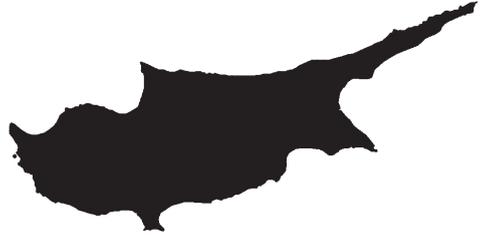


Felix Baier  
David J. Sparrow  
Hans-Jörg Wiedl



# The Amphibians and Reptiles of Cyprus



Edition Chimaira



SERPENT'S TALE  
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Baier, Sparrow, and Wiedl

**The Amphibians and Reptiles of Cyprus**

FRANKFURTER BEITRÄGE  
ZUR NATURKUNDE  
BAND 45

FRANKFURT CONTRIBUTIONS  
TO NATURAL HISTORY  
VOLUME 45

Felix Baier,  
David J. Sparrow, and  
Hans-Jörg Wiedl

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Edition Chimaira  
Frankfurt am Main



Felix Baier / David J. Sparrow / Hans-Jörg Wiedl  
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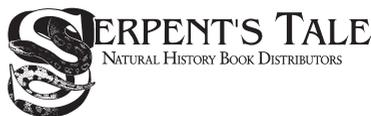
Cyprus Whip Snake (*Hierophis cypriensis*), F. BAIER (*top left*); Lemon-yellow Tree Frog (*Hyla savignyi*), D.J. SPARROW (*top right*); Starred Agama (*Laudakia stellio cypriaca*), F. BAIER (*bottom left*); juvenile Cyprus Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix cypriaca*), D.J. SPARROW (*bottom right*).

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REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND ENVIRONMENT

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

## Foreword

The worldwide human population increase, and resulting alterations in the global environment are currently causing the sixth major extinction event in the history of life on earth. As natural habitats throughout the world are degraded, reduced or fragmented, thousands of species are becoming extinct, sometimes before their value is fully appreciated. This is even more true for islands, which have extremely sensitive ecosystems.

The location of Cyprus at the crossroads of three continents, combined with its isolation as an island, its varied landscape, and the accompanying range of local climates, have produced a flora and fauna of great richness and diversity. Rapid economic development has inevitably had an impact on biodiversity. In line with European Union objectives, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus has placed the protection of the environment among its highest priorities.

We therefore welcome the publication of this book, which will contribute to the understanding of Cyprus' unique reptile and amphibian fauna and which fills a long-standing need. I am sure it will provide a useful basis for future efforts in herpetology and conservation.

This book will be a valuable source of information, not only for herpetologists, but also for Cyprus residents and interested visitors to the island.

Dr. MICHALIS POLYNIKIS  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Natural Resources and Environment  
Republic of Cyprus

## Preface

Historically, Cyprus has received little attention from herpetologists, and knowledge of the herpetofauna of Cyprus is not well advanced when compared with other Mediterranean regions. It is therefore timely to publish a volume summarising the current state of knowledge, highlighting gaps, and hopefully stimulating further research. This is especially true in view of the need for conservation efforts to protect the island's unique community of species.

Also among residents of the island, both Cypriots and expatriates, there is a lack of knowledge about these animals, and many misconceptions particularly about snakes. Educational material is scarce. There is considerable demand for information targeted at the non-expert (e. g., a field guide), providing an understandable overview of the subject, and helping people to identify and appreciate the amphibians and reptiles that they are likely to encounter.

In view of the need to fulfil both these objectives, we decided to produce a book catering both for scientists and non-specialists. The relatively small number of species on the island seems conducive to this twofold approach.

Although the book is mainly aimed at scientific readers, we have therefore tried throughout to make it understandable to the non-specialist. In particular, we have included a guide which enables identification of every native amphibian or reptile in Cyprus. We have also included a comprehensive glossary which explains all scientific terms used in this volume, and a general introduction on amphibians and reptiles.

Although these additions are unnecessary for experts in the field, we believe they will not detract from the scientific usefulness of this volume.

Heidelberg and Paphos, Summer 2009

FELIX BAIER  
DAVID J. SPARROW  
HANS-JÖRG WIEDL

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Two of us (FB and HJW) very much profited from the vast knowledge of Prof. Dr. WOLFGANG BÖHME, and wish to express their deep gratitude for his continual support over the past years, not only regarding the herpetofauna of Cyprus but also regarding general herpetological topics.

Dr. BEAT AKERET, Prof. Dr. WOLFGANG BÖHME, ELENA EROTOKRITOU, Dr. WAYNE FULLER, CHRIS KIKAS, Dr. EDOARDO RAZZETTI and Dr. EFSTRATIOS VALAKOS & co-authors provided valuable photos or drawings. Dr. PAULOS FLOURENTZOS (Director, Department of Antiquities) provided images from the Museum archives and gave permission to photograph in the Paphos District Museum, and NEOPTOLEMOS DEMETRION assisted in the photo shoot. Thanks also go to JOHN McLAREN for his permission for and assistance with the photography in Aquaworld, Crete.

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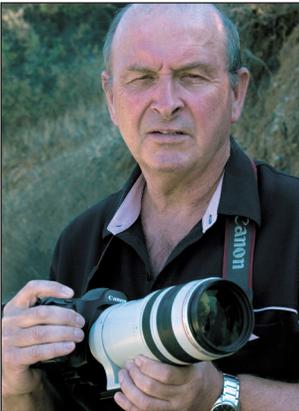
Last but certainly not least, all three of us want to express our gratitude to ANDREAS BRAHM and Dr. GEROLD SCHIPPER (both Edition Chimaira) for their great support during the production of this book.

The authors



### **Felix Sebastian Baier.**

Born 1987 in Heidelberg, Germany. Travelling to Cyprus since his early childhood and deeply fascinated by living things, he has long been interested in the island's nature, especially in reptiles and amphibians. On the basis of intensive zoological reading, he conducted his first field studies while still at school. Civil service at the Forschungsinstitut Senckenberg (Frankfurt/M.) gave him the chance to bring further ideas to fruition. Since 2008, he has been studying biology and philosophy at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich.



### **David J. Sparrow.**

Born in 1946 in the UK. Dr. David Sparrow is a Singapore-based photographer. He gained BSc (Hons) (1964) and PhD (1970) degrees in chemistry from the University of Birmingham, England. He worked in the chemical industry for 34 years during which time he co-authored, edited, reviewed and refereed numerous scientific articles, papers and books. He has had a lifetime fascination with snakes, and this project gave him the opportunity to combine this interest with his passion for photography.



### **Hans-Jörg Wiedl (“Snake George”).**

Born 1943 in Innsbruck (Austria), he grew up in the wilderness of Häselgehr in the Lechtal (Tirol), now a National Park. As an UN peacekeeper in Cyprus in 1973/1974, he developed his deep concern for the conservation of the herpetofauna of Cyprus. In 1986, he moved permanently to Cyprus, and established the “Snake George Reptile Park” in 1995. His major achievement was the rediscovery of the Cyprus grass snake in 1992. He received various honours, *inter alia* the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art (1998).