



Reproduction and Tail Bifurcation in the Wedge-snouted Skink, *Chalcides sepsoides*

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The Wedge-snouted Skink (*Chalcides sepsoides*) is a small, nocturnal, viviparous, and insectivorous skink with reduced limbs that inhabits Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan (Bar et al. 2021; Caetano et al. 2022). On 21 May 2023, we captured six *C. sepsoides* within a few tens of meters of each other and less than 100 m from the nearest city buildings in sand dunes abutting the western port city of Ashdod, Israel (approximately 31.765°N, 34.633°E). All were captured for physiological studies under collection permit #2023/43380 from the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority and ethics permit #TAU-LS-IL-2307-142-3 from Tel Aviv University. All had regenerated tails and one female had a tail that was bifurcated (Fig. 1). The experiments were finished on 13 July 2023 and on 16 July we prepared the animals for release, at which time we noticed that two females gave birth over the weekend (sometime between the evening of 13 and the morning of 16 July).

One female (86.5 mm SVL, 66.5 mm tail length) weighed 6.7 g when captured and 6.0 g after giving birth to two live young. The neonates (Fig. 2) measured 39.7 and 39.8

mm SVL, only the latter's tail was measured (30.6 mm), and both weighed 0.6 g. The other female had a bifurcated tail, 6 mm from the tip, the shorter stub measuring 3.8 mm (Fig. 1). She gave birth to 1 dead and 2 live young. The living neonates measured 38.6 and 39.5 mm SVL, tail lengths were 26.2 and 23.4 mm, and both weighed 0.5 g. Both mothers and all four living neonates were released at the site where the mothers were captured on 16 July 2023. Two additional individuals were kept at the Meir Segals Garden for Zoological Research at Tel Aviv University in separate terraria with ample sand in which they promptly hid. On 26 July we checked both terraria and found that one contained a single neonate (36.4 mm SVL, 15.6 mm tail length, 0.4 g). The mother weighed 3.7 g at capture, 4.4 g at the end of experiments (13 July), and 4.1 g on 26 July. The other terrarium contained no juveniles. Its inhabitant, potentially a male, increased in size from 79.5 mm and 4.2 g at capture to 83.8 mm and 6.2 g on 26 July.

Chalcides sepsoides is known to give birth to one (Erez Maza and Marco Antonio Ribeira-Junior, pers. obs.) to ten neonates (Bar et al. 2021). The body sizes and clutch sizes we



Figure 1. Bifurcated tail of a Wedge-snouted Skink (*Chalcides sepsoides*) captured near Ezor Ashdod, Israel. Photograph by Shai Meiri.



Figure 2. A neonatal Wedge-snouted Skink (*Chalcides sepsoides*) born during the study. Photograph by Shai Meiri.

recorded agree with previous accounts of size and reproduction in this species (e.g., Meiri et al. 2020, 2021, although Akef 2022 and Werner 2016 recorded a minimum litter size of two).

To the best of our knowledge, tail bifurcation has been reported only once for this species over 100 years ago (Tofohr 1905, with a photograph allowing identification; also cited in Henle and Grimm-Seyfarth 2020 supplementary data).

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