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THE DISCOVERY OF A DEAD OCELLATED SKINK *CHALCIDES OCELLATUS* (FORSKÅL, 1775) IN THE CITY OF GENOA, A FIRST RECORD FOR LIGURIALUCA BAGHINO¹, GIACOMO ROSA^{2,3}¹ Via P. Magretti 19, 16142, Genova, Italy.² Department of Earth Environment and Life Sciences (DISTAV), University of Genova, Genova, Italy³ National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC), Palermo, Italy*Correspondence: lucabaghino6@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

On May 4th, 2026, an Ocellated Skink *Chalcides ocellatus* was found dead in a school building in the Multedo quarter of Genoa (NW Italy). This is the first record known for Liguria and Northern Italy. The discovery in Genoa of this individual is most probably attributable to accidental human-mediated transport and the possibilities that it may have reached Genoa through the closer harbour infrastructures are discussed.

KEY-WORDS: Ocellated skink, Mediterranean basin, Northwestern Italy, introduction.

SHORT NOTE

On the morning of May 4, 2026, during a pest-monitoring service inside a school building in the Multedo neighborhood of Genoa (Liguria, northwestern Italy), an individual of Ocellated Skink *Chalcides ocellatus* was found dead in a rodent-insect glue board (Fig. 1).

The specimen was immediately handed over to the Department of Earth, Environmental and Life Sciences – DISTAV of the University of Genoa for further examination and identification. To determine the sex and taxonomic status at the subspecific level, the specimen underwent detailed pholidotic and morphological examinations via high-resolution macro-photography, following taxonomic keys of Caputo et al. (2010). Characters analyzed included midbody robustness, cephalic scale symmetry, color and the presence of sub-caudal swellings. Based on these traits, the individual was identified as an adult female showing features consistent with the subspecies, *Chalcides ocellatus tiligugu* (Fig. 1).

The species spans a wide, circum-Mediterranean range, occurring across North Africa (from Morocco to Egypt) and the Horn of Africa as well as in the Middle East to Pakistan. In Europe, the species is native to Malta and Greece, while in Italy it naturally occurs in Sicily, Sardinia and surrounding minor islands (Razzetti et al., 2025). Isolated populations are present also in Portici (Naples) where the species was introduced in 1736 (Maio et al., 2015; Razzetti et al., 2025). Recently, species presence was also reported in Central Tuscany (Mori et al., 2022; Razzetti et al., 2025).



Figure 1. The individual of Ocellated Skink *Chalcides ocellatus* found dead. Genova Multedo, May 4, 2026. Note the two light dorso-lateral stripes (from the neck to the tail base), bordered by a dark band (pattern “tiligugu”).

To our knowledge, this finding represents the first documented record of *C. ocellatus* in Liguria and Northern Italy. As for the Tuscan record (Mori et al., 2022), the discovery in Genoa is probably attributable to accidental human-mediated transport from one of the native species range by loading goods or ship-related materials. This hypothesis is supported by the proximity of the Genova Pegli A10 highway exit, the oil terminal facilities of Multedo and the shipbuilding area of Sestri Ponente. These harbor infrastructures are linked to commercial and industrial maritime traffic across the Mediterranean basin, which includes routes with North African and eastern Mediterranean ports. The terminal regularly receives large container ships and feeder vessels involved in direct trade routes with Sicily, North African countries and Eastern Mediterranean ports, including Turkey. Such connections may allow the passive transport of small and secretive animals, such as lizards, through cargo shipments, agricultural products, plants and wood. Given the subspecific morphological traits of the collected female, domestic shipping lines connecting the port of Genoa with major Italian islands—particularly Sicily—represent the most likely primary pathway for this introduction. However, given the intense commercial traffic and the high polymorphism within the species, a North African origin cannot be completely discarded without a formal genetic validation.

This observation further highlights the potential role of maritime commercial hubs, such as airports and seaports, as gateways for the accidental introduction of non-native reptiles into urban areas of the Mediterranean basin.

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