

## **ABOUT THE COVER**

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## ABOUT THE COVER

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The frontispiece of this issue is a reproduction of plate No. 8 from the monumental monograph by Lajos Méhely (1862-1953), “Herpetologia Hungarica”, that he began to work on in 1896 but was never published. It was painted in watercolor by Méhely and depicts *Lacerta horvathi*, Horvath’s rock lizard, described in 1904 by Méhely. The original painting is now framed and hangs in the

Museum of Natural History in Budapest, Hungary. The species description was published simultaneously in Hungarian and German languages, in the Hungary-based periodicals “Állattani Közlemények” and “Annales Musei Nationalis Hungarici”, respectively (Méhely 1904a, 1904b). The new species was named after Géza Horváth (1847-1937), former director of the Department of Zoology, Hungarian

National Museum, Budapest, for his merits in the exploration of the Hungarian faunas and who directed Méhely's attention to the fauna of the Croatian mountains Kapela and Velebit. A complete biography (in the Hungarian language) of Géza Horváth can be read in Csiki (1944).

The Hungarian Natural History Museum was founded in 1802 in the frame of the National Museum, and the Zoology Department was created in 1870. Géza Horváth worked in the Department from 1873 for three years as an entomologist with the position of Curator of Heteroptera. He returned in 1895 as the Director for the Department and served in this position until becoming Director for the whole Museum in 1902. The territory of Hungary at that time was almost three times larger than today, and included areas now within the borders of Slovenia, Croatia, Yugoslavia, Romania (Transylvania), and Slovakia. All these form the edges of a more-or-less coherent biogeographical region, the Carpathian Basin, which at that time was a natural target for scientific studies of Hungarian zoologists and botanists. Géza Horváth was among the first group of scientists who initiated to compile an inventory, "Fauna Regni Hungariae" published as a series of volumes from 1896. He served as the president of the Tenth International Congress of Zoology, held in Budapest 1927, with more than 700 participants of 39 countries (Csiki 1929).

*Lacerta horvathi* is a member of the *saxicola*-group, and its closest relative is *L. mosorensis* Kolombatovic, 1886, according to Méhely. He considered Horvath's rock lizard as a final representative of the evolutionary lineage started with *Lacerta (Archeolacerta) saxicola* Eversmann,

1834. He also regarded the superficially very similar *Podarcis muralis* (Laurenti, 1768) as not belonging to this lineage, which was later confirmed by its allocation (Arnold 1973) from the genus *Lacerta* to *Podarcis*.

The distribution range of *Lacerta horvathi* after its discovery in the Croatian Mountains was extended by its discovery in Italy (Lapini & Dolce 1982) and Austria (Grillitsch & Tiedemann 1986). All these distribution data show a quite coherent range in the Carnic and Julian Alps where the existing populations are, however, relatively small and widely dispersed.

## References

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