

ON THE REDUCTION OF THE AREA AND ABUNDANCE OF THE GREEK TORTOISE  
*TESTUDO GRAECA* LINNAEUS, 1758 (TESTUDINIDAE, REPTILIA)  
ON THE PRIMORSKY LOWLAND OF DAGESTAN  
AND PROBLEMS OF ITS CONSERVATION

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Data on the status of the populations of *Testudo graeca* Linnaeus, 1758 on the Primorsky lowland of Dagestan are given. The research was conducted in 2014 – 2018. Over the past few decades, the range of this species on the Primorsky lowland has reduced by nine or more times. Viable populations were preserved on the coastal dunes and semi-desert-steppe landscapes in the vicinity of the Aji Lake (1,300 hectares) and along the fringes and outskirts of the forest in the Samur River delta (2,100 hectares). At present, the remaining part of the habitat is 3.4% of the Primorsky lowland area. The continuing intensive sand removal from the coastal dunes and the economic development of landscapes in the vicinity of the Aji Lake can lead to the extinction of this population in the coming years. In order to preserve it and a number of populations of other rare species on the Primorsky lowland, it is necessary to declare a specially protected natural area, including the remaining habitats of the Mediterranean tortoise. To maintain a stable population in the Samur Delta, it is necessary to expand the boundaries of the Federal Reserve "Samursky" to include coastal sand semi-deserts.

**Key words:** Dagestan, Primorsky lowland, *Testudo graeca*, habitat, abundance, protection.

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