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ECOLOGY AND MORPHOLOGY OF THE DAREVSKIA ROCK LIZARDS IN ZHYTOMYR REGION

On the territory of Ukraine, there are some artificially acclimatized species, called Darevskia rock lizards. These rock lizards belong to dangerous species. They are parthenogenesis ones, represented only by the females, which lay zygotic infertile eggs. In the second half of the last century the Soviet zoologists I.S. Darevskiy and M.M. Shcherbak introduced the parthenogenesis species *Darevskia armeniaca* (Méhely, 1909) into habitat of the canyon of the Teteriv River, in the suburban area of Denyshi in Zhytomyr region [2]. Recently it was informed about another specie in this territory – *D. dahli* (Darevskiy, 1957), which wasn't intended to be introduced into this area [3; 4].

The aim of the research is to study the biology and morphology of the population of rock lizards introduced in Zhytomyr region. The following methods were used: observation of the reptiles in the nature, photography, censuring, trapping, fixation and marking the reptiles, morphometric measuring of the body and the scutellation.

The attempt to introduce the parthenogenesis rock lizards into Ukraine turned out to be successful. The settlement of the lizards in Denyshi covers all the length of rock ledges from their beginning to the hanging bridge and behind it. The lizards move across the bridge and the dump footing to the right bank of the river, though they do not settle there. The period of activity of the lizards is from 12p.m. to 16p.m.

High density of settling in the population results in mature adults plotting fixed route areas. Premature lizards keep aloof of the mature adults in the grass and at the bottom of the rock [5].

The main seasonal events of the Ukrainian introduced *Darevskia* populations differ from those of species in the natural area. The awakening of the rock lizards in the territory of Zhytomyr region takes place in the period from the end of March to the middle of April depending on weather conditions. Hibernation of the lizards takes place at the end of September – the beginning of October. Thus, the season of activity lasts for 6-7 months. The clutches of 2-3 eggs are registered from the

middle of June to the beginning of July. Premature lizards emerge from the end of July to the beginning of August, and occur on a massive scale in August – September. They hibernate later than the mature adults [5].

We have designed the criteria for clear differentiation between the two species *D. armeniaca* and *D. Dahlia* in the field conditions. The best diagnostic features are the color of the body and the head and the peculiarities of pholidosis (the existence of a small shield between the naricorn and front nasal shields; the shape of the interparietal and sincipital shields, the quantity of scales between the centro temporal and tympanic shields, the quantity of podical shields).

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