



# A European Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*) on the Greek Island of Ikaria in the Aegean Sea

Elias Tzoras

Patras, 264 42 Achaia, Greece (eliasztoras@outlook.com; ORCID 0009-0006-7108-3052)

The European Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax* Fleischmann 1831), is widely distributed throughout mainland Greece and on the majority of islands in the Ionian and Aegean Archipelagos (Grillitsch and Grillitsch 1999; Christopoulos 2022). However, the species might have been introduced to some Greek islands (Stamfani in the Ionian, and Santorini, Serifos, and Kasos in the Aegean Sea) via human-mediated dispersal (Warnecke 1988; Kyriazi et al. 2013; Korniliou and Thanou 2024).

The island of Ikaria lies in the eastern Aegean Sea and is one of the largest islands in the area. Previous herpetological surveys have yielded detailed accounts of its herpetofauna, whereas more recent studies have focused on natural history or provided single-species records (e.g., Clark 1996; Broggi 2001; Allain and Bateman 2018; Grano 2020). Surprisingly, no records document the presence of *T. fallax* on Ikaria Island (e.g., Grillitsch and Grillitsch 1999; Kirchner 2009). I herein provide the first record of the species on Ikaria supported by photographic evidence.

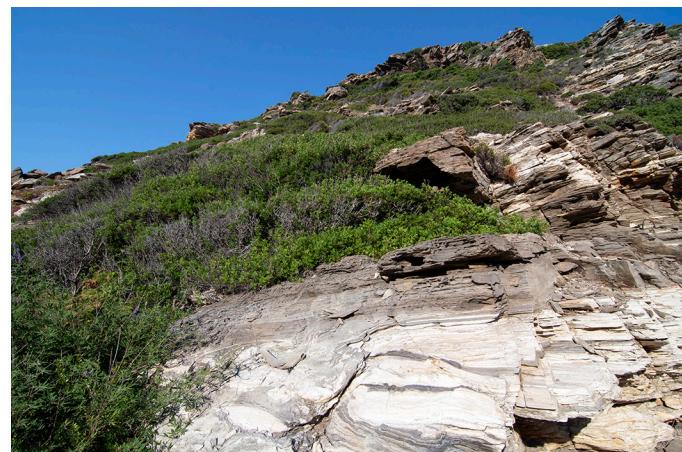
During faunistic surveys on 21 July 2024, I captured a single subadult *T. fallax* under a stone near Mileopo Village

(37.64307, 26.23429; Fig. 1). I did not take measurements or assess scalation but I did deposit a tissue sample at the Comenius University Herpetological Collection (CUHC 14182) and the identity of the species was confirmed by Daniel Jablonski. The biotope, beginning at sea level, consisted of a rocky, hilly area characterized by dense, low thorny shrubs, typical of phrygana vegetation (Fig. 2). Subsequent surveys by day and night over a four-day period yielded no further sightings.

Clark (1996) and Broggi (2001) did not locate the species during their surveys on the island. However, both authors indicated that its presence was expected, given its known occurrence on nearby islands, such as adjacent Samos (Ioannides et al. 1994). However, an anecdotal record of *T. fallax* from Ikaria was depicted on the species' range map in Speybroeck et al. (2016), which was subsequently cited by Allain and Bateman (2018) and Grano (2020). Unpublished distributional records are rarely included in such field guides, although this might have been the result of a typographical error. In any case, this observation represents the first confirmed record of the species on Ikaria Island. The species appears to be scarce on the island, which could be attribut-



**Figure 1.** The single European Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*) found near Mileopo Village, Ikaria Island, Greece (CUHC 14182). Photograph by Elias Tzoras.



**Figure 2.** Habitat of the European Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*) on Ikaria Island, Greece. Photograph by Elias Tzoras.

able to a combination of low population density and low detectability. *Telescopus fallax* has been documented from other eastern Aegean islands (e.g., Lipsos, Kalymnos, Kos, Rhodes, Lesvos, Symi, Tilos, Chios, Armanthia, Pserimos, Kastellorizo), with some reports based on single individuals, highlighting the challenges in detecting the species (Dimaki 2004; Kirchner 2009; Kalaentzis et al. 2018; Cattaneo et al. 2020). I suggest that it is likely to occur elsewhere on Ikaria.

### Literature Cited

Allain, S.J.R. and T.C.B. Bateman. 2018. Ixodid ticks on Oertzen's Rock Lizard (*Anatololacerta oertzeni*) on Ikaria, Greece, with notes on the island's reptiles. *Reptiles & Amphibians* 25: 176–179. <https://doi.org/10.17161/randa.v25i3.14291>.

Broggi, M.F. 2001. Bemerkungen zur Herpetofauna der Ägäisinsel Ikaria (Griechenland) (Amphibia, Reptilia). *Herpetozoa* 14: 9–14.

Cattaneo, A., C. Cattaneo, and M. Grano. 2020. Update on the herpetofauna of the Dodecanese Archipelago (Greece). *Biodiversity Journal* 11: 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.31396/Biodiv.Jour.2020.11.1.69.84>.

Christopoulos, A. 2022. New record of *Telescopus fallax* (Squamata:Colubridae) in Rhodope Prefecture, Thrace, Greece. *Herpetology Notes* 15: 873–876.

Clark, R. 1996. Some notes in the reptile fauna of Fournoi, Ikaria, and Schinoussa, Aegean Sea, Greece. *British Herpetological Society Bulletin* 5: 35–39.

Dimaki, M. 2004. Geographic Distribution. *Telescopus fallax* (Cat Snake). *Herpetological Review* 35: 294.

Grano, M. 2020. Report of alien invasive turtle, the Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Wied-Neuwied, 1839) (Testudines: Emydidae), in Ikaria Island, Greece. *Parnassiana Archives* 8: 55–56.

Grillitsch, H. and B. Grillitsch. 1999. *Telescopus fallax* (Fleischmann, 1831) Europäische Katzenratter, pp. 757–788. - In: W. Böhme (ed.), *Handbuch der Reptilien und Amphibien Europas. Bd. 3/IIA: Schlangen II Serpentes II: Colubridae II (Boiginae, Natricinae)*. Aula Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany.

Ioannides, Y., M. Dimaki, and A. Dimitropoulos. 1994. The herpetofauna of Samos (easter Aegean, Greece). *Annales Musei Goulandris* 9: 445–456.

Kalaentzis, K., I. Strachinis, P. Katsiyannis, 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.

Kirchner, M. 2009. *Telescopus fallax* (Fleischmann, 1831) found in the Aegean Island of Chios, Greece. *Herpetozoa* 21: 189–190.

Kornilios, P. and E. Thanou. 2024. Molecular evidence reveals human-mediated dispersals of snake species in the Aegean Islands. *Salamandra* 60: 201–207.

Kyriazi, P., P. Kornilios, Z.T. Nagy, N. Poulakakis, Y. Kumluta . Ç. Ilgaz, A. Avci, B. Göçmen, and P. Lymberakis. 2013. Comparative phylogeography reveals distinct colonization patterns of Cretan snakes. *Journal of Biogeography* 40: 1143–1155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jbi.12057>.

Speybroeck, J., W. Beukema, B. Bok, J. Van Der Voort. 2016. *Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Warnecke, H. 1988. *Telescopus fallax* (Fleischmann, 1831) auf den ozeanischen Strophaden-Inseln? *Salamandra* 24: 16–19.