

Forum

This new section in **Amphibia-Reptilia** is introduced to encourage debate on scientific topics of interest to readers. We begin with an exchange of correspondence relating to a paper published in volume 7 (3), 1986.

EDITORS

Comments on:

Chondropoulos, B.P. (1986): A checklist of the Greek reptiles. I. The lizards. Amph.-Rept. 7: 217-235.

Henrik Bringsøe
Esthersvej 7, DK-4600 Køge, Denmark

My main criticism of this paper is that the level of information is too low. For a journal of Amphibia-Reptilia's quality more new, hitherto unpublished data must be given or there must be a higher degree of critical reviewing.

A. *New data*

Locality records not followed by a reference in the species account are mentioned to form new records. Seven records are stated as such: *Hemidactylus t. turcicus* on Poros; *Tarentola m. mauritanica* in the NW coastal zone of the Peloponnese; *Algyroides nigropunctatus* in the prefecture of Fokida; *Lacerta agilis bosnica* in the Rhodopi mountain chain, prefectures of Florini and Drama; *Podarcis erhardii livadiaca* (which is the proper spelling) in the prefectures of Argolida, Arcadia (east part) and Laconia; *P. e. thessalica* in the prefecture of Fthiotida; and *P. taurica ionica* in the prefecture of Fokida. Two of these records (*T. m. mauritanica* and *A. nigropunctatus*) have also been submitted to another journal where they have now been published (Chondropoulos, 1984 and 1983 respectively). This is against normal ethics and the fundamental conditions of Amphibia-Reptilia and other scientific journals. Thus, these are not new records. However, the big time gap between date of submission to Amphibia-Reptilia (December, 1983) and date of publication (August, 1986) is striking and this delay might have caused the anomaly.

For the remaining five records important information on the basic material is lacking: exact locality details (except for *H. t. turcicus* on Poros), museum no. (if any specimens collected and preserved), date of collection/observation, name of person responsible for the collection/observation. As none of these requirements is fulfilled and no other information is given, these records can not be accepted.

B. *Critical reviewing*

There is an obvious lack of critical reviewing of the sources used (and a lack of originality). This will be demonstrated in the examples mentioned below:

- 1: In the introduction *Chalcides moseri* is stated to be endemic to Greece and in the species account it is also included (although followed by a question mark in brackets). It is unlikely that the existence of *C. moseri* is valid (Frör and Beutler, 1978; Böhme, 1981). Chondropoulos should have stated this.
- 2: *Chalcides o. ocellatus*, the Peloponnese (Arnold et al., 1978): If Chondropoulos wants to include this species in the Peloponnesian herpetofauna, he should do it with some comments. Lindfors (1976) has reported it from Korinthos; otherwise it has not specifically been reported from the Peloponnese before, only from the coastal islands off the E Peloponnese. The mention by Arnold et al. (1978) is supposed to have been based on finding(s) from the northeasternmost (or possibly the northernmost) parts of the Peloponnese. It is definitely not widespread.
- 3: The extensive use of Ondrias (1968) – see below.

The very low number of new records (see above) also reflects the lack of originality.

C. The use of references

As Chondropoulos' paper is nearly entirely based on results which have already been published, the use of references is important for his summarizing. The below-mentioned examples will illustrate some negative trends herein.

