

THE MOROCCAN GLASS LIZARD, *OPHISAURUS KOELLIKERI* (GÜNTHER, 1873), A NEW SPECIES IN ALGERIA

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Ophisaurus koellikeri, the only known anguid in Africa, is considered an endemic Moroccan species mostly found in forests, particularly those of *Cedrus atlantica*, *Quercus faginea* and *Q. ilex*, in subhumid areas (Schleich *et al.*, 1996; Bons & Geniez, 1996). It is abundant in the Middle Atlas, not so numerous in the Rabat-Casablanca-Essaouira area, and in parts of the High Atlas, including the Jbel Siroua. It is rare in the Souss plain. In eastern Morocco this species has been collected in the Jbel Tazzeqa (Bons, 1960). Its presence in Gaada of Debdou (Mellado & Mateo, 1992) and Debdou (Bons & Geniez, 1996) suggests that it may also be found in Algeria.

One specimen of *Ophisaurus koellikeri* (EBD 19809) is kept in the reptile collection of the Estación Biológica de Donana. It comes from the Tlemcen mountains (north-western Algeria) and more precisely from the Tal Terny (wilaya of Tlemcen). The animal was caught by J. Pena on May 7, 1986. It is an adult male with a snout-vent length of 152 mm and total length of 375 mm. Its back is black-spotted but the blue spots evident on Moroccan male Glass Lizards are absent. The country where this animal was found was woodland at 1200 meters altitude. The other reptiles found in this site were *Lacerta tangitana*, *Podarcis hispanica*, *Psammodromus algirus* and *Malpolon monspessulanus*. This site is at the eastern and northern extremities of the range of *Ophisaurus koellikeri* and is close to the Mediterranean sea. It extends the geographic distribution of this species 170 km towards the North-East.

The presence of *Ophisaurus koellikeri* in Algeria was predicted by Bons and Geniez (1996) on the basis of three observations: (i) the relative proximity of the Debdou area to the Algerian frontier; (ii) the similarity of the Debdou and Tlemcen mountains which led Brosset (1961) to consider <<the Debdou-Tlemcen mountain dorsal>> as a single geographic entity; (iii) the existence of old unconfirmed descriptions of apod lizards in central and eastern mediterranean Algeria, for example *Anguis fragilis* and *Ophiomorus miliaris* (= *O. punctatissimus*), European reptiles unknown in Africa. Doumergue (1901) citing Gervais (1836) reported *Anguis fragilis* and *Ophiomorus miliaris* in Algier and Bône (now Annaba). Moreover, H. Martin found an apod lizard which was named *A. fragilis* in the south-east of Algier, in Aumale (now Sour el Ghozlane) (Olivier, 1894).

The capture of *Ophisaurus koellikeri* in the West Algerian highlands suggests that its range may extend further across the mountains to the east.

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