

First record of *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Duméril & Bibron, 1839) from Crete

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RESUMEN: se describe el hallazgo de varios individuos de *Algyroides nigropunctatus* en La Canea (oeste de la isla de Creta). A pesar de que esta especie ha sido descrita como alóctona anteriormente en otros enclaves, este es el primer registro fuera de Europa continental, muy alejado de su rango de distribución natural.

The Dalmatian *Algyroides* (*Algyroides nigropunctatus* [Duméril & Bibron, 1839]), commonly known as the blue-throated keeled lizard, is a small diurnal lizard adapted to shaded and humid habitats, a crucial ecological trait responsible for its natural distribution across the Balkans (Bischoff, 1981; Carneiro *et al.*, 2017; Speybroeck *et al.*, 2016). It is the most widely distributed species of the genus, occurring along the east Adriatic coast from northeast Italy to southern Greece, including many islands of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (Sillero *et al.*, 2014; Speybroeck *et al.*, 2016). In the last years, new local records of this species have increased its natural distribution range (Bringsøe, 1995; Ajtić *et al.*, 2005; Andriopoulos & Pafilis, 2016). In continental Greece, *A. nigropunctatus* is restricted to the western region of the country, from the border with Albania to the Gulf of Corinth, east of the Pindos mountains, which are responsible for the humid climate of western Greece (Kotini-Zabaka, 1983; Speybroeck *et al.*, 2016). Its insular distribution in Greece includes most of the Ionian Islands and the Diapontia Islets (Chondropoulos, 1986; Speybroeck *et al.*, 2016).

On June 9th 2023, while carrying out fieldwork in Crete, we found four individuals of *Algyroides nigropunctatus* near the harbour of the Old City of Chania (35°31'02,8"N / 24°01'26,8"E; Figure 1). In the absence of genetic evidence, the blue throat and orange belly suggests its adscription to the nominal subspecies *A. n. nigropunctatus* (Badiane *et al.*, 2018; Strachinis *et al.*, 2021). Over the course of just a few minutes we spotted two adults and two juveniles basking in the Kiprou Defensive Wall near the Theatre Parking, which is surrounded by a vegetation patch of ca. 1,15 ha. We could not spend time searching for animals in the wall or exploring the vegetated area behind, but given the ease with which we found them, we suspect lizards may be abundant at this location.

Algyroides nigropunctatus as an introduced species has also been reported in south-eastern Italy and in the city of Athens (Carlino & Pauwells, 2016; Deimezis-Tsikoutas *et al.*, 2020). However, this is the first record of this species outside continental Europe, quite far from its natural distribution range. We hypothesize

Photo Ferran de la Cruz



Figure 1: Adult male of *Algyroides nigropunctatus* found in the Kiprou Defensive Wall of Chania.

Figure 1: Macho adulto de *Algyroides nigropunctatus* encontrado en la Muralla Defensiva de La Canea.

that its introduction, given its proximity to the harbour of Chania, may have resulted from sea transport. Maybe the historical relationship with venetians, who developed the fortification of the city, could also explain the presence of the species. Further prospecting is needed to assess the viability of this population and its distribution across the island, as well as a molecular analysis to determine its origin.

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