

NOTES ON THE MOSOR ROCK LIZARD, *LACERTA MOSORENSIS* KOLOMBATOVIC 1886, AND ITS REPRODUCTION IN CAPTIVITY

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INTRODUCTION

Lacerta mosorensis is a rather rare lizard and very rarely kept in terraria. It inhabits places which are often difficult to reach in the Dinaric Alps of Yugoslavia east of the line Split-Kotor and south of Sarajevo. It is about the same size as the common Wall Lizard (*Lacerta muralis*), but is easily distinguished from it: the skin is very smooth, almost like a skink; the head is flat to enable the lizard to enter narrow openings in the rocks; the colour may be bluish, brown, grey or yellowish, always with black spots on the body (see plate 1). The typical colouration is grey, unlike any other species of *Lacerta* which I have seen. *Lacerta mosorensis* seems to be closely related to *L. oxycephala*, *L. graeca* and *L. danfordi*.

The lizard is most often found at an altitude above 1000m, usually between 1100m and 1500m (Ragovanovic 1951), where it inhabits rather cool and humid places. Other writers state that the lizard is found at an altitude of 600m — 1500m (Arnold et al, 1977).

The species was first discovered in the Mosor mountains near Split, Yugoslavia, in 1886.

LACERTA MOSORENSIS IN CAPTIVITY

On November 6th 1981 I received two pairs of *Lacerta mosorensis* from a friend. They were collected in the region of Durmitor, high in the mountains of Yugoslavia. On February 20th 1982, I received another 10.

Two of the animals received on November 6th were placed immediately in a small (70cm x 70cm) glass terrarium in the garden. Here they commenced hibernation in December, and appeared again in February.

The animals received on February 20th were kept warm and active for a month before I put them in the same garden terrarium with those received earlier. They disappeared and remained inactive until the end of April. In May their activity increased and they began to eat more of the crickets (*Gryllus bimaculatus*) offered to them.

In June all the animals began to copulate regularly, whether or not they had hibernated. Copulation was so frequent that one of the females later died as a result of injuries caused by the males during copulation. By the end of June mating seemed to have ceased: I observed no more copulation, but it is quite possible that mating continued unobserved beyond this time. In July eggs were laid as follows: on July 16th I found 10 eggs, but as they were mixed with those of *Lacerta parva* I cannot be certain how many were laid by *mosorensis*. More eggs were discovered on July 26th and 29th, full details of which are given in the table (table 1).

TABLE 1

Date eggs discovered	No.* of eggs	Approximate age of eggs at time of discovery	Incubation temp.	Date of hatching	Incubation period (days)
16 July	?	+ 2 days	28°C	7 Aug (3); 8 Aug (1)	2 + 22 or 23
26 July	5	+ 3 days	31°C	} 14 Aug (2); 15 Aug (3)	3 + 19 or 20
26 July	8	1 day	31°C		
29 July	7	1 day	28°C	19 Aug (5); 20 Aug (2)	1 + 21 or 22

