

HERPTILE 17(2) June 1992

Field notes on the lizards of Menorca and the Isla del Aire.

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Between the dates 28/8/91 and 11/9/91 my family and I went on holiday to Menorca. Whilst the rest of my family enjoyed the sun my father and I went out searching for reptiles. Both snakes and lizards were observed, but we took particular interest in the lizards.

There are three species on the island, the Italian Wall lizard, *Podarcis sicula*, Lilford's Wall lizard, *P. lilfordi*, and the small Moroccan Rock lizard, *Lacerta perspicillata*.

Italian Wall lizard, *P. sicula* ssp.

Number examined; 5 males, 2 females.

This lizard was observed all over the island in a variety of habitats. Three places we particularly studied were Arenal d'en Castell, a tourist town in the north; Cala Galdana, an area of spectacular cliffs and gorges in the south, (we also observed Egyptian vultures and Booted eagles here), and S'Albufera, a large salt lake area in the east.

Description;

The males had a light green or brown reticulate pattern along the back, the sides having white, brown and sometimes black blotches. Females had a very dull brown reticulate pattern on the back and tail, with a black stripe running through the middle of the pattern. On the sides females were orange-brown and white (reticulate) pattern. Most individuals of both sexes also had a small, light blue spot behind each forelimb.

P. sicula has a very long tail, sometimes twice as long as the body. Males have a large head and thick body to match, unlike females which tend to be smaller headed and more slender. The strong males are aggressive, as I found out after being bitten on the finger. They appear to hold a small territory and keep other lizards out.

The largest male measured 70 mm from snout to vent, with a total length of 218 mm. It had six rows of belly scales and was found at S'Albufera. The largest female measured 67 mm from snout to vent, with a total length of 192 mm. It also had six rows of belly scales and was found at Arenal d'en Castell. A juvenile male measured 38 mm snout to vent, and 126 mm in total. This also had six rows of belly scales and was found at Cala Galdana. Dorsal scale rows were not recorded but are known to range from 60 to 75.

Juvenile *P.sicula* can be confused with Moroccan Rock lizards, *L.perspicillata*, owing to their small size, but can be distinguished at capture by counting the belly scales, 6 in *P.sicula* and 10 in *L.perspicillata*.

During the day the temperature ranged between 29°C and 32°C, far too hot for reptiles to bask in. These lizards and others were normally seen during the morning and afternoon.

Lilford's Wall lizard, *P.lilfordi lilfordi*.

Number examined; 2 adult, 1 juvenile.

The Isla del Aire, a small barren island off the southeast coast of Menorca is the only place in the world where you can find this subspecies of *P.lilfordi*, which is melanistic. It is completely protected by law and anyone seen killing or removing it from the island is liable to prosecution.

We longed to get to the island, but were told that there were no boats for hire. Not to be defeated we hired a pedalo and peddled one mile to the island. The sea was very rough and we nearly toppled over in the high waves, but it was all worth it. As soon as we got onto the island the lizards were practically running over our feet. Their behaviour was very unusual, they seemed to stay in large groups and reminded us of the Marine iguanas of the Galapagos, running together in large colonies. At one point, when we approached a tree, forty or so lizards ran off together, it was a terrific sight.

Description;

These lizards are all black or sometimes dark brown with a dark blue or purple throat and belly. The juveniles are black with a pale blue tail. The scales are smooth and the tail very short and thick, unlike the longer, thinner tail of *P.sicula*. Unfortunately we only had an hour to catch a few for closer examination so we were unable to measure them or carry out scale counts properly.

The largest adult measured 185 mm total length. The dorsal scales range from 70 to 90.

The island is very rocky and barren with only small patches of vegetation and a few small trees. The lizards were found basking on the ground, or in shrubs and on stone walls. Just as we were about to leave a tourist boat pulled in beside us! We had nearly killed ourselves to get there by pedalo after being told there were no boats!

Moroccan Rock lizard, *Lacerta perspicillata*.

We failed to catch any of these lizards for examination so we have no data on them, although three were sighted. It seems as though they had been eradicated by more aggressive geckos and wall lizards as we hardly ever saw them. Two were seen on a rocky hill path near small trees and shrubs, and another was sighted at the bottom of a stone wall on the same path.

Description;

These lizards are usually olive green, although one was a very bronzy-brown colour. The average length is about 50 mm from snout to vent, and they have about 10 rows of belly scales as well as a large 'window' in the lower eyelid. We sighted them at Arenal d'en Castell on the northeast coast.

Other species recorded;

Other reptiles we observed on Menorca were the Turkish gecko, *Hemidactylus turcicus*, Moorish gecko, *Tarentola mauritanica*, False smooth snake, *Macroprotodon cucullatus*, and the Viperine snake, *Natrix maura*.

