Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus (Duméril & Bibron, 1839)
Dalmatian Algyroides

Etymology. The species nomen is composed of two Latin adjectives, '*niger*', which means 'black', and '*punctatus*', drawn from the noun '*punctum*', meaning 'a dot'; this species nomen means 'black-dotted'.

Description. A slim, dorsoventrally flattened lizard with a total length of 21 cm, two-thirds of which is the long tail. The head is long and pointed. Males are larger than females with larger heads, and are much more colourful in the breeding season. The dorsal scales are large, larger than the lateral ones, overlapping and strongly keeled, what gives the animal a "rough" appearance and touch. Adult males have brownish, greyish or reddish-brown backs, with irregularly distributed small black spots, more evident in light-coloured individuals. In the mating season, they develop a sky-blue throat, orange to red flanks and belly with, sometimes, a row of blue scales on the flanks. The colours fade outside the breeding season and then the throat is only washed pale blue. Females have whitish, yellowish or greenish venter and throat, and a more uniformly dark brown dorsal colour. Sometimes they have a dark red spot in the neck area.

Young individuals have whitish chin and pale-yellow venter. Both sexes become much darker during the winter months.



Fig. 273: Non-breeding adult (above) and juvenile with partly regenerated tail (below) of *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus*. E. Tzoras

Similar species. Mature males are quite large and colourful and easy to differentiate, but juveniles and females are more difficult to be separated from the Greek Algyroides *Algyroides moreoticus*. In the Peloponnese, it is only near the town of Akrata where one is likely to find both species. *Algyroides nigropunctatus* is larger and has large keeled scales only on the back, while lateral dorsal scales are smaller and not keeled. In *A. moreoticus*, the lateral scales are large and keeled as the dorsal ones.

Distribution. The species was very recently introduced in the Peloponnese. A small population was discovered near the town of Akrata, along the north shore of the Peloponnese, in a house yard by the sea, just beside a small river with reeds. The species was further found 400 metres upstream in the same rivulet, revealing that the population has at least some extent and possibly some years in existence.

Naturally, the Dalmatian Algyroides ranges from north-eastern Italy, following the Adriatic and Ionian coasts down to the north shores of the Gulf of Corinth in southern Greece, as a rule to the west of Pindus Range (with some exceptions to the east). It is also present on most adjacent Ionian Islands: Kerkyra, Diapontia Islets (north-west of Kerkyra), Paxi, Lefkada (and adjacent islets), Cephallonia and Ithaca. Naturalized population has been also reported from Athens, another recent human-mediated introduction.

Habitat. The only Peloponnesian population found to date, is in the course of a rivulet and near its estuary, which is in Akrata town. Riverine vegetation with plane trees and orchards is the main habitat upstream, while at the river mouth there is the yard where specimens were first found. Mulberry trees, reeds, cement walls, and the occasional junk are the settings and the habitat in which these lizards live in. It is known that in Greece, which represents the southernmost part of their range, they prefer rather cool, shaded and relatively humid environments, like woodland habitats and brooks, but they also inhabit dry stone walls with or without vegetation, in villages, gardens, maquis and sunny areas with vegetation. Outside Peloponnese, they live from the sea level in places with Mediterranean climate along the coast, up to around 1,500 metres



Map 22: Distribution of *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus* in the Peloponnese.



Fig. 274: *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus*, male in the breeding season. Ph. Katsiyiannis

of altitude on mountains. Up to now, in Peloponnese this species has only been found near the sea.

Notes on natural history. The Dalmatian Algyroides is a diurnal medium-sized lizard, active all-year-round in our area. These lizards are secretive and well-camouflaged and not so easy to spot. They do not hibernate in such south and by-the-sea locations. They prefer cool temperatures, and can be seen basking on warm, sunny winter days even if a chilly night has been preceded. They are definitely easier to observe in winter than in summer. In spring and autumn, their activity is mainly in the morning and up to midday, while during the summer the activity becomes bimodal, very early in the morning and late in the evening. Characteristic is their habit of basking on branches and trunks high up on trees, up to 3–4 metres or more, something that *A. moreoticus* avoids.

Feeding. The Dalmatian Algyroides is a widely-foraging lizard. Its food consists of a variety of spiders, worms, caterpillars, insects (mainly Coleoptera), and other small invertebrates including snails.



Fig. 275: *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus*, female. Ph. Katsiyiannis

Breeding behaviour. Males are territorial and, in the breeding season, they develop an intense blue head and throat colour with blue flank spots. This flash of blue colour may be even stronger in the lizards' eyes because it reflects ultraviolet light that they are able to see. Mating takes place from March to May. Females lay 2–5 oblong eggs that hatch after about 50 days. Neonates appear from late June to late August.

Conservation status. Least Concern (LC) according to the IUCN.

Systematic note. *Algyroides nigropunctatus nigropunctatus* is the nominotypical subspecies which has been introduced in Peloponnese.

Hellenolacerta græca (Bedriaga, 1886)
Greek Rock Lizard

Etymology. The genus nomen combines the classical Greek adjective '*Hellênikós*' (*Ελληνικός*), meaning 'of Greece, related to Greece, Greek', itself derived from the noun '*Hellás*' (*Ελλάς*), an old name for Greece in classical Greek language, and '*lacerta*', the Latin noun for a typical 'lizard'. The species nomen is the Latin adjective '*græcus*' in its feminine declension, deriving from the ancient Greek adjective '*grækos*' (*γραικός*) meaning 'Greek'.