

mens collected from June to August 2016, 40 km north of Urmia, Province of West Azerbaijan, Iran. The most distinguishing characters of *A. chernovi* are morphological features, especially the presence of two supraocular scales, and the absence of both supraciliary granular scales, as well as a visible ear. The Iranian specimens were examined based on morphometric data, color pattern and pholidosis characters and compared with specimens from Turkey.

The genus *Ablepharus* FITZINGER, 1823, encompasses ten valid species which are distributed in southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe (ŠMÍD & al. 2014; KARAMIANI & al. 2015). *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953, was regarded a subspecies of *Ablepharus kitaibelii* (BIBRON & BORY ST-VINCENT, 1833), but later raised to species rank by SCHMIDTLER (1997). A molecular phylogenetics study confirmed *A. chernovi* to represent a genetically distinct species (POULAKAKIS & al. 2005), which is distributed in Armenia, Syria and Turkey (BARAN & ATATÜR 1998; ANANJEVA 2006; SINDACO & JEREMČENKO 2008; ARAKELIAN et al. 2011). *Ablepharus chernovi* is distinguished by the hidden tympanum [versus ear opening visible in *A. kitaibelii* and *A. pannonicus* FITZINGER, 1824], prefrontal scales in contact with each other, two frontoparietal scales [versus prefrontals separated and frontoparietal single in *A. grayanus* (STOLICZKA, 1872)] and two supraocular scales without supraciliary granular scales between eye and supraocular scales [versus three supraocular scales and a row of supraciliary granular scales between eye and supraocular scales in *Ablepharus bivittatus* (MÉNÉTRIÉS, 1832)] (Fig. 1) (BARAN & ATATÜR 1998; ANDERSON 1999; ARAKELIAN et al. 2011).

During excursions to the northwestern Iranian Plateau from June to August 2016,

First record of *Ablepharus chernovi*  
DAREVSKY, 1953, from Iran

The first record of the Chernov’s Snake-eyed Lizard, *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953, from Iran, is presented based on three male and five female speci-

Table 1: Examined specimens of *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953, deposited in the Göteborg Natural History Museum, Reptilia exotica (GNM Rep. Ex.), Göteborg, Sweden.

| Museum code                  | Sample size | Record locality  |
|------------------------------|-------------|--|
| GNM Rep. Ex. 6427            | 1           | 3 km S Çamlıbel, Tokat Province, Turkey (40°08' N, 36°46' E)           |
| GNM Rep. Ex. 6421-6423, 6425 | 4           | Maden valley, Bulgar Dagħ, Niğde Province, Turkey (37°20' N, 34°39' E) |

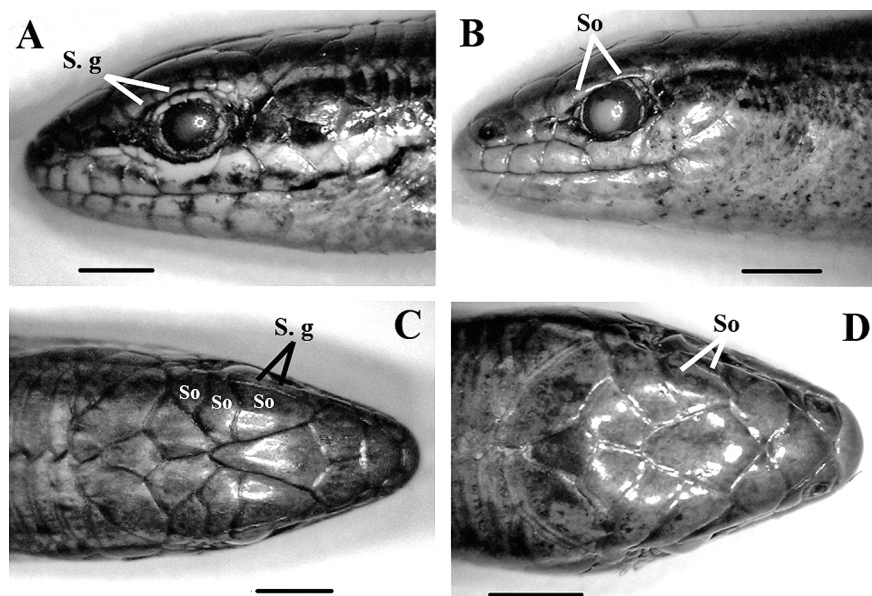


Fig. 1: Lateral (A) and dorsal (C) views of the head scalation of *Ablepharus bivittatus* (MÉNÉTRIÉS, 1832) (RUZM SA10.5, from near Tabriz, Province of East Azerbaijan, NW Iran), and lateral (B) and dorsal (D) views of the head scalation of *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953 (RUZM SA30.2, from near Urmia, Province of West Azerbaijan, NW Iran). So – Supraocular scales, S.g – Supraciliary granules.

