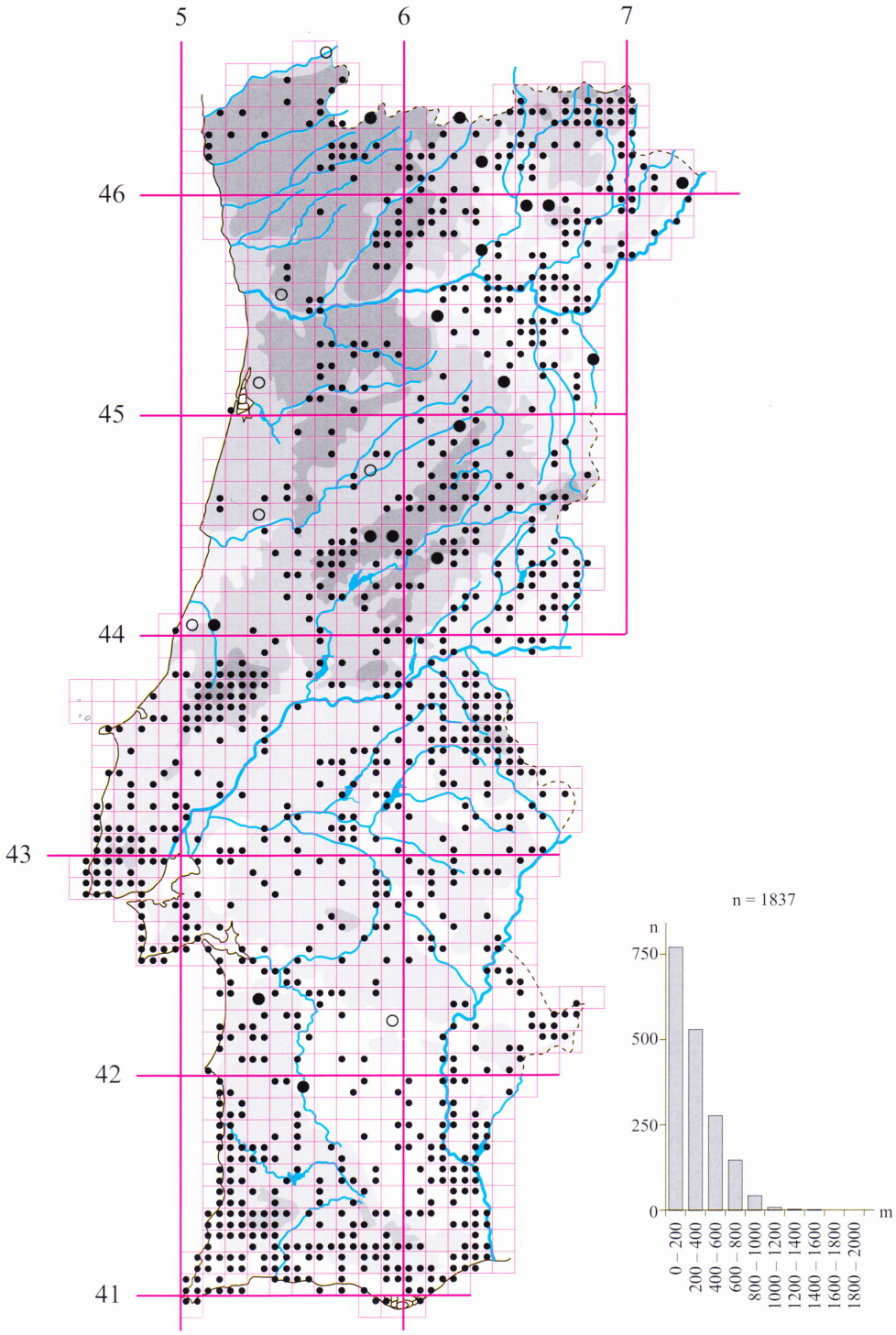
## *Psammodromus algirus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
### Algerian sand lizard
### Lagartixo-do-mato

