

ON THE SYSTEMATIC POSITION OF THE SAND LIZARD (*Lacerta agilis* LINNAEUS, 1758) IN THE WESTERN UKRAINE

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The sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) is one of the well studied species of the European herpetofauna. Its high geographic variability was the reason for the description of a lot of subspecies unevenly distributed throughout the territory of Eurasia (Darevsky et al. 1976; Baranov 1976; Shcherbak et al., 1976; Bannikov et al., 1977). Some of subspecies have wide zones of intergradation, especially in cases of contacts between West and East European forms (*L. a. agilis*, *L. a. chersonensis*, *L. a. exigua*).

Three subspecies of the sand lizard are currently recognized for the Ukrainian fauna. The main part of the territory is inhabited by *L. a. chersonensis*. The nominotypical subspecies is known from the Transcarpathians. The broad zone of intergradation between *L. a. chersonensis* and *L. a. exigua* stretches through the eastern Ukraine (Darevsky et al., 1976). The lizards from the Transcarpathian plain were referred by Shcherbak and Shcherban' (1980) to *L. a. agilis*, almost without the admixture of features from *L. a. chersonensis*. However, the Ukrainian Pre-carpathians are considered by these authors as an area with the occurrence of lizards with mixed features.

Thus the boundary between subspecies goes approximately along the Carpathian range, this seems rather natural from the point of view of zoogeography. Nonetheless, specimens with the mixed features could be found on both sides of the range. The contact between these forms takes place due to the ability of sand lizard to transfer mountain passes during its distribution (Shcherbak and Shcherban', 1980). Therefore, there is a zone of intergradation of the two forms mentioned above in the Carpathian massif area.

In 1984, Bischoff revalidated *Lacerta agilis argus* (Laurenti, 1768) and suggested for this form an intermediate between *L. a. agilis* and *L. a. chersonen-*

sis geographic position. To the west this subspecies could be met as far as eastern Germany and to the east to the eastern Poland. Owing to this, the nominal form is absent from the territory of the former USSR (Bischoff, 1984). In this case the question on the systematic position of the West-Ukrainian sand lizards becomes controversial.

During a visit to the Eastern Carpathians at the end of August 1994, several specimens of sand lizards were collected by the author. The lizards were caught in the Rachov District (Zakarpatskaya region) near the edge of the Chernaya Gora Mountain of the Carpathian Reserve. This apparently isolated population dwells on the shingle shallows of one of the tributaries of the Chernaya Tisza River. The sand lizards were quite rare here due to the occupation of the territory by dense forest and high elevation of the area (757 m above sea level) (Lugovoi et al., 1987). These specimens were determined to subspecies and are stored in the collection of Zoological Institute (St. Petersburg) (ZISP 20503).

These lizards are characterized by scalation features (postnasals $1/2a$; 1 row of preanals) and coloration of *L. a. argus*. The specimens display the erythronotus mutation which is very typical of *L. a. argus* (Bischoff, 1988). The total size measurements correspond to those known for *L. a. argus* (Nollert, 1988).

The above said and also a comparison of the published data with our own measurements make it possible to contend that the dwelling of the subspecies *L. a. argus* on the territory of the Transcarpathian Ukraine is proved by the collectional data. Taking closeness of this and the nominal subspecies into account all previously mentioned lizards of nominal subspecies from the territory should be ascribed to *L. a. argus*. Therefore, the Transcarpathian lowland is inhabited by *L. a. argus*. Behind this, lizards with the features of *L. a. argus* are expected to be found in the adjacent regions, where the nominal subspecies

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was previously mentioned, western Moldavia for example. There are some data on the finding of erythronotus specimens in Belorussia (Pikulik et al., 1988) and in the coniferous forest zone in the Ukraine (Sukhov, 1948). Study of the collectional materials from these and adjacent areas will make it possible to determine the eastern border of the subspecies and dimensions (size) of the zone of its intergradation with *L. a. chersonensis*.

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