

First record of *Tarentola mauritanica* (LINNAEUS, 1758),
from Athens, Greece

The Moorish Gecko, *Tarentola mauritanica* (LINNAEUS, 1758), has a wide distribution comprising North Africa and South Europe (MARTÍNEZ RICA 1997) and has been introduced to numerous overseas localities (MAHRDT 1998; ACHAVAL & GUDYNAS 1983). In Greece, the species has mainly an insular distribution inhabiting four Ionian Islands (Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zakynthos and Strofades) and Crete, whereas the only mainland populations described are located in the northwestern Peloponnese coastal region (WERNER 1927; ŠTĚPÁNEK 1934, 1940; CHONDROPOULOS 1986; VALAKOS & MYLONAS 1992; VALAKOS et al. 2008). The known Greek range of *T. mauritanica* was recently updated with two new island records from Corfu (MAČÁT et al. 2014) and Lesbos (MIZERAKIS & STRACHINIS 2017).

On November 6, 2015, a resident from the municipality of Aigaleo, Athens, sent to the first author three photos of a Moorish Gecko found near her residence (38.0022° N, 23.6789° E) (F. Retinioti in litt.). Almost one year later, on October 24, 2015, a resi-

dent of Sepolia, a district in the northwest of Athens, found a fatally injured adult male Moorish Gecko there (38.0078° N, 23.7193° E), approximately 4 km west of the first observation's location in Aigaleo (A. Rigkos in litt.). He contacted the authors for identification of the lizard and the specimen was deposited at the Zoological Museum of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (ZMUA 4185; snout-vent-length: 61 mm, tail broken, body mass: 4.39 g; Fig. 1). Eight months later, on June 28, 2017, during a field survey, the authors observed about 30 individuals of the Moorish Gecko in Sepolia (38.0090° N, 23.7188° E), which were active at noon on a rather warm day (36 °C). Most of them were seen on old garden walls surrounded by vegetation, in abandoned buildings and parks, and fled when the authors tried to approach them. One individual was captured and examined while several others were photographed.

This is the first time the species is reported in mainland Greece, outside its known distribution in the western Peloponnese. In the last years, new lizard species, either native to Greece such as *Podarcis peloponnesiacus* (BIBRON & BORY, 1833) (HEDMAN et al. 2017) and *Podarcis muralis* (LAURENTI, 1768) (KARAMETA & PAFILIS 2017) or alien, such as *Podarcis siculus*



Fig. 1: Male *Tarentola mauritanica* (LINNAEUS, 1758), from northwest Athens, Greece (ZMUA 4185).

(RAFINESQUE-SCHMALTZ, 1810) (ADAMOPOULOU 2015), were reported from Athens metropolitan area. Like the previous species, the Moorish Gecko must have arrived in Athens through human activities. Being a strongly synanthropic species, *T. mauritanica* has only comparatively recently colonized Europe (HARRIS et al. 2004; RATO et al. 2012) and still expands its range (e.g., ARREDONDO et al. 2014; JESUS et al. 2008). Monitoring the extent and rate of dispersal of the highly adaptive *T. mauritanica* to the wider Athens area and assessing its interactions with the widely distributed local gecko *Hemidactylus turcicus* (LINNAEUS, 1758), would provide additional information on the population and expansion dynamics of the species.

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