

Land snails in faecal pellets of *Agama stellio*

(Reptilia: Sauria: Agamidae)

The Hardun or Starred agama, *Agama stellio* (LINNAEUS, 1758), is widely distributed in that part of Israel which is characterized by a Mediterranean climate. It is especially commonly encountered in the northern and central part of the country, where it can be seen "sun-bathing" at a large variety of exposed sites like protruding rocks, fences, telephone poles, walls, rooftops, etc. (WERNER 1966: 15).

In a study of potential predators of land snails among the reptiles of Israel, faecal pellets of several Harduns were collected at two different sites in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni on December 8, 1980.

At the first locality 17 pellets were found between and under concrete slabs serving as a hiding place for two adult and three juvenile Harduns. Most pellets contained remains of various beetles, crickets and large ants, however, two pellets contained tiny bits of shells from land snails. A careful comparison with the snails living near the site, showed them to belong to the White garden snail, *Theba pisana* (MÜLLER, 1774).

At the second locality eleven faecal pellets were found under a large piece of hardboard which formed a hide out for two adult Harduns. Also these pellets consisted mainly of insect remains, except for one which contained pieces, including the nuclear whorls, of a shell of *Theba pisana*.

In all three cases the shell remains were very small and strongly corroded by the gastric juices of the Harduns. It is therefore not unlikely that no remains at all are traceable in faecal pellets of Harduns of snails with a weaker and thinner shell.

From the above data it is clear that *Agama stellio* is mainly feeding on insects as has been reported before by WERNER (1966: 15) and ARNOLD & BURTON (1978: 110), however, it may feed occasionally also on snails.

Additional information: While this note was in print additional evidence of predation on land snails by *Agama stellio* in Israel has turned up.

On 3 March 1981 a male Hardun was caught between Netzer Sereni and Rehovot. It was kept at home for several days in order to obtain faecal pellets from it. This trial turned out to be a success. One pellet contained the remains of a crushed *Xeropicta vestalis joppensis* (SCHMIDT, 1856). A specimen of the same *Xeropicta* species was obtained from pellets found at the base of an electricity pole used as a perch by Harduns between Netzer Sereni and Qiriyat Jawarish on 18 September 1981.

Untersuchungen von Kotproben des Harduns (*Agama stellio*) in Israel haben gezeigt, daß diese Agame neben den verschiedensten Insekten gelegentlich auch landbewohnende Gehäuseschnecken frißt.

References

ARNOLD, E. N. & BURTON, J. A. (1978): A field guide to the reptiles and amphibians of Britain and Europe. — 272 pp. London (Collins).

WERNER, Y. L. (1966): The reptiles of Israel. — 49 pp. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (In Hebrew.)

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