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First record of *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Duméril & Bibron, 1839) from the Peloponnese peninsula, Greece

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Algyroides is a small genus of lacertids native to Europe that includes four species (Sillero et al., 2014). All *Algyroides* species show a preference for shaded, cool, and humid habitats, and are mostly associated with woodlands (Harris et al., 1999). Two species are native to Greece, namely *A. moreoticus* Bibron & Bory, 1833, and *A. nigropunctatus* (Duméril & Bibron, 1839). *A. moreoticus* is endemic to the Peloponnese peninsula and the Ionian islands of Kefalonia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets (Bischoff, 1981). *A. nigropunctatus* has a much wider distribution across the Western Balkans, spanning the Adriatic and Ionian coastal regions from north-eastern Italy to Greece, including most of the Ionian Islands (Sillero et al., 2014, Strachinis et al., 2021). Since *A. nigropunctatus* is best adapted to humid habitats, in Greece it is more common in the regions west of the Pindos mountain range, where precipitation is relatively high (Carneiro et al., 2017), although it has also naturally spread to the regions east of the Pindos (Pafilis and Andriopoulos, 2016). The two species occur in sympatry on Kefalonia and Ithaca, where they share the same micro-habitats (Strachinis and Artavanis, 2017). An introduced population of *A. nigropunctatus* was discovered to occur in the city of Athens (Deimezis-Tsikoutas et al., 2020). Here, we report on the observation of *A. nigropunctatus* on the Peloponnese peninsula where, to our best knowledge, the species has not been confirmed until now. Our record raises the number of known reptile and amphibian species of the Peloponnese to exactly fifty (see Valakos et al., 2008).

In the early afternoon of 18 March 2024, we visited a neglected garden in Krathi village, at the northern shore of the Peloponnese peninsula, Greece (38.1522°N, 22.3504°E; elevation 3 m). The garden was adjacent to the estuary of a small stream. We observed five individuals (Fig. 1) (three males and two females) of *A. nigropunctatus* basking on the trunks of mulberry trees (*Morus* sp.) and on metal boards. In line with the known behaviour of this species, they were seen on ground level as well as climbing in trees up to three meters high. A second visit in the wider area was conducted to investigate nearby sites. On 21 April 2024 we also found an adult male approximately 400 meters from the first site (38.1489°N, 22.3500°E; elevation 10 m). Both of these sites were situated along the same small stream. However, in this case, the encountered lizard was seen to occupy a densely vegetated area composed of Oriental Plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*). The lizards were identified based on morphological traits that distinguish them from congeneric *A. moreoticus*, native to the Peloponnese: a significantly larger size, bigger scales on the dorsum than on the flanks, a reddish colouration of the ventral side, and a bluish colouration of the head in males. None of the animals were captured or otherwise disturbed. While no juvenile individuals were observed, the presence of multiple adult males and gravid females suggests the existence of an established population. Within a few meters from the trees occupied by *A. nigropunctatus* we also observed several individuals of *A. moreoticus*. The two species were not found in exact syntopy but occupied adjacent terrains.

Our record adds to the increasing number of known lizard populations in Greece as a result of human introductions. In some cases, this includes non-indigenous species (not members of the Greek herpetofauna) while, in others, this concerns native lizard species founding populations outside of their known range in Greece. The first group includes *Hemidactylus turcicus* (Carranza and Arnold, 2006; Rato et al., 2011), *Chamaeleo africanus* (Dimaki et al., 2008), *Chalcides ocellatus* (Kornilios et al., 2010), *Laudakia stellio* (Karameta et al., 2022),

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Figure 1. Photographic evidence of introduced *Algyroides nigropunctatus* as found on the northern shore of the Peloponnese peninsula, Greece. (A) Mature male. (B) Mature female. (C) Mature male. Photos by Philippos Katsiyiannis.

Tarentola mauritanica (Strachinis et al., 2023), and the recently introduced *Podarcis siculus* (Adamopoulou, 2015), and *Podarcis vaucheri* (Spilani et al., 2018). The second group, in addition to the abovementioned population of *A. nigropunctatus* from Athens and our new record, includes *Chamaeleo chamaeleon* (Dimaki et al., 2015), *Podarcis muralis* (Karameta and Pafilis, 2017), *Podarcis peloponnesiacus* (Hedman et al., 2017), and *Anatololacerta pelasgiana* (Christopoulos et al., 2022). It should be noted that while major urban centres are often the most likely sites of lizard introduction events, this is not always the case as illustrated by the reported *A. nigropunctatus* observations. It is important to monitor the dynamics of introduced lizard species to better understand the mechanisms of invasion and adaptation to new environments, as well as to detect any potential detrimental effect of the introduced species on native herpetofauna.

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