

Archaeolacerta bedriagae (CAMERANO, 1885)

Bedriaga's Rock Lizard · (Italian name: lucertola di Bedriaga)

It is a medium-sized and flattened rock lizard. Head is elongated and flat. Eyes stick out remarkably. Dorsal scales are smooth, flat and not keeled. The dorsal coloration ranges from greenish to brown-grey-blackish tones, generally reticulated. Those individuals, in which the darker tones of the reticulation are particularly dense, can appear melanitic; some irregularly arranged light spots are also present. Ventral part from yellow-greyish to red, often dark spots are present on the throat. Juveniles are generally distinguishable from the adults by the brilliant green tail. Adults total length 28 cm, SVL up to 8 cm. Only at a first superficial look could this lizard be mistaken with *Podarcis sicula cettii* that in some cases show a similar dorsal reticulated pattern.

Distribution, zoogeography and taxonomy: Sardinia, and on the satellite islands of Razzoli, Budelli, S. Maria, Spargi, La Maddalena, S. Stefano, Giardinelli, Caprera and Isola Rossa di Trinità d'Agultu. Corsica and on the Isolotto della Folaca.

For long time reputed to be exclusively a montane species, this Cynro-Sardinian endemic lizard is now considered a complex of isolated populations. But LANZA (1983) observed that the Sardinian populations seemingly are in territorial and genetic continuity. *A. bedriagae* has also been found in many coastal localities and micro-insular habitats, as on the small granitic Folaca Islet (Corsica), characterized by



an area of only 3700 m² and 11 m elevation. On the latter islet this lizard is the only Lacertidae, while on the satellite islands of Sardinia it is sympatric with other species. In Sardinia, *A. bedriagae* has been found on the Gennargentu Massif (1800 m), while in Corsica it reaches 2710 m (Mount Cinto). *A. bedriagae* occurs on rocky, frequently granitic, habitats often scarcely covered or even without vegetation. Its flattened body seems to be functional to this habitat. In the mountain regions of Corsica (Haut-Asco, 1700–1800 m) the species occupies rocks exposed to the sun, sometimes partially covered by *Genista labelli*, *Juniperus nana* and *Berberis aetnensis* (CASTILLA et al., 1989).

The hypothesis concerning the actual distribution of the species are i) the presence of the ancestor on the Corsican-Sardinian complex before its separation from the con-

tinant; ii) the active colonisation of the islands occurring during the Messinian sea-regression (5 mybp) (LANZA, 1983).

Besides the nominal form of Corsica and the Folaca Islet the following subspecies have been described *sardoa* (PERACCA, 1903) of Gennargentu Massif; *paessleri* (MERTENS, 1927) of Mount Limbara. The ssp. *ferreae* (STEMMLER, 1962) of Punta Falcone (S. Teresa di Gallura, NE Sardinia) is considered a synonym of *A. bedriagae paessleri* GUILLAUME (1987).

Biology and ecology: Available information is scarce on the biology and ecology of this species. CASTILLA et al. (1989) reports that *A. bedriagae* feeds on vegetable matter, Oligochaeta, Araneae, Coleoptera, Lepidoptera and Formicidae; the latter represents the main amount of the examined faecal pellets. Many herpetologists presume the existence of a moderate form of gregariousness, even if specific studies have never been made. DELAUGERRE & CHEYLAN (1992) observed in the Valdu Niellu Forest (Corsica), up to 30 individuals in the same rock crevice. These authors, referring to the competitive behavior between *A. bedriagae* and *Podarcis tiliguerta*, underline that the latter seems to be dominant at low or medium elevations, while the first seem to prevail at higher altitude (1300–1500 m). VANHOODONCK et al. (2000) observed competitive behavior between *L. bedriagae*, *P. tiliguerta* and *P. sicula*. The first show to be less competitive despite its larger size and the capability of high locomotory performance.

