

the end of September or October to March–May, depending on location. Lizards fall into inactivity at an air temperature of +7.5 °C. The breeding season begins shortly after the end of hibernation; fights are observed between males. Pairs remain together for the reproductive season. Sand Lizards dig deep burrows of up to 70 cm length. Between the end of May and the beginning of June, females produce 1–2 clutches, each containing 4–15 eggs. The incubation period lasts for about two months. Hatchlings with a body length of 2.3–3.4 cm emerge in July. They become sexually mature after the second or third hibernation, at a body length of 7–8 cm. The longevity of *L. a. boemica* is 6–7 years in Dagestan. Sand Lizards feed on various insects and their larvae, spiders, woodlice, earthworms, and molluscs. Large individuals may eat smaller lizards, including their own young.

Conservation status: The Sand Lizard is included in the Red Data Books of Karelia, Moscow, Tver, and the Tomsk regions, as well as the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area.



Fig. 342: Head scales of a male Caucasian Green Lizard, *Lacerta media*.

E. DUNAYEV



Fig. 343: Juvenile Caucasian Green Lizards are easily distinguished from adults by their pale longitudinal stripes.

E. DUNAYEV

Caucasian Green Lizard

Lacerta media LANTZ & CYRÉN, 1920

Figs. 342–345, Map 70

The Caucasian Green Lizard often settles among dense, prickly bushes on steep, stony slopes and drops itself from a height of 3–4 metres at the slightest disturbance. Large lizards, especially males with strong limbs, are capable of making long jumps from stone to stone. When mulberries ripen, these lizards show no aversion to eating the sweet fruits.

External appearance: This is the largest species of the genus *Lacerta*, reaching a body length of 17 cm, tail length of 25 cm or more and a body weight of 70 g. In the Russian part of the species' range, specimens are typically smaller than in Transcaucasia. Males grow larger than females. A masseteric scale is absent, and the tympanic scale is usually pronounced. There are usually four pairs of infralabials, less often five. The dorsal scales are hexagonal and elongate, with strongly developed keels, and arranged in 42–56 rows at midbody. The row of 11–16 femoral pores is short, and does not reach the knee joint; at the same time, external pores are smaller than internal ones.

The dorsal surface of juveniles is dark brown or fulvous with five narrow, greenish longitudinal stripes. Adult lizards are bright green with numerous small black spots and speckles, with a vermiculate or reticulate pattern on the head. The upper side of the hindlegs on females has round black spots. The venter is yellowish-green in males, and yellowish or white in females. During the breeding season, the lateral side of the head, throat, and sometimes the edges of the body along the venter on the male acquire a bright, pale blue to mid-blue colour, and the body becomes emerald green. Often, there are also rounded blue spots on the sides of the front third of the body. The tail and hindlegs are always green.

Distinguishing features: This species differs from the Five-streaked Green Lizard by its larger size and a short row of femoral pores that do not reach the knee.

Distribution and subspecies taxonomy: The Caucasian Green Lizard is common in eastern Turkey and north-western Iran. In the Caucasus, it occurs sporadically in eastern and northern Georgia, in the foothills and mountainous regions of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and on the Black Sea coast in Abkhazia and Ajaria.

In Russia, it lives in the valleys of the rivers of inland Dagestan, and in isolated localities on the Black Sea coast of the Krasnodar Territory.

Of the three to five currently recognized subspecies, the nominotypical one, *L. m. media* LANTZ & CYRÉN, 1920, inhabits the Caucasus. Previously, the Caucasus Green Lizard was considered a synonym of the polytypic species *Lacerta trilineata* BEDRIAGA, 1886, which was then divided into more than ten subspecies.

Natural history: The Caucasian Green Lizard lives in shrub thickets, in juniper and pistachio–juniper arid, open forests, or deciduous oak forests. It is also found in vineyards, gardens, prickly and rocky hedges. In mountains, it is found up to 2,600 m a.s.l. but, in Dagestan, it does not occur at such high elevations. Population densities are uneven within the species' range. Whereas in Dagestan, in the surroundings of the villages of Akhty and Rutul,



Fig. 344: An old male Caucasian Green Lizard from Dagestan.