- 1: *Cyrtopodion* (at date of submission still named *Cyrtodactylus*) *kotschy*: Reference has been made to Bruno (1980) for *C. k. bibroni* on Thasos and for *C. k. saronicus* on Aegina. Bruno (1980) does not give any new data (not even new summaries) on Greek *C. kotschy*, merely a re-drawing of one of Beutler and Gruber's (1977) maps (Karte 2). Thus, the use of Bruno (1980) is in this connection irrelevant.
- 2: Previously other works summarizing the Greek distribution of various taxa have appeared. For instance Beutler and Gruber (1977) on *Cyrtopodion kotschy*, Bischoff (1981a, 1981b, 1981c) on *Ophiomorus punctatissimus*, *Algyroides moreoticus*, and *A. nigropunctatus* respectively, Salvador (1981) on *Hemidactylus turcicus*, Schneider (1981) on *Chalcides ocellatus*, and Werner (1938a) on the Greek amphibians and reptiles in general. Where these distributional summaries were complete for the Greek range at the time of printing, earlier references are superfluous.
- 3: One should be very careful when referring to Ondrias (1968) as this paper contains numerous errors and inaccuracies wherefore it ought in general to be disregarded. The species account lacks references although there is a comprehensive reference list. Consequently, it is unfortunate that Chondropoulos has referred to Ondrias (1968) 29 times.
- 4: *Cyrtopodion k. tinensis*: Bird (1935) has erroneously been left out from the reference list.
- 5: *Ablepharus k. kitaibelii*: I wonder how reference has been made to Pieper (1970) under "Mainland" since Pieper (1970) has only mentioned mainland specimens in one single sentence stating that the author had compared island specimens with some from the Peloponnese.
- 6: *Chalcides moseri*: Ahl (1937) should have been mentioned for the dubious distribution and should subsequently have been included in the reference list (however, see the above remarks).
- 7: *Ophiomorus punctatissimus* on Kerkyra: It seems inappropriate to refer to Arnold et al. (1978) as this book does not give any new distributional data. Pieper (1970) is fully adequate.
- 8: *Ophisops elegans macrodactylus*: Baran (1982) has demonstrated that the western populations of *O. elegans* differ from the eastern; previously all these were assigned to *O. e. ehrenbergii* (Wiegmann, 1835) (type locality "Syria") which will still apply for the eastern populations, however, Baran (1982) used *O. e. macrodactylus* Berthold, 1842 (type locality Constantinopel = Istanbul) for the western populations including the Greek. Chondropoulos' statement that "*O. e. macrodactylus* has the priority against its synonym *O. e. ehrenbergii*" is obviously incorrect since *O. e. ehrenbergii* was described seven years before *O. e. macrodactylus*!
- 9: *Podarcis erhardii* (p. 230 centre): Chondropoulos claims that Liefertinck (1974) considers the populations of the Thera archipelago to belong to *P. e. naxensis*. This is wrong since Liefertinck (1974) does not discuss systematics in any way in his paper which is merely some superficial field notes (as intended).
- 10: *P. taurica ionica*, in the Peloponnese: Making a reference to Mayer and Tiedemann (1980) for distribution purposes is not relevant: the sample from Feneos (used for electrophoresis) does not give any new distributional data as Wettstein (1953) already reported *P. t. ionica* from that place. Stating that it occurs "everywhere" in the Peloponnese is exaggerated; for the proper range see Kabisch (1986) as the data presented here should have been known to Chondropoulos.

As a summary of the above, most negative and reprehensible in Chondropoulos' check-list is the lack of new data (only five new records which are even without ANY documentation and therefore virtually useless) and the lack of originality. The remaining points raised under "C. The use of references" demonstrate that the low level continues throughout the paper.

References not stated by Chondropoulos

- Ahl, E. (1937): Über eine neue europäische Eidechse. *Zool. Anz.* **117**: 155-157.
 Bird, C.G. (1935): The reptiles and amphibians of the Cyclades. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, London **16**: 274-284.
 Böhme, W. (ed) (1981): *Handbuch der Reptilien und Amphibien Europas*. Bd. 1, Echsen I. Akad. Verlagsges., Wiesbaden. 520 pp.
 Chondropoulos, B.P. (1983): Geographic distribution: *Algyroides nigropunctatus*. *Herp. Review* **14**: 27.
 Chondropoulos, B.P. (1984): Geographic distribution: *Tarentola mauritanica* (Moorish Gecko). *Herp. Review* **15**: 78.
 Kabisch, K. (1986): *Podarcis taurica* (Pallas, 1814) — Taurische Eidechse. In: Böhme, W. (ed.): *Handbuch der Reptilien und Amphibien Europas*. Bd. 2/II, Echsen III: 343-362. Aula, Wiesbaden.
 Lindfors, P. (1976): Herpetologiska notiser från ett område runt Korinthos, Peloponnesos, i Grekland. *Snoken* **6**: 188-192.

Køge, December 4, 1986

Reply to Bringsøe

As a general remark I think it is widely believed that the acceptance and publication of a paper in a journal having the high standards of Amphibia-Reptilia, especially its known strict reviewing process, is a strong criterion for the paper's originality and validity. From this point of view Bringsøe's introductory opinion concerning the publishing policy of Amphibia-Reptilia is rather strange since he seems to admit this journal's quality.

The main aim of my checklist was the compilation of a concise and up-to-date synopsis of the data scattered in the international herpetological literature about the taxonomy and zoogeographic distribution of Greek lizard taxa. Such a reference work covering all the Greek area was thought to be absolutely necessary because of the general interest of the herpetofauna of Greece.