Acknowledgements;

I would like to thank my father, Tell Hicks, who assisted me in the finding and capturing of these beautiful lizards, and also for the excellent photographs to accompany the article.

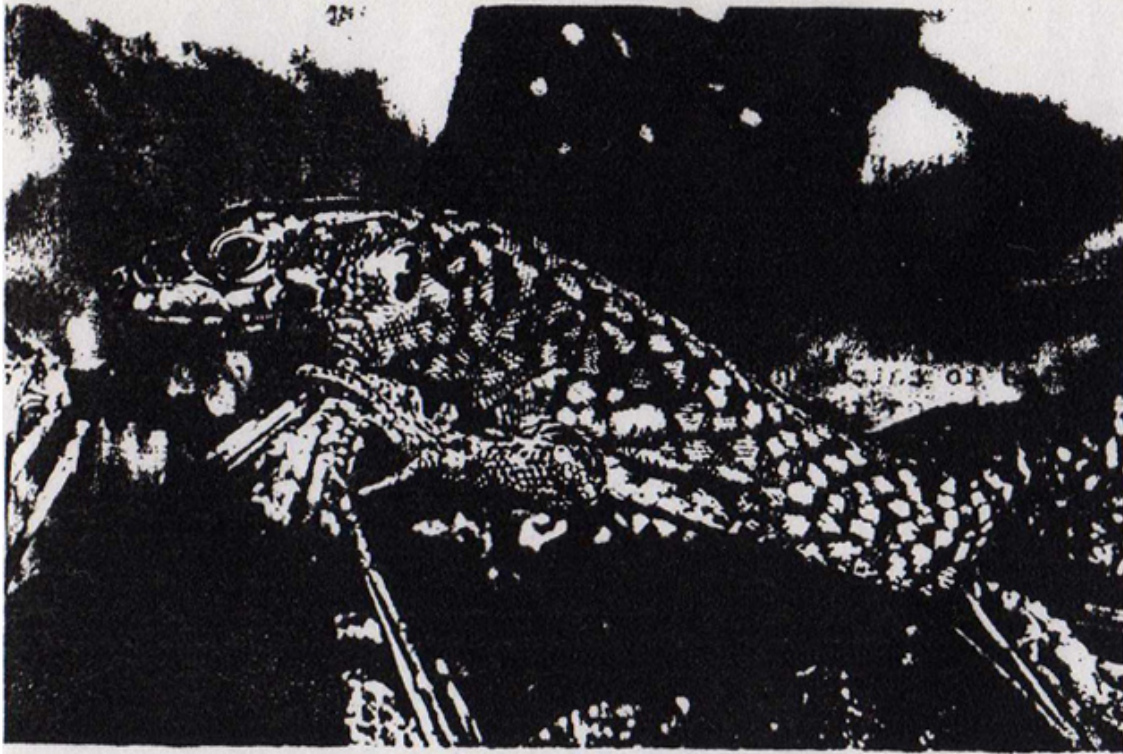


Fig. 6. Large male reticulated Italian Wall lizard, *Podarcis sicula* ssp. Photo by T.Hicks. (See Hicks, pp 68 - 71)

