area of sand-dunes sloping south-west to sea-level, but as the dunes were fairly thickly covered with bushes and tall grass, it was difficult to locate them without disturbing them. It was, however, noticeable that at the most only one or two lizards were to be found in the same area in the mornings.

SUMMARY.

Close observation of two specimens of *Lacerta muralis* living free in a garden over a period of nearly 2½ years, together with more generalised observation of the habits of wall lizards in captivity and the wild, suggests that in this species and probably in other species of wall lizard, individual territories are developed, not as compact areas but as a system of routes built up over a period and kept to more or less rigidly. Males may tolerate females on their routes and even actively accompany them at times, but may be expected to defend their routes against other males. The foot-shaking reaction of the females when meeting other lizards suppresses antagonism in the males. The system of routes facilitates greater concentration of lizards in periodically favourable areas than would be possible in more compact territories.

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VERY LARGE ENGLISH SLOW-WORM

By

R. A. FAIRFAX

A blue-spotted male slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) caught at Portsmouth, Hampshire, measured 489 mm. (19¼ inches) in length. M. Smith (The British Amphibians and Reptiles, 1964, Collins, 3rd ed.) gives 460 mm. as the length of the two largest British specimens he had seen. Is the Portsmouth specimen the largest yet found in this country?

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SLOW-WORM EATING COMMON LIZARD

By

H. ASHLEY BEST

On the evening of March 29th, 1965, a captive female slow-worm (body-length 180 mm.) was found eating an almost full-grown common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) of about 100 mm. total length. The lizard had been seized by the head, possibly by accident, and was consumed about 20 minutes later. The effort caused the slow-worm to water at the eyes but there were no apparent ill-effects; three days later it fed again on earthworms. The reptiles had hibernated together in the same cage and had emerged about three weeks before the events described.

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