



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



Fig. 349: A large male of the Caspian Green Lizard from Dagestan.

A. KIDOV

the species is found in eastern Turkey, northern Iran, and south-western Turkmenistan.

In Russia, Caspian Green Lizards occur in Dagestan, reaching the latitude of Armavir and Stavropol in the north. There are no recognized subspecies.

Natural history: The Caspian Green Lizard lives in the lowlands and in the mountains up to 2,500 m a. s. l. It prefers areas with green grass, steppe, mountain steppe or semi-desert vegetation. It often settles among bushes of blackberry, rosehip, Christ's-thorns, and around human dwellings. In Dagestan, it is found in the low-



Fig. 350: An adult female of the Caspian Green Lizard from Dagestan during the breeding season, with bright green head and shoulders.

L. MAZANAIEVA

land, foothill and, in part, in the mountain areas, approximately in the same habitats frequented by Sand Lizards. In the contact zone of these two species, one dominates in numbers over the other. Locally, Caspian Green Lizards form dense populations. They climb into shrubs and trees, may dive into water and stay submerged for 1.5–2 minutes. Their burrows dug in soft soil are 50–70 cm long. The activity of this species is diurnal; in summer, in open biotopes, there are two peaks of activity. Caspian Green Lizards have individual territories of about 200–300 m². In spring, they emerge from hibernation between mid-March and mid-April, and leave again for overwintering in October or November; during warm winters, they may remain active to February. Specimens hibernate in their own holes or those of burrowing mammals. In lowland Dagestan, most females produce two clutches per season: in the surroundings of Makhachkala, clutches usually contain 4–8 eggs, in South Dagestan 6–10 eggs. The incubation period lasts about two months. In Dagestan, hatchlings with body lengths of 3.3–3.4 cm have been observed from the second half of July, although the majority appears in the second half of August. Females reach sexual maturity in their second year of life, at a minimum body length of 6.5–7 cm. This species has a lifespan of five years. Various insects and their larvae, primarily beetles, as well as spiders, molluscs, blackberries, and raspberries, have been recorded in its diet. Cannibalism is a rare occurrence in Caspian Green Lizards.

Conservation status: Populations are stable and in no need of any conservation measures throughout the species' range.

Genus *Ophisops* MÉNÉTRIES, 1832 Snake-eyed lizards

Small, slender lizards growing to just over 6 cm in body length. The tail is about twice as long as the trunk. Males reach slightly larger sizes than females. Snake-eyed lizards have transparent lower eyelids that are completely or partially fused with the upper lids to form a spectacle over the eye, like in snakes, hence their common name. However, the fused eyelids have not lost their mobility, and lizards can blink in which the transparent circle moves down the eyeball. The top and sides of the head have longitudinal grooves.

The nostril is located between 2–4 nasal scales, it does not touch the supralabial and does not rise high on the head. The frontal scale is significantly narrowed in its middle part. Large scales of the collar are visible only on the sides of the throat.



Map 72: *Ophisops elegans*.

The dorsal scales of snake-eyed lizards are pointed, distinctly keeled and imbricate. The ventrals are large, smooth, and arranged in regular longitudinal and transverse rows. Femoral pores are well developed.

Hatchlings and juveniles are brightly coloured with contrasting patterns but become duller as they mature.

Snake-eyed lizards are inhabitants of stony and clayey semi-deserts and are active even in the hottest hours. Females lay eggs, and can produce more than one clutch per season.

Snake-eyed lizards are common from North Africa and south-east Europe eastwards to western Pakistan and central India.

The genus includes 11 species of which one lives in the territory of the former USSR and Russia.

Elegant Snake-eyed Lizard

Ophisops elegans MÉNÉTRIES, 1832

Figs. 351–354, Map 72

The generic and common names of the species refer to its snake-like eyes covered with a transparent "spectacle" or "brille."

External appearance: The Elegant Snake-eyed Lizard has a body length up to 6.2 cm, and a tail of up to 11.4 cm. The upper surface of the head has a distinct longitudinal groove.

The frontal shield is significantly narrowed in its middle part. The masseteric shield is absent. Snake-eyed Lizards do not have separate eyelids; they are fused as in snakes. The dorsal scales are imbricate, with sharp keels. The ventral shields are large, smooth, and arranged in regular longitudinal and transverse rows. There is one large shield in the pre-cloacal area.

Adult Snake-eyed Lizards are greenish-grey or olive-brownish above; the sides are gingery-yellow or reddish-orange with dark spots and speckles. Young lizards are characterized by a bright, contrasting pattern of four white stripes on a black background. The longitudinally striped pattern of young lizards may more or less persist in adult specimens. The venter is white, with no pattern.

Distinguishing features: The Snake-eyed Lizard differs from other lizards living near its species range by the transparent "spectacle" of the lower eyelid and imbricate, strongly keeled scales.

Distribution and subspecies: The Snake-eyed Lizard is common in the north-east of the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor and western Asia in the west, southwards to the Sinai Peninsula, eastwards to Pakistan and north-western India. Within the limits of the former USSR, it lives in Transcaucasia.

In Russia, the Snake-eyed Lizard was recently found in south Dagestan. There may be an isolated population in the foothills of Chechnya, in the surroundings of the village of Ishcherskaya.

Over the years, eight subspecies have been described, of which two are unanimously recognized: the nominative one, *O. e. elegans* MÉNÉTRIES, 1832, and *O. e. ehrenbergi* (WIEGMANN, 1835). In Transcaucasia and Russia, only the first one is present.

Natural history: The Snake-eyed Lizard lives in stony and clayey semi-deserts and dry steppes, on clayey-gravelly slopes with xerophile vegetation. In the foothills, it is found in juniper, open