



Podarcis siculus (Rafinesque- Schmaltz, 1810) as a slug hunter (Squamata; Lacertidae): A case record from western Black Sea region of Turkey

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Abstract

In this brief paper, we give some photographs and observations on the slug hunting of *Podarcis siculus* (Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1810), a member of the Lacertidae, from Zonguldak, a province in western Turkey near the Black Sea.

Keywords: lizard, diet, prey

Öz

Bu kısa makalede, Lacertidae familyasının bir üyesi olan *Podarcis siculus* (Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1810)'un Türkiye'nin batısında Karadeniz'e yakın bir il olan Zonguldak'taki sümüklüböcek avcılığına ilişkin bazı fotoğraf ve gözlemlere yer verilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: kertenkele, diyet, av

1. Introduction

The Lacertidae family is classified below the Squamata order, which is the largest order of reptiles. Lacertid lizards, also known as wall lizards or true lizards, are native to Afro-Eurasia.

It is a diverse family with about 362 species in 42 genera. They represent the dominant group of lizards found in Turkey. According to the latest online checklist, the genus *Podarcis* (Wagler, 1830) which belongs to the Lacertidae family, comprises 27 currently recognised species (World Lacertidae Phylogeny, 2023).

Podarcis siculus (Rafinesque- Schmaltz, 1810), also known as Italian wall lizard, originated throughout the Italian mainland and ranges through surrounding islands and distant countries. It's colour varies from green to brown. Mainland species have reticulated green patches on the dorsal side. In males, at most half of the outer ventral scales are blue. Undersides are usually unspotted and whitish or greenish (Speybroeck et al., 2016).

As a generalist predator, the *P. siculus* diet consists of a broad variety of invertebrates, mainly arthropods. *P. siculus* feeds on small vertebrates and plants as well (Bonacci et al., 2008). There is also a distinctness in diet between the sexes, with males having a more diverse diet than females. Also, insular populations of *P. siculus* do consume a greater percentage of plant matter as a part of their diet (Taverne et al., 2019). To refer to the extraordinary observation records, it is known that it fed on a dead adult Etruscan shrew (*Suncus etruscus*) and a juvenile Mediterranean house gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*) (Capula & Aloise, 2011). Also, there have been reports of cannibalism (Grano et al., 2011). The extensive diet of the species also influences its evolutionary success.

2. Materials and methods

This observation was photographed with a Nikon D5300 DSLR camera body and a Tamron 150-600 mm G1 telephoto lens from Filyos Castle, Çaycuma district, Zonguldak province, Turkey. Coordinates are 41°34'26.6"N, 32°02'07.8"E, 15:35 PM GMT +03:00, April 30, 2023.

3. Results and Discussion

In this report, we provide a direct observation of a male *P. siculus* hunting a *Deroceras* sp. land slug (Fig. 1). After catching it, the lizard dropped the slug from its mouth (Fig. 2). The lizard disappeared after chasing the fallen slug. It is clearly visible that the tissue of the slug is damaged. This shows that the lizard has been chewing the slug for some time and trying to keep it in its mouth. As seen, Filyos Castle has an important role in the breeding and feeding area of the *P. siculus*.



Figure 1. An adult male *Podarcis siculus* hunted a *Deroceras* sp..



Figure 2. Dropped the slug from its mouth and went after the fallen slug.

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