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EVOLUTIONARY LOSS OF LIMBS IN SOME TAXA OF LIZARDS

Summary

Reduction of limbs has occurred within 52 evolutionary lines of Squamata at least 62 times, of which in the case of lizards, the *manus* and *pes* has been reduced together at least 20 times. Among lizards with the reduced number of limbs (or phalanges), there are two morpho-ecological types, which can be named “short tail diggers” and “long tail surface dwellers”. One of the theories explaining the occurrence of loss of the whole limbs or reduction of their parts points to improvement of the ways of escape from the predators. This theory is well supported by an example of genus *Chalcides* belonging to the skinks family. The cause of limb reduction in the Australian Pygopodidae is different, as they play an ecological function of snakes and their limb reduction is an adaptation to hunt.

Key words: anatomy, environmental adaptations, evolution, reptiles, Squamata