FIRST RECORD OF THE LIZARD-PARASITIZING MITE, *OPHIONYSSUS SAURARUM* (ACARI: MACRONYSSIDAE) IN SLOVAKIA

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Reptile mites as the members of the family Macronyssidae (Acari, Mesostigmata, Gamasida) belong to haemotophagous organisms, representing important parasites for various poikilothermic host species. Compared to other taxa of mesostigmatic Acari, which parasitize homoiothermic mammal hosts, reptile-parasitizing mites are relatively poorly known particularly in Europe. To the best of our knowledge, there is no published record of gamasid ectoparasites collected from free-living reptiles in Slovakia, nor is there any study dealing with these mites collected from animals in Slovakia.

Twenty eight wild-caught individuals of the lacertid lizard *Lacerta viridis viridis* (Laurenti, 1768), distributed in a xerothermic shrubland area in the Slovak Karst National Park in SE Slovakia (Václav et al. 2007), were examined for mite ectoparasites. The mite *Ophionyssus saurarum* (Oudemans, 1901) was identified from these lizards. With respect to the lizard population studied, the occurrence of this parasite showed a ubiquitous pattern, with mite individuals (protonymphs, females and males) having been found around the tail base and hind limb axillae. Specifically, we determined 3 male, 8 female and 21 protonymph individuals of *O. saurarum*, respectively, on the lizards examined. The number of mites on single lizard hosts ranged from 0 to 4 individuals, with the prevalence of mite parasitism among *L. v. viridis* being 75% (21/28).

In Europe, only fragmentary information on *O. saurarum* can be found in parasitological and taxonomic literature. For example, there is mention of *O. saurarum* in Evans & Till (1966), Alvarez Calvo (1978), Micherdzinski (1980), Haitlinger (1987), Lewin & Grabda Kazubska (1997), and Stanyukovich & Iohansen (2003). A review of the published account shows that in Central Europe there were various reptilian hosts reported for *O. saurarum*, for example, *Darevskia parvula* (Lantz et Cyrén, 1913), *Lacerta agilis* (Linné, 1758), *L. strigata* (Eichwald, 1831), *L. viridis* (Laurenti, 1768), *Podarcis muralis* (Laurenti, 1768), *P. hispanica* (Steindachner, 1870), *Vipera berus* (Linné, 1758), and *Zootoca vivipara* (Jacquin, 1787). Moreover, in Europe other two congeners of *O. saurarum* have been found to parasitize lizards and/or snakes, viz. *O. lacertinus* (Berlese, 1892) and *O. natricis* (Gervais, 1844). More information is needed on the effects of mite parasitism on their natural hosts.

Material examined: SE Slovakia, NP Slovenský Kras, near the town Plešivec (48º34'N, 20º26'E), 200–400 m a.s.l., 2–10 May 2007. All individuals of *Ophionyssus saurarum* were collected from *Lacerta viridis viridis*, in the axillae of the rear body parts. In all specimens leg. R. Václav and P. Prokop, det. and coll. P. Mašán.

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