

A NOTE ON *HEMIDACTYLUS TURCICUS*

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The gecko *Hemidactylus turcicus* is widely distributed in southern Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East extending into Iran. It has been introduced into Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Mexico, Cuba and Chile. The subspecies *H. turcicus parkeri* occurs in Somalia, the south of the Arabian peninsula, southern Iran, and Pakistan; while *H. turcicus spinalis* is found in the Balearic Islands. The genus *Hemidactylus* probably originated in the Mediterranean region where *H. turcicus* is common, often apparently cohabitating with *Tarentola mauritanicus*. Two other species of geckos occur in Europe: *Phyllodactylus europaeus* of Italy, Corsica and Sardinia, and the clawed *Cyrtodactylus kotschy* of the Balkans, Ionian and Aegean islands, southern Italy and south west Asia.

H. turcicus inhabits bark, tree trunks, palm fronds, agaves, rocky outcrops and human habitations. It is said not to hibernate regularly. Crepuscular and nocturnal, the adult geckos may reach a length of 10 cm. They are slender, with tubercles on the back and tail. The specimen in my photograph was seen in Mallorca in late November, 1994. It was immature, measuring only about 6 cm in length. I was lucky to find it under a boulder beside the road in the Sierra del Nord because I did not come across other reptiles so late in the year.

Fast, agile, and an excellent climber, *H. turcicus* feeds mainly on insects and spiders. It utters a mournful, mewling cry. At least five types of call have been identified, from which both the age and sex of the individual making them can be distinguished. One or more clutches of spheroid eggs are laid in June and hatch in July. Measuring 10-12 x 9-10 mm, they have marbled white shells and are hidden in sand or amongst rocks. The incubation period is about 45 days at 32°C and 90-100 days at 25°C. The young are about 4 cm long at birth.



Plate 1. *Hemidactylus turcicus*, seen on Mallorca, November 1994.