*Psammodromus algirus* is an Ibero-Maghrebian faunal element inhabiting northwestern Africa (Morocco, northern Algeria, northwestern Tunisia), the Iberian Peninsula, and southern France (Languedoc). It is present on the entire Iberian Peninsula with the exception of the northern coastal strip, the Asturian and Cantabrian Cordilleras, parts of the Pyrenean Mountains, and the north sides of the central Spanish mountain chains.
In Portugal it represents the most common and most widely distributed species of reptile in the plains, hilly country and montane regions (< 800 m alt.). Larger uninhabited areas are limited to completely destructured agricultural installations (e.g. around Beja), *Eucalyptus* cultures, and the granite plateaus of the mountains north of the Rio Mondego. Scattered individual records exist from the zone near the coast north of Leiría, but this may well be a result of insufficient mapping.
*Psammodromus algirus* is a thermophilous species, predominantly occupying the thermo- and meso-Mediterranean regions and retreating into climatically favorable niches with Mediterranean character in supra-Mediterranean and Euro-Siberian zones. The latter include protected valleys and south-facing slopes situated in the bottom third of mountain rises, and are marked by reduced precipitation (rarely reaching 1200 mm per annum),

**Fig. 203:** Espinhaço do Cão, western Algarve. Photograph by P. Niebergall.

*Psammodromus algirus*



extended hours of sun-exposure and elevated average temperatures (usually not > 7-8°C). In the Serra do Gerês, for example, it is a characteristic inhabitant of the pine forests along the Barragem da Caniçada showing occasional advances into the south-facing heath areas up to an altitude of about 1250 m.

In Portugal the maximum vertical distribution is reached at 1600 m (Serra da Estrela), but this is based on a single find that must be considered extremely high. All other locality records are from levels below 1200-1400 m altitude, with a preference for elevations below 400 m. In the Sierra Nevada (Spain) and the High Atlas (Morocco) it reaches 2600 m (BARBADILLO et al. 1999, BONS & GENIEZ 1996).

*Psammodromus algirus* is an ubiquist colonizing a large number of different biotopes in open and semi-open country, but also in open forests. It is a ground-dweller posing few demands as to the quality of the substrate and thus appears on both unconsolidated (sand, granite grit, scree) and solid grounds (rock surfaces, firm soil), as well as on layers of leaf or needle litter. More rarely is it found on more vertical rock structures and walls. For purposes of thermoregulation and when hunting for prey it presents itself as a skilled climber on the branches of brushwork and uprooted tree trunks. Distribution centers are particular to the marginal areas of open oak and pine forests with moderately dense undergrowth, in degraded open forest and on fallow lands offering a mosaic of different vegetation (heaths, shooting stumps, bush islands, patches of grass, unvegetated stretches), partly also in heaths and pine forests covering littoral dunes (in part areas with < 30 %

**Fig. 204:** Serra da Cabreira. Photograph by P. NIEBERGALL.

vegetation cover). In some places it follows scarps along roads and trails and so advances deep into closed forests. In contrast to wall lizards (*Podarcis*, *Teira*), *Psammodromus algirus* avoids the contact with human settlements and appears only in their environs. It may be altogether absent in regions of structureless pseudo-steppes and expansive corn monocultures.

Despite its high degree of adaptability to modifications of its biotopes the Algerian sand lizard is threatened everywhere where these are changed entirely to suit human purposes (intense agriculture and forestry, urbanization, erection of reservoir dams). The number of specimens killed on roads is limited and may just have population-reducing, although in some cases also population-fragmenting, effects.

**References:** Almaça (1972), Barbadillo et al. (1999), Bogaerts (1990), Böhme (1981), Caetano et al. (1979), Crespo (1972, 1974a, 1975), Crespo & Oliveira (1989), Dias et al. (1983), Faria (1991), Ferrand de Almeida (1995), Ferrand de Almeida & Ferrand de Almeida (1986), Ferrand de Almeida et al. (2001), Glandt et al. (1998), Godinho et al. (1999), Loureiro et al. (1996), Malkmus (1979a, b, c, 1981b, 1982a, 1984b, c, 1985a, b, c, 1986/87, 1987a, c, 1989a, b, 1990a, b, 1991c, e, 1992b, 1993a, b, 1995a, b, 1997a, b, 1999a, 2002, 2002b, 2003a), Malkmus & Schwarzer (2000), Marques et al. (1995), Meek (1983), Pargana et al. (1996), Pena et al. (1985), Pfau (1988), Raimundo (1995), Rebelo & Crespo (1999), Schwarzer (1996, 1997c), Segurado (1994), Teixeira (1997), Teixeira et al. (1996).

**Fig. 205:** Serra da Arrábida. Photograph by R. Malkmus.