



ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ARE THE DAYS OF DESCRIBING NEW MEDITERRANEAN LIZARDS OVER?

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The pace of new reptile species descriptions, especially of new lizard descriptions, is rapidly increasing. The number of recognized lizard species has increased by more than 30% since the turn of the century. I examine the traits of newly-described lizard taxa, and compare them to those of species described earlier, to predict where new species will be found, what traits they have, and whether they are likely to be more extinction-prone than well-known species. I compiled data on the biogeography and ecology of newly-described lizards and examine the relationship between their traits and their date of description. New descriptions are generally of small species, predominantly with small geographical ranges. Most 'new' species have been described from the Oriental Realm, while few new species were described from Africa. Interestingly, rates of species description are lowest in the Mediterranean biome – <8% of the standing diversity of lizards that have the majority of their range in Mediterranean biomes the world-over was described this century. Only six lizard species were described in the Mediterranean biome within the Mediterranean basin (others were described in the Mediterranean parts of Australia, South Africa, North America and Chile). These were almost invariably the results of splitting well-known forms. There has probably been only one real new discovery of a lizard in the Mediterranean biome of the Mediterranean Basin this century (*Asaccus barani*). Eight Mediterranean Basin lizard species were described in the desert biome. These numbers stand in stark contrast to the accelerating species description rates in much of the rest of the world. I take this to mean that the lizard fauna of Mediterranean regions in general and that of the Mediterranean basin in particular is probably almost completely known. Future descriptions will likely be the results of eroding species recognition criteria.