

REPTILIA.

The Sand-Lizard in the North of England.—In the recent volume of the Cambridge Natural History on “Amphibia and Reptiles,”

Mr. Hans Gadow says that the Sand-Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*, Linn.) "is absent in Ireland and Scotland, while in England it is restricted to the southern half"; and a similar statement is made by Mr. Boulenger in the Hampshire volume of the Victoria History of the Counties of England. The reputed Sand-Lizards, frequently reported from northern counties, generally prove, on investigation, to be large examples of the Common Lizard (*L. vivipara*). This, however, is not the case in Lancashire, and, I believe, in Cheshire, for on the coast sand-hills the true Sand-Lizard was formerly common, and may even yet occur in places where the sandhills are unreclaimed. Lancashire naturalists of the old school knew the Sand-Lizard well, but, as questions of geographical distribution did not greatly interest them, there are few records left beyond the bare fact that the species was common. There are, however, specimens in the Warrington Museum, whose identity Mr. Boulenger has confirmed, which were captured at Southport and Formby, on the Lancashire coast. In Mr. Isaac Byerley's 'Fauna of Liverpool,' published in 1856, the Sand-Lizard is described as occurring "on the sand-hills from West Kirby to New Brighton" (in Cheshire). "At Seaforth, Crosby, and elsewhere" (in Lancashire). Mr. W. D. Boebuck states ('Naturalist,' 1884-85, p. 258) that, after examining specimens sent to him from various North of England localities, and finding that they were only "lightly coloured specimens of the Viviparous Lizard," he did not believe in the existence of the true *L. agilis* so far north, until Mr. G. T. Porritt procured him a couple of specimens from the Southport sand-hills, which he "at once saw were unmistakably referable to that species." He adds:—"Mr. Porritt tells me these Lizards swarm on the sand-hills at Southport, where he has frequently seen them sparkling in the sun with a glistening emerald-green, and sometimes almost golden, brightness." The late Thomas Alcock, in his pamphlet on the 'Natural History of the Coast of Lancashire' (1887), also speaks of the Sand-Lizard at Southport, where he says it was "formerly plentiful on the isolated group of sand-hills at the north end of the town. Hesketh Park, however, now occupies the best part of this locality." In 1862 and 1865 he captured and received a number of examples from this place. Mr. H. O. Forbes, in the 'British Association Handbook' for 1896, says, on the authority of Mr. Linnaeus Greening, of Warrington, "Common; Wallasey, Southport, and Formby sand-hills." The Cheshire locality is included on the strength of specimens which were shown to Mr. Greening by the late C. S. Gregson, who stated that he had obtained them at Wallasey. The sand-hills between West Kirby and New Brighton were of the same

character as those extending along the Lancashire coast from Liverpool to the mouth of the Ribble, and it is a generally accepted theory that the river Mersey, within geologically recent times, used to empty itself into the sea considerably to the west of its present mouth ; so that at one time the Wallasey coast-line was north of the river. The spread of the suburban residential districts round Liverpool, the growth of seaside resorts such as Hoylake and West Kirby, and the formation of golf-links all along the coast have destroyed a large portion of these sand-hills ; but there are considerable stretches in both counties where the Lizard may still exist. The Sand-Lizard is not known in Cumberland or Westmoreland, and, although many miles of the North Wales coast, from the mouth of the Dee westward, are, or were, similar in character to the Cheshire shores, I know of no record of the Sand-Lizard from the Principality. The evidence therefore shows that *L. agilis*, generally considered to be only an inhabitant of some of the southern counties, occurs in the north, on a strip of sand-hills bordering the Irish Sea, from the mouth of the Ribble to the outskirts of Liverpool, and, unless Byerley's and Gregson's specimens were incorrectly localized, on the Cheshire shore from West Kirby to New Brighton. Possibly some of the readers of 'The Zoologist' may be able to give information about existing specimens, or of recently captured examples of the Sand-Lizard in Cheshire.—T. A. COWARD (Bowdon, Cheshire).