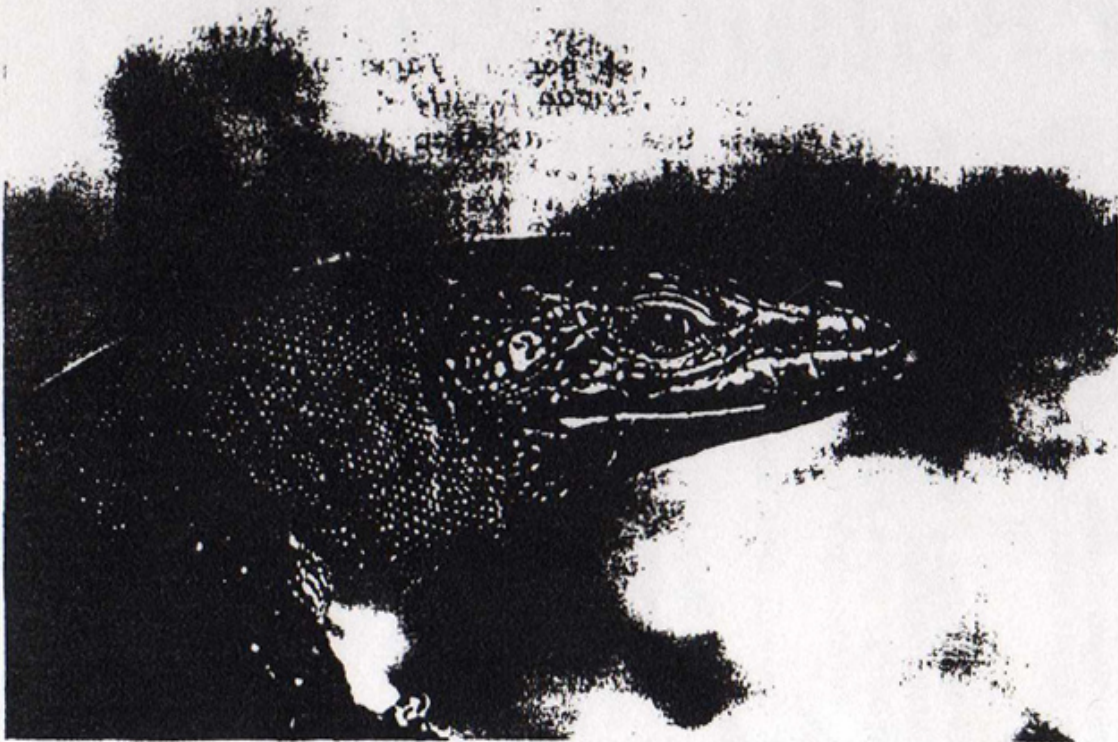


Fig. 7. A melanistic form of Lilford's Wall lizard, *Podarcis lilfordi* lilfordi. Photo by T.Hicks. (See Hicks, pp 68 - 71)



Fig. 8. Moila snake, *Malpolon moilensis*. Skoura.
Photo by D. Buttle. (see Buttle, pp 72 - 81)

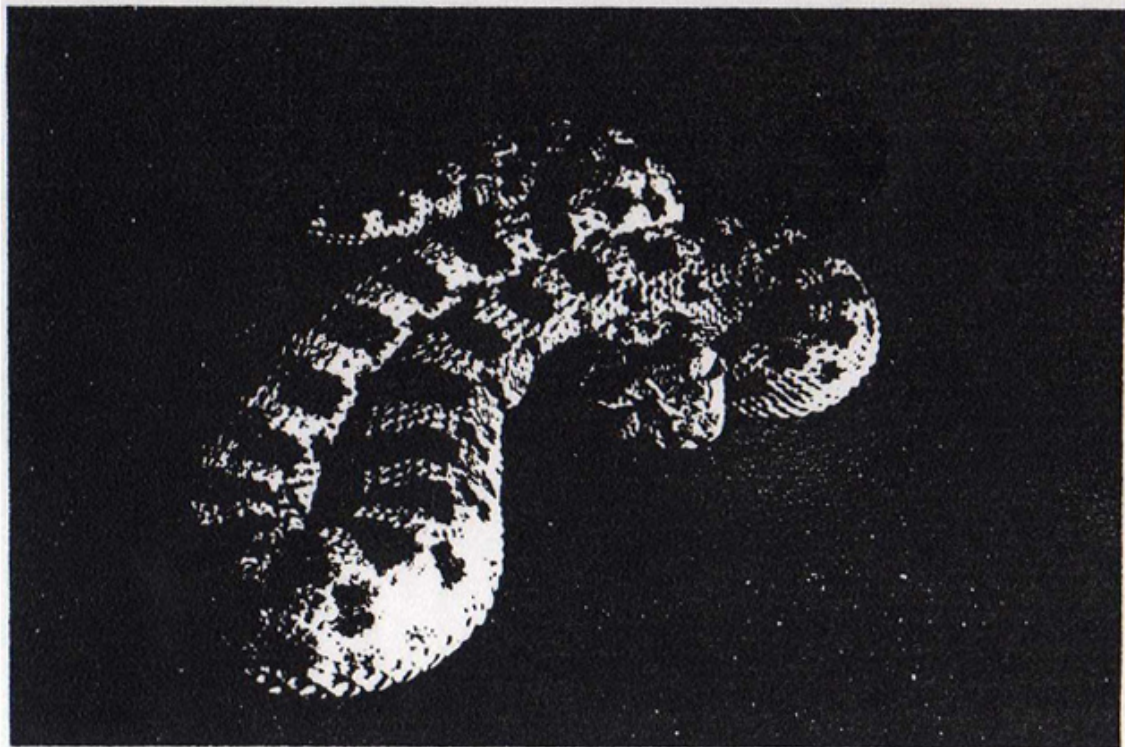


Fig. 9. Horned viper, *Cerastes cerastes*. Tinfou.
Photo by D. Buttle. (see Buttle, pp 72 - 81)