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Trogonophis wiegmanni Kaup, 1830 - Tunisia, El Kef

***Trogonophis wiegmanni* Kaup, 1830 (Squamata Trogonophidae).** The checkerboard worm *Trogonophis wiegmanni* (so called for its distinctive checkered pattern of dark and light scales) is a legless, fossorial lizard belonging to the order Amphisbaenia Gray, 1844, an ancient group of reptiles that includes few living representatives in the Palaearctic. Distributed from southwestern Morocco to northwestern Tunisia (including the coastal islands Chafarinas and Habibas), it is a Maghrebian endemic and also the only North African representative of the family Trogonophidae Gray, 1865. Within this geographic range, the species occurs from the sea level up to 1,900 m a.s.l. in a wide variety of habitats of the Mediterranean biota, such as bare sandy patches, steppe, oak forests, juniper shrubs, pastures, and cultivated areas. It is a viviparous lizard characterized by strong sexual dimorphism, with males having longer tails and larger heads than females. However, many aspects of its



social behavior, biology, and ecology remain still poorly known. The genus has been considered for a long time monotypic, but recent molecular investigations carried out by Salvi et al. (in Mol. Phyl. Evol., 120: 118-128) have found the occurrence of three cryptic lineages (two from Morocco, one from Tunisia and Algeria), although not yet described as distinct species. The populations from central and western Morocco were previously referred to the subspecies *T. w. elegans* (Gervais, 1835). The specimen depicted in the photo was found in El Kef, near Kaser el Moulouk (Tunisia), therefore, it should belong to the nominal subspecies.

Pietro Lo Cascio. Associazione Nesos, via Vittorio Emanuele 24, 98055 Lipari (ME), Italy; e-mail: plocascio@nesos.org. (Photos by Ignazio Sparacio)