Wintering can be more or less prolonged and is related to altitude. MÜLLER (1904) reports that the activity of this lizard started early in the morning at the first rays of sunlight, becoming intensified during the morning, while in the afternoon *A. bedriagae* seem to be less active. SOCHUREK (in SCHNEIDER, 1984) reports that this lizard is active even during rainy days, but recent studies by BAUWENS et al. (1990) show that its activity decreases with scarce insolation. These authors also observed that body temperature of *A. bedriagae* of the montane areas of Corsica is generally high (circa 32 °C), and constant throughout the day. This lizard is active also around midday and has been even observed basking. Body temperature of mountain populations seems not to differ from body temperature of coastal populations of *P. sicula* and *P. tiliguerta* (BAUWENS et al., 1990). *A. bedriagae* of a montane locality of Corsica shows a narrow range of activity body temperature when compared with that observed in the syntopic Tyrrhenian Wall Lizard (CORTI & ZUFFI, in press).

The breeding season takes place between April and June, depending on altitude and weather conditions. Courtship behavior studies are lacking (CASTILLA et al., 1989). Clutch size of 3–6 elongated eggs of ca 15–17 x 6–12 mm. Hatchlings appear in July–September.



Fig. 37: *Archaeolacerta bedriagae*, Bocca d'Illarata, Corsica, France.

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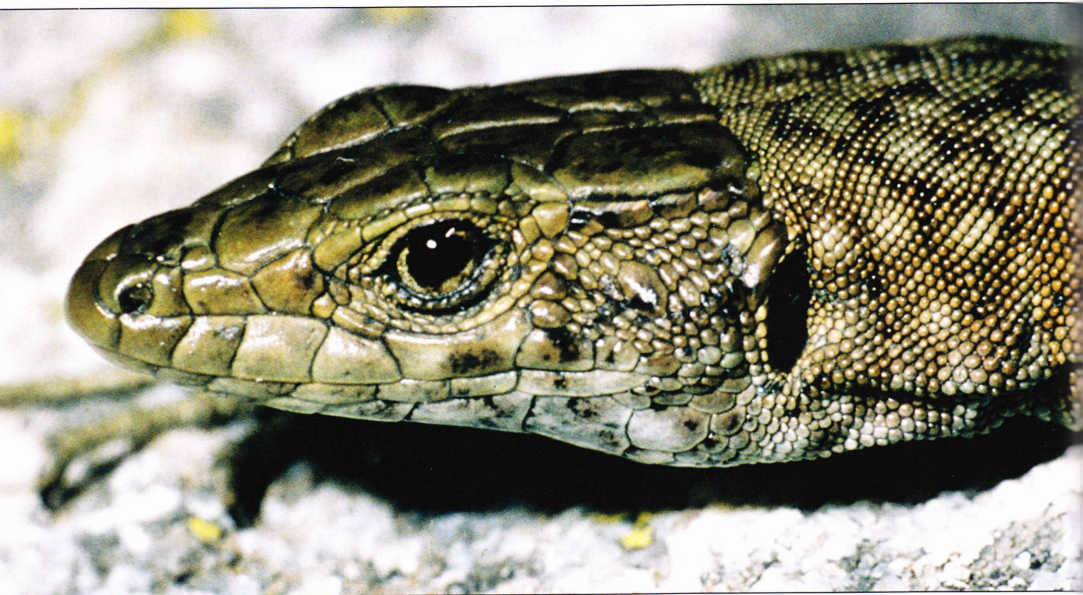


Fig. 38: *Archaeolacerta bedriagae*, Col de Verghiu, Corsica, France.

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Fig. 39 (top): *Archaeolacerta bedriagae*, juvenile, Limbara Mountains, Sardinia. W. BÖHME



Fig. 40 (middle): *A. bedriagae* in syntopy with *Podarcis tiliguerta*, Col de Verghiu, Corsica, France. C. CORTI



Fig. 41: Montane habitat of *A. bedriagae* + *P. tiliguerta*, Col de Verghiu, Corsica, France. C. CORTI