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Comparative analysis of two close related forms of lizard *Darevskia "raddei"* and *D. "nairensis"*

Petrosyan; Ruzanna¹; Arakelyan, Marine¹

¹Faculty of Biology, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia

In order to decide a disputed taxonomic rank of two close forms of rock lizards of genus *Darevskia* we compared form "*nairensis*" from the city of Yerevan in the gorge of Razdan river (1006 m above sea level) and "*raddei*" from a vicinity of the Geghard monastery in the gorge of Azat river (1940 m) approximately at distance of 24-25 km from each other. Morphological researches have shown their similarity: "*nairensis*" and "*raddei*" significantly differ only by number of dorsal scales ($P < 0.01$ for both sexes) and scales between the masseteric shield and the supratemporal ($P < 0.01$ for males and $P < 0.001$ for females), where the number of scales of "*raddei*" exceed that of "*nairensis*". Despite the close morphological similarity, earlier was suggested that two close forms of lizards may be reproductive isolated. Our researches have shown that terms of breeding of males and females of "*nairensis*" were on 7-10 days earlier than "*raddei*", however this may result of different climate conditions in concerning with elevation. Our parasitological observation of blood smears have shown that two forms of lizards contain different forms of blood parasites, where "*nairensis*" were infected mostly by parasites identified according to their morphology as specimens of genus *Karyolysus*, while "*raddei*" were mostly infected by parasites of genus *Hepatazon*, which also may result of different habitats rather than species rank differences.

petrosyan.ruzanna@mail.ru