

## HERPETOLOGY OF EUROPE AND SOUTHWEST ASIA.

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Welch, K.R.G., 1983. Herpetology of Europe and Southwest Asia: A Checklist and Bibliography of the Orders Amphisbaenia, Sauria and Serpentes. Malabar: R.E. Krieger Publishing Company. I-VIII, 1-135. ISBN 0-89874-533-0. LCCN 82-12645.

In this book Welch gives a survey of worm lizards, lizards and snakes which live in Europe (including the Soviet Union), Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Jordan, The Lebanon, Israel and on the Arabian and Sinai peninsula. In spite of the title, the book does not give any information on amphibians and turtles. The author does not mention synonyms; if necessary the name of the genus which has been given at the first description of the (sub)genus is given. For each (sub)genus the area of distribution is given. The author also gives a list of references to publications for every (sub)genus. In two appendices publications by genus and area of distribution are mentioned. The bibliography covers about 750 titles. On the last pages two alphabetical indexes are given.

In Southeast Europe a lot of species find their ultimate eastern or northern area of distribution. This is a good reason to handle Southwest Asia and Europe together. According to this principle Northern Africa should have been treated in the same way. The exclusion of European Russia is simply strange. Furthermore it is not advisable to use national borders in zoology. However, the author uses them very often, which is not very helpful when trying to obtain a clear idea of the area of distribution.

The author has hardly given synonyms. That is why

this book is difficult to use when one is used to genetic names like *Cyrtodactylus* or *Coluber*. For this reason it is difficult to find the answer to the question whether the author has forgotten to mention *Coluber algirus* (Malta) and *Coluber rubriceps* (Anatolia, Tharacia and Southeast Bulgaria) or whether he considers these names as synonyms to other names.

The bibliography gives about 700 titles. I do not have a survey of the literature of the whole area, but I am rather well informed about the herpetofauna of Southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Welch has overlooked a lot. For example, important publications on Greece (Ondrias, 1968), Turkey (Basoglu & Baran, 1977 and 1980; Baran, 1976), Italy (Bruno & Maugeri, 1976 and 1977) and Europe (Böhme, 1981) are not inserted in the list. This explains the confusing use of obsolete names (*Haemorrhoids jugularis caspius* = *Coluber caspius*) and explains also why the author did not mention *Lacerta bedriagae*, which lives on Northern Sardinia at sea level. For some obscure reason *Coluber nummifer* (*Coluber ravergieri nummifer*) is not mentioned.

Furthermore, Welch copies without any reservation long lists of subspecies as described by Mertens & Wermuth (1960). Everyone who is seriously interested in the European herpetology realises that a lot of these subspecies are not valid. Hellenius (1976) supposes that one gets the impression that the great number of (sub)species of the genus *Lacerta* (= *Lacerta* and *Podarcis*) is frequently not due to the lizards themselves, but to the authors who want to glorify their names by describing every deviant shape or colour variety that can be found on every small island or rock. It is a pity that the author has not used the same method as he did for *Ophisops elegans*. Here he has simply neglected all subspecies. Because of the many indistinct differences between the subscribed sub-

species and the area of distribution one can hardly write on this subject without reasearch.

The author gives for *Chalcides guentheri* the area of distribution as "Turkey south to Israel". In this publication which is mentioned in the reference of literature, Pasteur (1981) however mentions only a small area of distribution in Israel, the Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Salvador (1981) however believes that in this case we probably have to deal with *Chalcides bedriagae pistaciae* (Valverde, 1966).

According to Welch *Mabuya aurata* and *Natrix tessellata* are inhabitants of Cyprus. Since the 18th and 19th century the appearance of these animals has been reported, but these reports were not based on clear evidence. Today their 'appearance' is based on the fact that authors gratuitously copy from other authors. For the rest the author mentions 16 other reptiles that appear on Cyprus. However he has forgotten five species: *Hemidactylus turcicus*, *Mabuya vittata*, *Typhlops vermicularis*, *Coluber nummifer* and *Telescopus fallax*.

Considering the mistakes mentioned above and other deficiencies, this book by Welch can not be given the description 'important'. The book contains too much slovenliness, the options of the author are not always clearly motivated and the biography is incomplete. One can only consider it as a passable first draft. In August 1986 I paid in Holland f 70.05 for it, in my opinion a price that is far too high.

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