*From a total of 4 females

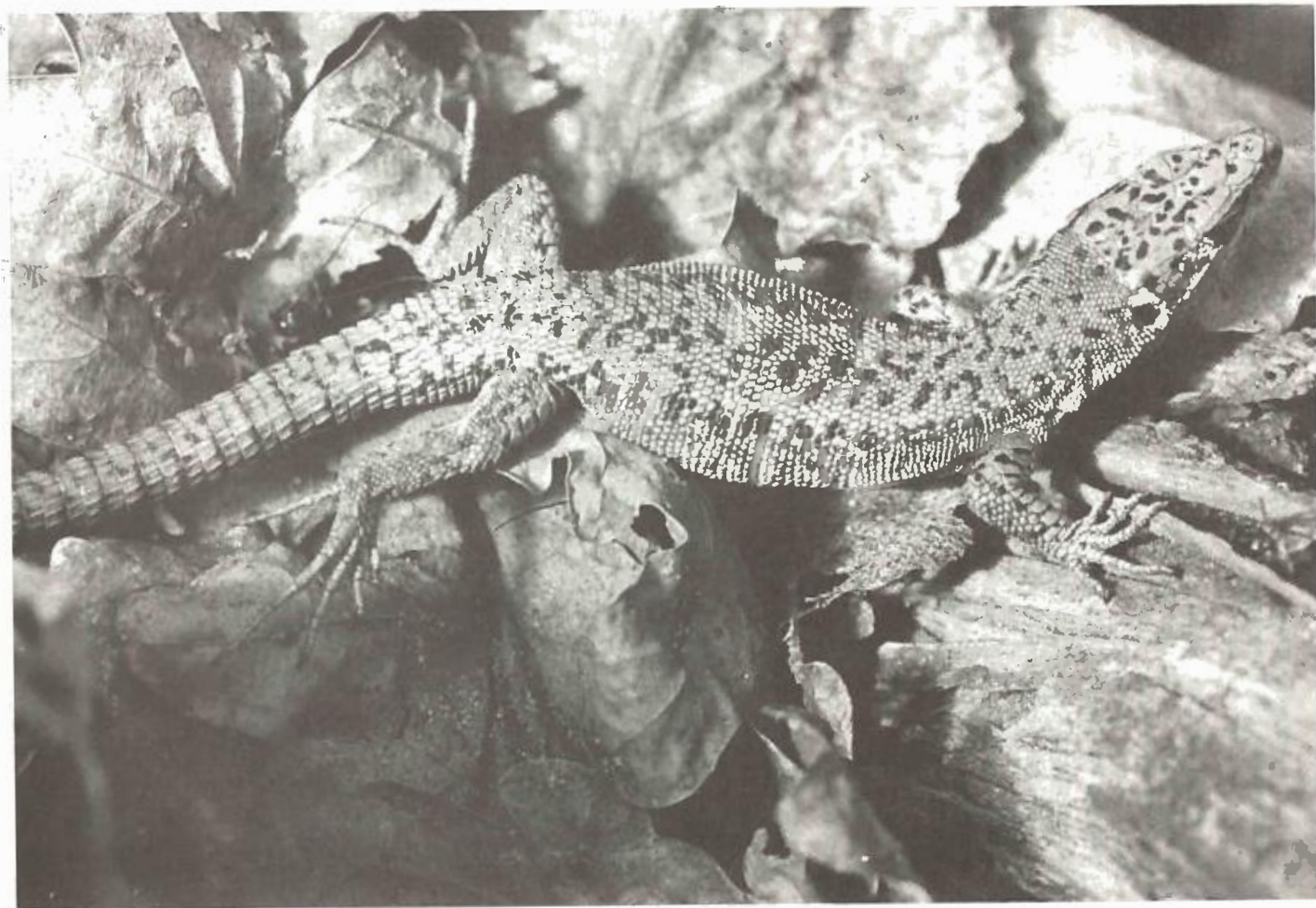


Plate 1. *Lacerta mosorensis*, adult

From the table it will be noticed that the length of incubation is amazingly short: about 23 days in all instances. All of the females laid only one clutch of eggs this year (and possibly every year?). The number in each clutch seems to vary from 4 (July 16th?) to 8.

At birth the young lizards have the small black spots characteristic of the adults, and most of them have a blue tail, though the blue is not as clear as in the young of some other *Lacerta* species (e.g. *saxicola*, *danfordi*, *monticola*) and some of them had no blue colouration at all.

At hatching the lizards are quite small. Two average sized examples which I measured had a head and body length of 2.7cm and tail length of 7.2cm in one and 2.8cm and 7.2cm respectively in the other. They grow slowly, similar to *L. saxicola* and *L. horvathi*. Within 2-3 months *L. graeca*, *L. danfordi* and *L. laevis* which were about the same size at hatching and kept under the same conditions were double the size of the *mosorensis*.

The species seems to do well in small, outdoor glass-covered vivaria in our rather fresh and humid climate, which is to be expected as in Yugoslavia it is a lizard of the high mountains.

The most exceptional thing about this lizard is the very short incubation period of the eggs. I have bred almost every species of *Lacerta*, but until now the shortest incubation periods of any of them have been near 40 days. (*L. graeca* and *L. monticola*). Now I find one with a period of about 23 days. It would be interesting to know how far advanced in development the embryos are when the eggs are first laid.

Now at the time of writing in November, the lizards show themselves every sunny day, just as do *L. monticola*, *saxicola* and *caucasia*.



Plate 2. *Lacerta mosorensis*, juvenile

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