SEXUAL DIMORPHISM IN *OPHISOPS JERDONI* BLYTH (LACERTILIA : LACERTIDAE)

In most lizards, males are generally larger in size and often display brilliant colours during the breeding activity to facilitate their recognition by the opposite sex. In most of the geckonids, agamids, diabamids and varanids, male members are additionally endowed with certain specialized glandular organs, the preanal organs, on their thighs to distinguish them from the females[1–5]. There is, however, no report of any evidence o sexual dimorphism in *Ophisops jerdoni*, a member off the family Lacertidae amongst the members of which there is neither any sex limited size difference nor restriction of preanal organs to the male sex only. The preanal organs as in other members of the family (except *Eremias aporosceles*) are to be found in both sexes of *O. jerdoni*[1, 6].

The preanal organs in *O. jerdoni* lie embedded subdermally on the underside of the thighs and open to the outside through pores arranged in a file on the surface of each thigh (Fig. 1). Each pore leads into a single complex gland, itself lying in between 2 or more enlarged scales, termed as the femoral scales. An examination of 85 mature specimens of the lizard (51 males, size range 21–42 mm; 34 females, size range 20–45 mm) collected from dry and rocky banks of the river Tawi in Jammu (J. and K. State), revealed the presence of 6 to 11 pores on each side, 9 (range 7–11) and 7 (range 6–10) being the modal number of such pores in males and females respectively. Any variation from the modal number in the femoral pores is limited to the end of the pore series nearest to the knee and is not a consistent sex-limited difference. However, the number of scales separating the two most proximal pores of the two sides was different in the mature males and females. These intervening scales, termed here as the *interfemoral scales* (IFS in Fig. 1) numbered only one in males, though, in a few cases (13%) even this solitary scale was found to be absent.

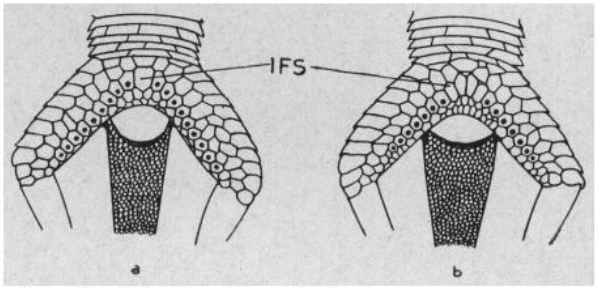

FIG. 1. (*a*) Drawing of the posterior abdominal scalation of *O. jerdoni* male to show one interfemoral scale (IFS) lying in between the two most proximal femoral pores of the two sides. (*b*) The same as above in female *O. jerdoni* showing four IFS in the homologous region.

In females, on the other hand, the interfemoral scales were either 4 or 5 in number. When subjected to one way analysis of co-variance, the difference in the number of the IFS in the two sexes was found to be significant, so as to afford a positive evidence for the presence of sexual dimorphism in the lizard *O. jerdoni*. However, such a sexual dimorphism is altogether absent in the hatchlings of this lizard.

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