

10th Symposium on the lacertid lizards of the Mediterranean Basin



2nd Symposium on the lizards of the Mediterranean Basin

Book of abstracts



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P2 - Mitochondrial diversity in the southern populations of *Pseudopus apodus*

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The Eastern Mediterranean is a region with extraordinary diversity of reptile fauna. Many Western Palearctic species are endemic to this region or have southern limits of their distribution here. This is also a case of the legless anguid lizards of the genus *Pseudopus* Merrem, 1820. Despite the species diversity of the genus since the Early Miocene, only one species, *Pseudopus apodus* (Pallas, 1775), has survived until the present time in a longitudinally oriented range that spreads from the coastal Balkans in the west through Anatolia, western Levant, the Caucasus Isthmus, the Black Sea, and the southern Caspian region to central Asia in the east. Only recently, phylogeography of the species revealed three main phylogenetic lineages that diverged during or shortly before the Pleistocene. Two of them more or less correspond to the known subspecies, and their low genetic variability suggests relatively recent dispersal and colonization of vast parts of the range. The third, southern and endemic, lineage is more geographically restricted and diversified than the other two. We investigated mtDNA diversity of the populations originating from Israel and southern Turkey. Our results revealed the highest haplotype and nucleotide diversity from the entire distribution range of the species. Interestingly, some of the haplotypes from central Israel are more distant from each other than populations from southern Turkey and northern Israel despite they occur in significantly smaller area. These results highlight the importance of Eastern Mediterranean for preserving high diversity of reptiles. The study was supported by the grant APVV-15-0147.