

# Arboreal and nocturnal activity of the snake-eyed skink *Ablepharus kitaibelii* in Greece, with a link to video evidence

ELIAS TZORAS<sup>1\*</sup>, BOYAN ZLATKOV<sup>2</sup>, SYLVIA GEORGIEVA<sup>3</sup> & VLADISLAV VERGILOV<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Independent Researcher, Patras 26442, Achaia, Greece

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

<sup>3</sup>University Specialised Hospital for Active Treatment in Oncology EAD, 6 Plovdivsko Pole Street, 1756 Sofia, Bulgaria

\*Corresponding author e-mail: [eliaszoras@outlook.com](mailto:eliaszoras@outlook.com)

The snake-eyed skink, *Ablepharus kitaibelii* Bibron & Bory de St-Vincent, 1833, is a diurnal species distributed widely in the central and southern Balkan peninsula, north-western Turkey, as well as on several Ionian and Aegean Islands (Vergilov et al., 2016). It inhabits a variety of biotopes from sea level up to highly elevated regions (Speybroeck et al., 2016) and is well known as a terrestrial, semi-fossorial species found frequently in moist leaf litter in sparse to densely vegetated habitats throughout its native range (Gruber, 1981).

On the night of 9 September 2024 (20:25 h), during a faunistic survey of the Strofylia forest, north-western Peloponnese (38.123° N, 21.375° E, WGS 84), we observed an adult snake-eyed skink moving on the ground. After a few minutes it moved up the vertical trunk of a eucalyptus tree (Fig. 1, [BHS video, 2024](#)) to a height of about 2 metres and then hid itself under the bark. The observation took place in a stand of eucalyptus trees situated in the middle of an extensive forest of *Quercus macrolepis* surrounded by wetlands and adjacent clearings.

Nocturnal activity has not been reported previously in this species. It is known that *A. kitaibelii* usually shows a bimodal activity pattern, being mostly active during the first hours after sunrise and the last hours before sunset (Pasulević, 1965; Gruber, 1974). However, its activity can extend into dusk (Fuhn, 1970), while during summer months the species is considered crepuscular (Speybroeck et al., 2016; Vergilov, 2017). Other authors have suggested that the species is not active during the summer and the hot months of the year (Rotter, 1962; Herczeg et al., 2007). Our observation of nocturnal activity was made one hour after sunset, in dark conditions when the individual was

observed under artificial light. Arboreal activity has apparently not been reported previously and neither has it been seen to climb vertical surfaces (Fejérváry, 1912). Our note shows that the snake-eyed skink has a more diverse behavioural repertoire than reported previously.

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Figure 1. *Ablepharus kitaibelii* climbing an eucalyptus tree after dark

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