Some answers to Bringsøe's particular comments are given below according to his order and numeration:
 A. In the introduction to my paper it is clearly stated that except for the bibliographic data, information was also taken from the author's field observations/collections and the material of the Zoological Museum of Patra University. In the cases of these two last sources of data I decided to omit particular specimen data such as those mentioned by Bringsøe (date of observation/collection, Museum number, collector's name, etc.). This was solely done in order to meet the basic requirement of Amphibia-Reptilia for space-saving. Furthermore, neither the Editors nor the reviewers suggested to me the addition of such data.

B. 1. Throughout the checklist only positive references were used. So, in my opinion, the sentence "There are no later references after species first record" which follows the registration of *Chalcides moseri* Ahl, 1937, is informative enough on the questionable existence of this species nowadays. Of course the negative references mentioned by Bringsøe for the same taxon were well known to me.

3. As can easily be revealed by scanning the references cited in most of the recent articles concerning the Greek herpetofauna, the Ondrias' (1968) paper continues to be thought valid. Bringsøe himself has used that paper in his recent work on the herpetofauna on the Peloponnese (Bringsøe, H., 1985): A check-list of Peloponnesian amphibians and reptiles, including new records from Greece. *Ann. Musei Goulandris* **7**: 271-318).

C. 1. Despite Bringsøe's opinion, Bruno (1980) gives additional information on the distribution of *Cyrtodactylus kotschyi* comparing it to that given by Beutler and Gruber (1977). This becomes clear by a mere comparison of the maps included in those two papers (fig. 6, p. 117 and Karte 2, s. 181 respectively). Moreover, as is specifically mentioned in its legend, the Bruno map is a modification of Beutler and Gruber's made on the basis of additional data.

2, 3, 5, 7, 10. Contrary to Bringsøe's remarks I did not regard as superfluous any information available.

So I preferred to give as many references as possible, even if some of them could be considered redundant in a sense.

9. Bringsøe insists that Lieftinck (1974) gives no information concerning the subspecific status of *Podarcis erhardii* in the Thera archipelago. This opinion is obviously erroneous since Lieftinck clearly mentions (p. 131) that the animals of Thera probably belong to *P. e. naxensis*.

10. As could be documented from my numerous unpublished data, *Podarcis taurica ionica* is indeed widely distributed in the Peloponnese. These data in addition to the relevant bibliographic references mentioned in the checklist prove that my statement that this taxon occurs everywhere in the Peloponnese is not an exaggeration as Bringsøe claims.

I would like to express my thanks to Bringsøe for his effort at criticizing my work because I believe that such arguments further the cause of scientific truth and accuracy. Also, I am grateful to the Editors of Amphibia-Reptilia for the opportunity for this dispute.

Patra, September 8, 1987

B.P. Chondropoulos

Reply to B.P. Chondropoulos

The intention of my remarks was to call attention to the inconsistency that this check-list had been accepted despite the generally high quality of Amphibia-Reptilia.

The primary goals of Amphibia-Reptilia are to publish results of herpetological research, documented to an appropriate extent. "Space-saving" will only be a secondary requirement and should never be given priority against the above.

I can confirm that I have been very careful when referring to Ondrias (1968) in my paper (Bringsøe, 1985 [1986]); it has only been used once (p. 286) as some unverified and dubious records are mentioned.

I admit that a few extra dots have been made on Bruno's (1980) fig. 6, but nothing new has been added for *C. k. bibrioni* on Thassos and for *C. k. saronicus* on Aegina, so Chondropoulos' use of this reference is still irrelevant.

Obviously a translation of the sentence of Lieftinck (1974, p. 131) on *P. e. naxensis* referred to by Chondropoulos is needed and it reads as follows: "On Thira otherwise known as Santorini, the second island, our herpetological observation consisted only of taking photographs of most probably *Lacerta erhardii naxensis*". This sentence does not contain any discussion of systematics.

Indeed it is interesting that Chondropoulos has recorded *P. t. ionica* outside its hitherto known Peloponnesian range (cf. Kabisch, 1986). However, since his information that it is widespread in the Peloponnese is followed by various references, these should form the basis for the information "everywhere". This example merely demonstrates another impropriety of the way new records have been incorporated. As mentioned before, the only satisfactory way of reporting new records in a paper is to write them separately and provide each with a proper documentation, irrespective of any requirement for "space-saving".

Køge, December 8, 1987

Henrik Bringsøe