the authors collected eight adult specimens (three males and five females, RUZM-SA30.1-8) of *A. chernovi* from 40 km north of Urmia (37°40' N; 45°05' E; about 1,310 m a.s.l.), Province of West Azerbaijan, in northwest Iran (Fig. 2). These were com-

pared morphologically with five specimens of *A. chernovi* (Table 1) from neighboring Turkey. The specimens were examined for five metric and seven meristic characters. Symmetrically arranged structures were counted at the right body side. For counting

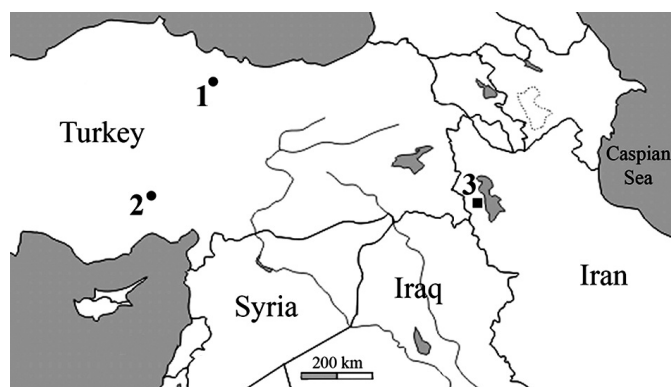


Fig. 2: Record localities of the studied samples of *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953. 1 – Tokat and 2 – Niğde Provinces of Turkey; 3, – the new records from near Urmia, Province of West Azerbaijan, NW Iran.



Fig. 3: Adult specimens of *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953. Female (left) with regenerated tail (RUZM SA30.2), and male (right) with original tail (RUZM SA30.5) from near Urmia, Province of West Azerbaijan, NW Iran.



Fig. 4: Habitat of *Ablepharus chernovi* DAREVSKY, 1953, near Urmia, Province of West Azerbaijan, NW Iran.

meristic characters a Wild M8 stereo microscope was used, morphometric measurements were taken with a digital caliper (Shoka Gulf) to the nearest 0.01 mm. Due to the obviously inconsistent pattern in counts and measurements, males and females were treated as a single entity.

Based on morphological comparisons, Turkish and Iranian specimens of *A. chernovi* accorded in the numbers of supraciliary scales (two), supralabials (six), infralabials (six), scales around mid-body (18), subdigital lamellae under the 4th toe (12) but differed in the numbers of scales around the eye (three to five concentrated posterior to the eye in Iranian versus 10 arranged around the eye in Turkish specimens), number of transversal rows of ventral scales (70-76 in Iranian versus 70-79 in Turkish specimens). Mean  $\pm$  standard error of the morphometric measurements for Iranian and Turkish specimens, respectively, were as follows: Snout-vent-length:  $43.57 \pm 2.26$  mm versus  $40.52 \pm 2.03$  mm, distance between axilla and groin:  $29.00 \pm 1.93$  mm versus  $27.49 \pm 1.20$  mm, head width:  $3.89 \pm 0.04$  mm versus  $3.84 \pm 0.11$  mm, length of forelimb:  $6.50 \pm 0.13$  mm versus  $6.52 \pm 0.24$  mm, length of hindlimb:  $9.18 \pm 0.13$  mm versus  $10.23 \pm 0.40$  mm. In the Iranian specimens, the dorsum is light or dark brown with longitudinal rows of intermittent black maculation, similar rows of spots on flanks; the venter is gray (Fig. 3). The lizards were found in open areas with bushes, sparsely wooded places and grassland where they were usually hidden under ground cover and leaves (Fig. 4).

According to previous studies (ANDERSON 1999), the authors expected to find *A. bivittatus* in the study area, but detected *A. chernovi*. Comparison with specimens from Turkey did not show much difference between Iranian and Turkish specimens. The presence of *A. chernovi* in Iran increases the number of species which show that the northwestern political border of Iran does not form a biogeographical border for the herpetofauna.

Based on this study and previous research (ANDERSON 1999; KARAMIANI et al. 2015; KARAMIANI 2016) four species of *Ablepharus* occur in Iran, *A. bivittatus*, *A. chernovi*, *A. grayanus* and *A. pannonicus*.

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