

## NOTES

### EARLY BREEDING OF THE COMMON LIZARD (*LACERTA VIVIPARA*)

During the early part of April, 1952, several specimens of the Viviparous Lizard were caught in the vicinity of Market Rasen in North Lincolnshire. Among them were two gravid females. The first had the typical brown coloration above with lateral bands of cream on each side and cream below. The second, which was found basking on the branch of a small fir tree, matched the colour of the foliage perfectly, being of a brilliant green ground colour above with longitudinal bands of darker green; the underside was pale green. The lizards were placed in a vivarium with other smaller females and one male, all of which had been taken in the same locality. They soon became tame, feeding on small earthworms, centipedes and Greenfly, etc.

On the morning of May 28th the first female was observed burrowing in the sand beneath a loose piece of moss. Several hours later she was seen whilst feeding and it was obvious by the reduction in her size that she had deposited her young. The moss was carefully lifted and underneath in a hollowed out depression in the sand were eight "eggs". They were in an upright position and formed a cluster, glossy in appearance and slate blue in colour. The moss was then put back into its original position and the lizard returning to it disappeared beneath and a considerable amount of movement was seen to go on. A little later she reappeared and from that time took no more interest in her "eggs". On lifting the moss it was then seen that she had almost completely buried them, only the tips being visible.

Twenty-four hours later five of the "eggs" hatched. The youngsters were active at once, running about the cage, climbing over the rocks and beneath the moss. Although there was plenty of food for them they were not seen

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to eat for 24 hours; after that they fed voraciously upon Greenfly. They measured at birth about 46 mm. in length the tail being 24 mm. In colour they were dark green above speckled with bronze, giving them when they basked in the sun, the appearance of having been lightly brushed with gold. The remaining three "eggs" did not hatch and were removed after 48 hours. They had a somewhat shrivelled appearance and fully formed lizards could be seen through the membrane.

Of the five living young one was eaten by a full grown lizard and as this individual seemed bent on devouring the rest of the family she was removed. None of the other adults paid any attention to the young ones.

Dr. Malcolm Smith in his book, "*The British Amphibians and Reptiles*", states that emergence of the young from the egg membranes may take place immediately after birth or not for some days. The earliest birth of which he has a record is June 22nd; the earlier date now recorded is no doubt connected with an unusually warm spell early in the spring. The gestation period for *L. vivipara* is three months, so far as is known, and presumably mating took place at the beginning of March which this year was unusually warm. The weather report of the Cleethorpe Meteorological Office for that period is as follows:—

Date	<i>Temperature F°</i>		<i>Rainfall</i>	<i>Sunshine</i>
	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Min.</i>		
February 28th ... ..	46	29	trace	—
February 29th ... ..	52	35	trace	1.8 hours
March 1st ... ..	51	35	—	0.1 „
March 2nd ... ..	56	41	—	1.3 „
March 3rd ... ..	57	46	—	0.7 „
March 4th ... ..	53	42	0.15 ins.	3.0 „
March 5th ... ..	53	42	trace	0.5 „
March 6th ... ..	50	34	0.53 ins.	1.0 „
March 7th ... ..	52	42	0.28 ins.	—

ROBIN LAWSON.

12 Sackville Street,  
Grimsby.