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this species is not rare, it is scarce around Botlikh village. These diurnal lizards awake from hibernation between the second half of February and mid-March or early April, and leave again for overwintering at the end of September. They climb with ease in shrubs and trees to heights of a few metres. Caucasian Green Lizards dig one metre long or even deeper burrows. The breeding season begins in April. In southern Armenia and eastern Georgia, females produce two clutches per year: the first, containing 9–18 eggs measuring 9×17 mm, at the end of May, and the second, with fewer eggs, a month or even more later. Each large female may lay as many as 30 eggs per season. Hatchlings, 2.9–3.5 cm long, emerge between mid-July and early September. This species reaches sexual maturity at the age of two years, at a body length of 9 cm (females) or 9.5 cm (males). Food mainly consists of insects: beetles, acridoids, butterflies and their caterpillars, dipterans, and

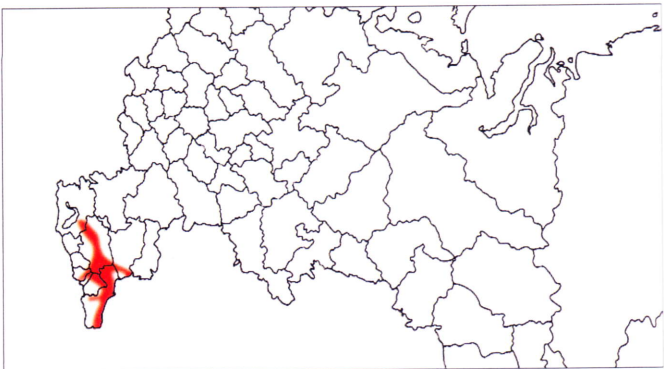


Map 70: *Lacerta media*.



Fig. 345: An adult male of the Caucasian Green Lizard from the Krasnodar Territory.

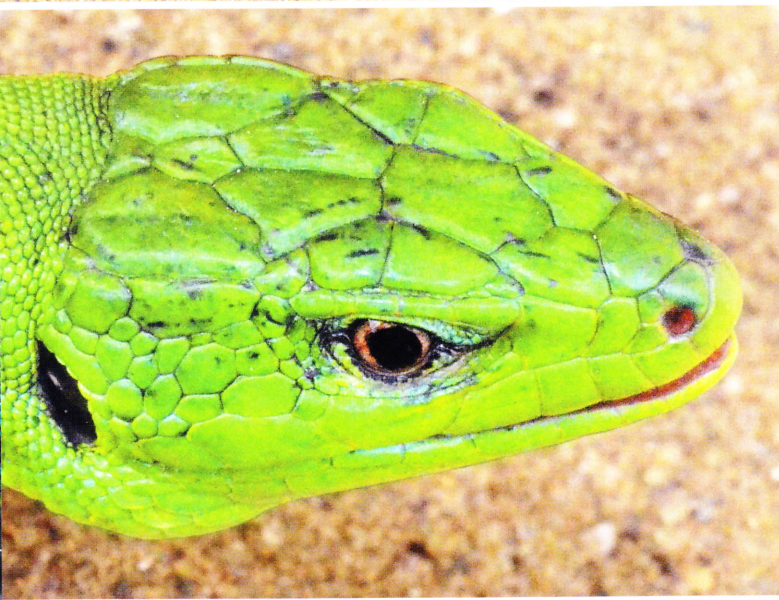
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Map 71: *Lacerta strigata*.

often molluscs, spiders, and woodlice. Occasionally, large individuals eat young lizards of other and their own species, as well as mulberries and grapes.

Conservation status: The Caucasian Green Lizard is included in the Red Data Books of Russia, Dagestan and the Krasnodar Territory.



Figs. 346–347: Caspian Green Lizard, *Lacerta strigata*, adult male from Dagestan.
E. DUNAYEV

Caspian Green Lizard or Five-streaked Green Lizard or Striated Lizard

Lacerta strigata EICHWALD, 1831

Figs. 346–350, Map 71

Baltic German naturalist Karl Eduard VON EICHWALD described this species from the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea, which is now in southern Turkmenistan.

External appearance: The Caspian Green Lizard has a more slender habitus and a longer tail than the Sand Lizard. It may attain a body length of 11.2 cm, a tail length of 21.1 cm, and a body weight of 48 g.

The masseteric and tympanic shields are usually well defined. The dorsal scales are narrow with longitudinal keels; femoral pores reach the bend of the knee. Young lizards are brownish-olive with five narrow, longitudinal pale stripes. In adults, dark brown or black spots and speckles are located between the stripes. Pale dorsal bands last longer in females, while in males they are almost unnoticeable. The upper side of the anterior third of the body is usually green, and its hind part, including the limbs and tail, are olive-fulvous. The venter is greenish or greenish-yellow in males and usually white in females, without spots. During the breeding season, the head, throat, and sides of the neck of the males are dark blue, while those of females become greenish-yellow.

Distinguishing features: This species differs from the Sand Lizard by its habitus, juvenile pattern, and having a tympanic shield. It is distinguished from the Caucasian Green Lizard by longer rows of femoral pores, reaching to the knee joint.

Distribution and subspecies: The Caspian Green Lizard inhabits mainly the eastern half of the Caucasus. In Transcaucasia, it occurs in the lowland regions of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia; it is unknown west of Suram Pass. Until recently, an isolated population existed on Cape Pitsunda in Abkhazia. Outside the Caucasus,



Fig. 348: An adult female of the Caspian Green Lizard.
L. MAZANAIEVA