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Observations on the Ecology, Reproduction and Behavior of *Spermophilus Bennett, 1835*
(Mammalia: Rodentia) in Turkey

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Abstract: Field and laboratory investigations on the ecology, reproduction and behavior of *Spermophilus citellus* and *Spermophilus xanthophrymnus* were performed over a period of 4 years. Both *S. citellus* and *S. xanthophrymnus* are diurnal species and occupy semiarid steppe areas in Turkish Thrace and Anatolia, respectively. Distribution of the former species is confined to restricted steppe areas in Turkish Thrace while the latter lives on the Anatolian steppe, and is sympatric with *Meriones tristami*, *Mesocricetus brandthi*, *Allactaga williamsi* and *Microtus* spp. The burrows of both species have one entrance, and are built separately in the field. They constitute small social colonies and communicate with each other by emitting hoarse, sharp and shrill sounds. *S. xanthophrymnus* enters hibernation in August and emerges in February. It was observed that they were tolerant of each other. Based on field and laboratory studies *S. citellus* and *S. xanthophrymnus* give birth once a year. The litter size was at 3 for the former species, and 1-4 for the latter. Average weight at birth was 5 g for both species. Newborns of both species became hairy at 15-17 days, their eyes opened at 22-25 days, and their ears at 30 days and offspring were weaned at the end of the second month after birth. The external characters of 2 babies from Edirne attained those of adults 4 months after birth.

Key Words: *Spermophilus*, ecology, reproduction, behavior, Turkey

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