

REPTILE COMMUNITIES
OF THE KARAKALPAKIAN USTYURT (UZBEKISTAN)

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Terrestrial route counts of reptiles in 24 localities of the plateau Ustyurt were carried out in 2007 – 2008. 474 individuals of 15 species were found along a total of 243.5 km passed. Based on the results of our survey, the reptile population structure has been clarified in 12 landscapes. The low specific diversity and population density of reptiles were observed everywhere. 2 to 8 species with a population density of 1.9 – 8.4 individuals per ha were found in certain landscapes. In terms of abundance, the reptiles belonged to rare or common species. The steppe agama *Trapelus sanguinolentus* and the Central Asian tortoise *Agrionemys horsfieldii* were the most abundant. Four racerunner species (*Eremias*) had a pronounced confinement to various types of substrate, which allowed them to occupy the dominant position in the landscapes by numbers. Four main landscape complexes of reptile communities were identified, which changed zonally in the latitudinal direction. The attitude of the reptiles to their environmental conditions is discussed. The plasticity of the *Eremias* species to substrates is estimated, and to distinguish its types is suggested.

Key words: reptile communities, specific diversity, population density, Ustyurt, Uzbekistan.

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