

***Darevskia dahli* (Darevsky, 1957)**

Dahl's Rock Lizard

Plate 5, figures 19a–19b.

Lacerta saxicola dahli Darevsky 1957c:32.

Lacerta dahli, Darevsky 1966b:127.

TYPE LOCALITY.— “Armyanskaya SSR, Kirovakanskii raion, okr. stancii Shahali” [= vicinity of railway station Shahali, Kirovakan region, Armenia].

TAXONOMY.— A parthenogenetic species that originated by hybridization between *D. portschinskii* × *D. mixta*.

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION.— A Little Caucasus endemic lizard, occurring in N Armenia and S Georgia.

DISTRIBUTION IN THE STUDY AREA (Pl. 5:19b).— This species is distributed mainly in forest zones of N Armenia in Lori, Shirak, and Tavush Provinces.

First record: Discovered by I.S. Darevsky near Shahali, Lori Province, on 27 July 1955.

GENERAL INFORMATION.— *Size:* $SVL_{max} = 64$ mm; $SVL/TailL = 0.48-0.76$; dorsal scales at midbody = 51–56 (average 53.2); gular scales = 24–30 (average 26.8); femoral pores = 14–20 (average 17.3) (Darevsky 1967).

Karyotype: $2n = 38$, 36 macrochromosomes (acrocentric) and 2 microchromosomes (Kupriyanova 1994).

Habitat (see Pl. 18), *life history, and biological notes:* *Darevskia dahli* inhabits moderately dry bedrocks and gorge slopes in the forest zone. It occurs also among stony sites in mountain steppe habitats in formerly forested sites near Stepanavan and Tashir, Lori Province. Usually found along forest roads, among overgrown ruins, and on stony fences and walls. Altitudinal distribution ranges from 700 to 1500 m. *Darevskia dahli* is active from early April until October. Diurnal. Summer activity is bimodal.

A parthenogenetic species, it lays eggs between the end of June and the end of July. According to Darevsky (1967) and Danielyan (1968), it lays two clutches of eggs per year, but a second clutch does not seem always to occur as, for instance, observed by Arakelyan (2001c) in the Papanino (Lori Province) population.

Most of the three-year-old lizards examined were immature (only one of eight was found carrying eggs) whereas four- and five-year-old animals routinely laid two to four and three to five eggs respectively. For each of the three age groups, eggs average in size 11.7×6.1 mm, 12.5×6.0 mm, and 13×6.3 mm, respectively.

In the Papanino population, two distinct morphological clones are present; they differ in belly coloration, which can be yellowish or bright yellow (Danielyan 1987a). Some differences have been observed in ecology and number of eggs; for instance, in egg number production, it has been found that the bright yellow lizards produce fewer eggs, usually only two to three per clutch, and they tend to be less xerophilous.

Juveniles ($SVL = 24-27$ mm) appear in mid-August and September.

According to Arakelyan (2001a), the life span of *Darevskia dahli* does not exceed six years.

CONSERVATION STATUS.— Although populations are usually numerous, they are often isolated from one another. Some of the populations are threatened by habitat transformation. Thus, *Darevskia dahli* is recommended to be included in the *Red Book of Armenia*.

According to IUCN (2009), it is globally classified as "Near Threatened."

REFERENCES: Aghasyan et al. 2009; Ananjeva et al. 2006; Arakelyan 2001a, 2001c; Bannikov et al. 1997; Chernov 1939; Danielyan 1968, 1972, 1987a; Darevsky 1966b, 1967; Darevsky and Kupriyanova 1982; Darevsky et al. 1991, 1994; IUCN 2009; Kupriyanova 1994; Szczerbak 2003.