BREEDING OF THE GREEN LIZARD (*LACERTA VIRIDIS*) IN ENGLAND

In April 1952 a pair of Green Lizards were purchased from a dealer. They were said to have come from Italy and had not been long in captivity. At the end of April courtship was observed on several occasions. This was of the standard lacertid type, the male biting the tail of the female, each time nearer to the body, until finally the abdomen was reached. Actual mating was not witnessed. Three to four weeks later, by the increase in the size of the body of the female, it was evident that she was gravid. About seven weeks after mating the position of the eggs in the body could be seen externally and could be felt on palpation. The lizard also became more sluggish in its movements than before, and tamer.

During the mating period the lizards were kept indoors in a vivarium and only put out of doors on hot days. As soon as the weather was warmer they were transferred to a reptiliary out of doors. This is 9 ft. by 5 ft., and 3 ft. deep, enclosing a small moat 9 inches wide by 3 inches deep, and an island with rocks, moss, plants and heather. The inner walls are glazed to prevent climbing and the whole is covered with a wire frame to prevent cats and birds from entering.

On June 17th the female was seen to crawl under a flat rock, and several hours later emerged, having laid her eggs. These, 14 in number, were removed and placed in a wide-necked jar with sand. They were then partially covered and water to moisten the sand was run down the inside so that it did not come into contact with the eggs. The jar was then floated in a tropical fish tank which maintained a temperature of 75°-80°F. A piece of glass was placed on the aquarium; this collected the moisture evaporating from the sand which condensed on the glass and dripped back into the jar. In this way the sand was kept damp.

The eggs when first laid were about 15 mm. long and oval in shape. Three weeks later they were distinctly larger and darker in colour. About five weeks after laying they had attained their full size and in some of them the embryo could be seen, its situation being indicated by a dark blob. The embryo became more noticeable a week or so before hatching, and was seen to move about, exceedingly slowly.

On August 15th, exactly eight weeks after being laid, the first eggs hatched. A watch was kept and as soon as the lizard began to break through the egg was removed; the first sign of emergence was the appearance of a tiny slit about one-eighth of an inch long, in the parchment-like shell*. Some of the eggs were accidently turned so that the dark blob, marking the site of the embryo, was underneath. This proved fatal, since after rupturing the shell, the head of the emerging lizard became buried in the sand, moistened with escaping albumen, so that it was unable to breathe and died. In the case of those young that hatched successfully, about half an hour or more elapsed before the lizard finally freed itself and left the shell. Most of the young emerged with the yolk and umbilical cord still attached to the body. Nine of the fourteen eggs had hatched successfully by the next day. The young were about two inches long, brownish above, pale green beneath. They were housed in a small vivarium and fed on *Drosophila,* green fly, black aphis, chopped earthworm, shredded raw meat, small caterpillars and maggots. Six of the lizards still survive (April, 1953) and are about 11 inches long, the body being about one-third of the total length.

* Presumably made by the egg-tooth with which the young lizard is furnished.—*Ed.*

PETER SAYER, 7 Bramley Way, West Wickham, Kent.