



Fig. 297: Male Common Caucasian Rock Lizard.

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Fig. 298: Ventral colouration of the Common Caucasian Rock Lizard.

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Natural history: The Common Caucasian Rock Lizard inhabits rocky habitats in the middle and upper belts of the mountains, up to the subalpine and sometimes even the alpine zone. In rare cases, it is found in trees in the forest and in areas of mountain meadows up to an elevation of 3,000 m and more above sea level. Within its range, it prefers moderately humid biotopes. The activity of this species is diurnal. These lizards emerge at the end of March to early May from hibernation, and leave again for overwintering in September or October.

Clutches containing 2–6 eggs measuring about 6.5×11.5 mm are deposited at the end of June or in July. In Dagestan, young 22–27 mm in length hatch in early August. They reach sexual maturity at the age of two years with a body length of 49–51 mm. These lizards feed on hymenopterans and dipterans, beetles, bedbugs, butterflies, cicadas, orthopterans, and spiders.

Conservation status: Population densities are high in most parts of the species' range. However, the subspecies *D. c. vedenica* is less common and included in the Red Data Book of Chechnya.

Dagestan Rock Lizard

Darevskia daghestanica (DAREVSKY, 1967)

Figs. 299–301, Map 59

Ilya S. DAREVSKY described this dwarf lizard based on specimens collected in Dagestan. Its species status was confirmed not only after a detailed study of preserved specimens but also of the biology of these lizards.

External appearance: The body length is up to 5.8 cm, the tail is approximately twice this size.

The rostral shield does not touch the frontonasal. A complete or interrupted row of granular scales is located between the supraciliary and supraocular shields, and the number of these granular scales, up to 15, is higher than that of the Common Caucasian Rock lizard. Behind the first supratemporals 2–5 small posterior temporal scales are located. The masseteric shield is small or completely absent. Dorsal scales are smooth, slightly convex, arranged in 43–54 rows at midbody. The row of 13–18 femoral pores reaches almost to the knee joint. Shades of greyish-brown, yellowish-fulvous and ashy-grey dominate in the dorsal colour of both males and females. In general, the pattern of the Dagestan Rock Lizard is more blurred than that of the Common Caucasian Rock Lizard. A vertebral stripe may be formed by two parallel rows of dark spots

Map 59: *Darevskia daghestanica*.



Fig. 299: Dagestan Rock Lizard, *Darevskia daghestanica*.

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or has the form of a punched pattern. Sometimes the vertebral stripe is reduced or missing completely. There are no bluish spots at the level of the front legs on the lateral stripes.

Distinguishing features: The Dagestan Rock Lizard differs from the Common Caucasian Rock lizard by having more granules between the supraorbital and supraciliary scales, larger average values of the main characters of pholidosis, and a whitish venter.

Distribution and subspecies: The Dagestan Rock Lizard is common in the mountainous areas and piedmont of Dagestan,

Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, up to the left bank of the Terek River in the lower reaches of the Dariali Gorge in the west. An isolated population is known on the southern slope of the Main Caucasus Range (South Ossetia). There are no recognized subspecies.

Until recently, the Dagestan Rock Lizard was considered a subspecies of the Common Caucasian Rock Lizard, *Darevskia caucasica*. Both species are often found in close proximity of each other and can hybridize. However, in the eastern part of the North Caucasus no hybridization occurs despite the fact that these species live there in sympatry.



Fig. 300: A pair of Dagestan Rock Lizards.

T. KIRSCHY



Fig. 301: Portrait of a Dagestan Rock Lizard.

T. PANNER



Fig. 302: Gravid female of the Artvin Rock Lizard, *Darevskia derjugini abchasica*.

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Natural history: The Dagestan Rock Lizard is found in rocky habitats on dry mountain slopes and in river valleys of the forest and, in part, mountain-steppe zones. Locally, these lizards live on river cliffs and flat forest areas in the foothills. In the mountains, they can be found at about 3,000 m a.s.l. Where they occur in sympatry with Common Caucasian Rock Lizards, they are generally found in open rocky biotopes, whereas the latter species seems to favour areas covered by dense vegetation. Population sizes are large.

These lizards are diurnal, with a double-peak of activity in hot weather. They cease overwintering in late March or early April, and leave for hibernation from the beginning of October. Under favorable conditions in the piedmont of Dagestan, specimens can be active all year around. Clutches consist of 4–5 eggs and are deposited in June–July. The young hatch in August or early September, at a total length of 50–55 mm. Orthopterans, beetles, caterpillars, dipterans and their larvae, caddisflies, spiders, and earthworms constitute their diet.

Conservation status: Populations of Dagestan Rock Lizards appear to be stable and in no need of any conservation action.

Artvin Rock Lizard

Darevskia derjugini (NIKOLSKY, 1898)

Figs. 222, 302–305, Map 60

The common name refers to the type locality, the vicinity of the town of Artvin in north-eastern Turkey. The scientific name of the

species honours Russian geologist, oceanographer and zoologist Konstantin Mikhailovich DERYUGIN or DERJUGIN.

External appearance: Maximum body length 6.5 cm, tail length 10 cm. The head is not flattened.

Masseteric and tympanic shields are usually well defined. The dorsal scales are more or less round, smooth or have weak keels in the posterior half of the body. The rows of femoral pores are short (6–12), and do not reach the knee joint. Males differ from females by having fewer transverse rows of ventrals, but a relatively larger head as well as longer limbs and tail.

The back is brown with small dark spots. On the flanks, there are wide, dark stripes with a scalloped edge, and sometimes, along the vertebral line, there is a poorly defined dark band. Pale stripes extend on the sides of the tail backwards from the base of the hips. Occasionally there are specimens with indistinct, pale rounded



Map 60: *Darevskia derjugini*.