Teira dugesii (Milne-Edwards, 1829)
Madeiran lizard
Lagartixa-da-Madeira

Together with the two Maghrebian species *Teira perspicillata* (Duméril & Bibron, 1839) and *Teira andreanskyi* (Werner, 1929), *Teira dugesii* forms a holophyletic group (*Teira*) of the Maghreb lizards (Mayer & Bischoff 1996). According to Bischoff et al. (1989) *Teira dugesii* is differentiated intraspecifically to form three subspecies:

- *Teira dugesii dugesii* (Milne-Edwards, 1829) on Madeira and islands of the Desertas group (Deserta Grande, Ilhéu Chão, Bugio). It is considered a recent introduction on the Açores (Faial, Graciosa, Pico, São Jorge, São Miguel, Terceira, Santa Maria). It is commonly assumed that the introductions took place during the 19. century, "por uns soldados que vieram d'Elvas para o castello de S. Braz local onde só se encontrava tal reptil até na pouco annos" (Chaves 1909), but this cannot really be substantiated (see Morelet 1860, Fritsch 1870, Drouët 1861).
Meanwhile, displaced Madeiran lizards have also been discovered on the mainland (Sá-Sousa 1995): "Alcântara quarter near the port area of Lisbon, living on the ground under bushes near the railway fence along the belt area extending some 1.15 meters on 17th July 1992. The species had been introduced there some years previously, probably in cargoes

Fig. 195: *Teira dugesii dugesii*; Madeira (Ponta de São Lourenço). Photograph by R. Malkmus.

of bananas from Funchal". A revisit in 2001 revealed that the data on population size and distribution range gathered in 1992 had remained largely unchanged (SÁ-SOUSA in litt. 2001).

Teira dugesii jogeri (BISCHOFF, OSENEGG & MAYER, 1989) on Porto Santo.

Teira dugesii selvagensis (BISCHOFF, OSENEGG & MAYER, 1989) inhabits the Selvagens Archipelago (Selvagem Grande, Selvagem Pequena, Ilhéu de Fora). Whether or not this lizard was introduced to the island group by man, is still unclear.

Within its expansive vertical distribution range from the supralittoral to an altitude of 1862 m (Ruivo) it inhabits a wide variety of climatically different regions: besides regions with little precipitation (e.g. Ponta de São Lourenço, Desertas, Selvagens; < 300 mm), it occurs in those with > 3000 mm (central Madeira) and annual average temperatures oscillating between 9 and 23°C.
Teira dugesii shows a high degree of plasticity with regard to the choice of habitat and occurs equally in natural and semi-natural environments, cultivated areas, and human settlements. Although it shows a preference for rock structures, it is by no means bound to these. In the littoral it is often spotted at crevice-rich cliff faces, in boulder and scree fields, advancing right to the spray zone. On the subarid scree plains (*Bisserulae-*

Fig. 196: *Teira dugesii dugesii*; Madeira (near Caniço de Baixo). Photograph by R. MALKMUS.

Scorpiurietum) of the Ponta de São Lourenço, which are intersected by rock outcrops, scree-filled grooves and boulder fields and only show a scattered therophyte vegetation, it locally occurs in very high population densities. In montane regions (> 1400 m alt.) it inhabits rock structures and walls situated in heaths and meadows, small open forests and gorges. It can even be found in more open situations, on rocky outcrops and sun-exposed sites inside the closed laurel forests along the levadas. In cultivated lands finely structured by fruit tree groves, small private forests, gardens and meadows, it is a very common sight (especially on terrace walls and on paths). It will often climb trees in order to find a spot for basking and has been observed perched 2-4 above the ground on *Castanea, Quercus* and *Ficus*. In pursuit of food the lizard shows great skill climbing in blackberry scrub, on Aloe, *Euphorbia*, *Cynara* and *Echium* (see ELVERS 1977, 1978, BEYHL 1990, 1997). There is probably not a single human settlement on Madeira where *Teira dugesii* would not appear as a co-inhabitant.

By far more limited is the distribution situation of this lizard on the Açores. Here it is confined to short stretches along the coastline in the immediate vicinity of human settlements where it finds stone bolts, walls, ruins, moles in ports, rocky cliffs and boulder fields of more recent lava flows. It is particularly abundant at garbage dumps with organic refuse.

The confinement to areas near the coast could be viewed equally as an indication for a recent introduction or the presence of climate-ecologically unfavorable conditions in the

Fig. 197: *Teira dugesii dugesii*; Faial/Açores (near Horta). Photograph by R. MALKMUS.

inland of the islands. On Graciosa and Santa Maria the lizards were encountered up to an altitude of 500 m (Le Grand 1993), on São Miguel between 200 and 300 m. On the Selvagens it inhabits almost all biotopes available. The highest population densities are found around houses and - in contrast to *Tarentola bischoffi* - right within the breeding colonies of the storm petrel (Wagner 2002).
Early in the 19. century the lizard was hunted on Madeira as its meat, processed to pellet form, was believed to remedy tuberculosis. The damage this lizard was alleged to cause within vineyards by consuming grapes and which Sarmento (1948) described as "importante", led to the vine dressers seriously pursuing it, with relevant trapping methods, especially on Porto Santo, escalating into cruelty to animals. Today it is agrochemistry and concrete walls that reduce populations and limit the suitability of biotopes, but a genuine endangerment of the species may only be seen at very localized levels.

References: Báez (1994), Báez & Biscoito (1993), Barbadillo et al. (1999), Beyhl (1990, 1997), Bischoff et al. (1989), Cook (1979, 1983), Crisp et al. (1979), Davenport & Dellinger (1995), Dellinger (1997), Den Hartog (1981), Elvers (1977, 1978), Godinho et al. (1999), Kämmer (1982), Malkmus (1984e, 1991c, 1995a, d, 2002b), Richter (1986, 1998), Sá-Sousa (1995), Schielzeth (1991), Wagner (2001, 2002).

Fig. 198: *Teira dugesii dugesii*; Melanistic specimen; Deserta Grande. Photograph by P. Wagner.

Fig. 199: *Teira dugesii jogeri*; Porto Santo. Photograph by M. GARCIA-PARIS.

Fig. 200: *Teira dugesii selvagensis*, male; Selvagem Grande. Photograph by W. BISCHOFF.

Fig. 201: *Teira dugesii selvagensis*; in a breeding colony of *Calonectris diomedes*. Photograph by P. WAGNER.

Fig. 202: *Teira dugesii selvagensis*; Selvagem Pequena. Photograph by P. WAGNER.