



A New Island Record of the Anatolian Limbless Skink (*Ophiomorus kardesi*) from Greece

Michail Manonas¹, Alexios Panagiotopoulos², and Elias Tzoras³

¹Neo Iraklio, 141 22 Attica, Greece

²School of Biology, University of Patras, 265 00 Patra, Greece

³Patras, 264 42 Achaia, Greece (elias tzoras@outlook.com)

The genus *Ophiomorus* includes twelve currently recognized species, which are widely distributed in the Palearctic (Hedges 2014; Kornilios et al. 2018). Two of these occur in Greece, the endemic Greek Limbless Skink, *Ophiomorus punctatissimus* (Bibron and Bory de St. Vincent 1833), and the recently described Anatolian Limbless Skink, *O. kardesi* Kornilios, Kumlutas, Lymberakis, and Ilgaz 2018. The Greek Limbless Skink ranges throughout the southern Peloponnese Peninsula and on the islands of Kythira, Elafonisos, and Dokos, as well as at two unconfirmed sites in eastern and southwestern continental Greece (Valakos et al. 2008; Broggi 2016; Kornilios et al. 2018). The Anatolian Limbless Skink occurs primarily in southwestern coastal Turkey and adjacent islets, as well as the Greek island of Kastellorizo in the eastern Aegean, which is the only known location in the country (Kalaentzis et al. 2018).

Herein, we confirm the occurrence of *O. kardesi* on the islet of Agrielaia, a satellite in the Kastellorizo Island complex of Greece.

Under a light overcast in the early morning during herpetological surveys on 20 March 2024, we encountered

a single adult *Ophiomorus kardesi* (Fig. 1) hidden under a stone on Agrielaia (36.15056, 29.60369) (surface area = 0.0155 m²), 300 m straight-line distance from the island of Kastellorizo. Habitat consists of stony terrain (loose soil is present at only a few sites) and herbaceous plants dominated by clusters of Tree Spurge (*Euphorbia dendroides*) (Fig. 2). After our discovery, we searched for additional individuals with no success. A photographic voucher has been deposited in the Kansas University Digital Archive (KUDA 14633) and the identity of the species was confirmed from photographs by Konstantinos Kalaentzis.

Until now, *O. kardesi* has been found only on Kastellorizo, where it has been observed at multiple locations (Valakos and Papapanagiotou 1985; Kalaentzis et al. 2018). Our observation is both an additional insular record for *O. kardesi* in Greece and the only known record of any reptile on Agrielaia. Elsewhere in its range, these lizards are associated with loose soils in xeric environments; consequently, other nearby satellites of Kastellorizo that have not been extensively surveyed for herpetofaunal species might also support populations of *O. kardesi*.



Figure 1. An Anatolian Limbless Skink (*Ophiomorus kardesi*) from Agrielaia, a satellite of Kastellorizo (Megisti) Island in the eastern Mediterranean. Photographs by Elias Tzoras.



Figure 2. Habitat on Agrielaia, a satellite of Kastellorizo (Megisti) Island in the eastern Mediterranean, where an Anatolian Limbless Skink (*Ophiomorus kardesi*) was encountered. Photograph by Elias Tzoras.

Literature Cited

- Broggi, M. 2016. The reptile fauna of the Island of Elafonisos (Peloponnese, Lakonia, Greece). *Herpetozoa* 28: 198–203.
- Hedges, S.B. 2014. The high-level classification of skinks (Reptilia, Squamata, Scincomorpha). *Zootaxa* 3765: 317–338. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3765.4.2>.
- Kalaentzis, K., I. Strachinis, P. Katsiyiannis, P. Oefinger, and C. Kazilas. 2018. New records and an updated list of the herpetofauna of Kastellorizo and the adjacent islet Psomi (Dodecanese, Greece). *Herpetology Notes* 11: 1009–1019.
- Kornilios, P., Y. Kumlutas, P. Lymberakis, and Ç. Ilgaz. 2018. Cryptic diversity and molecular systematics of the Aegean *Ophiomorus* skinks (Reptilia: Squamata), with the description of a new species. *Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research* 2018: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jzs.12205>.
- Valakos, E.D., P. Pafilis, K. Sotiropoulos, P. Lymberakis, P. Maragou, and J. Foufopoulos. 2008. *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Greece*. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
- Valakos, S. and D. Papapanagiotou. 1985. The herpetofauna of Kastellorizo (Megisti) Island (SE Aegean Archipelago). *British Herpetological Bulletin* 13: 9–12.