N O T E

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New data on the geographical distribution of the wood mouse, *Apodemus sylvaticus*, and the pygmy field mouse, *Apodemus uralensis*, in Lithuania

Rimvydas JUŠKAITIS

Institute of Ecology, Akademijos 2, LT-2600 Vilnius, Lithuania; e-mail: juskaitis@takas.lt

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A b s t r a c t . Since the publication of "The Atlas of European Mammals" in 1999 plenty of new data have been collected on the distribution of *Apodemus* spp. in Lithuania. These data have changed our knowledge of the comparative distribution of *A. sylvaticus* and *A. uralensis* in the country. Essentially, *A. uralensis* is widespread in the north-western part of the country, whereas *A. sylvaticus* is found only in southern and eastern Lithuania. Both species reach the limits of their geographical ranges in Lithuania.

Key words: *Apodemus sylvaticus*, *A. uralensis*, distribution, geographical limits, Lithuania

"The Atlas of European Mammals" (M i t c h e l l - J o n e s et al. 1999) is the newest and most comprehensive publication on the distribution of mammal species in Europe. According to this atlas, the distribution of the wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus* Linnaeus) includes Lithuania (Fig. 1) and localities for this species are scattered almost throughout the country, including the western and north-western parts of Lithuania. However, according to M i t c h e l l - J o n e s et al. (1999) the pygmy field mouse (*Apodemus uralensis* Pallas) is not found in Lithuania, although it occurs in almost all of Latvia and in the south-eastern part of Estonia.

In the few years since the Atlas was published, plenty of new localities and distribution data have been collected for Lithuanian *Apodemus* spp, and *A. uralensis* was identified as a new mammal species for Lithuania as recently as 1999 (J u š k a i t i s 1999). New records on the distribution and habitats of *A. uralensis* and *A. sylvaticus* in Lithuania were recently summarised by B a l č i a u s k a s et al. (1999) and J u š k a i t i s et al. (2001), thus the aim of this paper is to review the distribution of these two species in the country.

Identification keys based on measurements and cranial and morphological features (P u c e k 1981, M e z h z e r i n & Z a g o r o d n y o u k 1989, Z a g o r o d n y o u k & M e z h z e r i n 1992) were used for the discrimination of both species. Localities of *A. uralensis* and *A. sylvaticus* were mapped on 10 × 10 km squares on the national grid "Lithuania-94". When two or more localities occurred in the same square, they were treated as one.

In Lithuania, *A. uralensis* was caught in the Žemaitija National Park, the Kurtuvenai and Varniai regional parks, the Kamanos strict nature reserve (M a z h e i k y t e 2000, J u š k a i t i s et al. 2001) and almost everywhere in Mažeikiai administrative district (J u š k a i t i s & B a r a n a u s k a s 2001). A total of 62 specimens of *A. uralensis* were caught at 33 Lithuanian localities between 1996–2000 (J u š k a i t i s et al. 2001). A dense distribution of *A. uralensis* localities was also established in north-western Lithuania as well as at several scattered localities elsewhere, leading to the assumption that this species may be quite widespread in north-western, western and northern Lithuania (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1. Geographical situation of Lithuania in Europe.

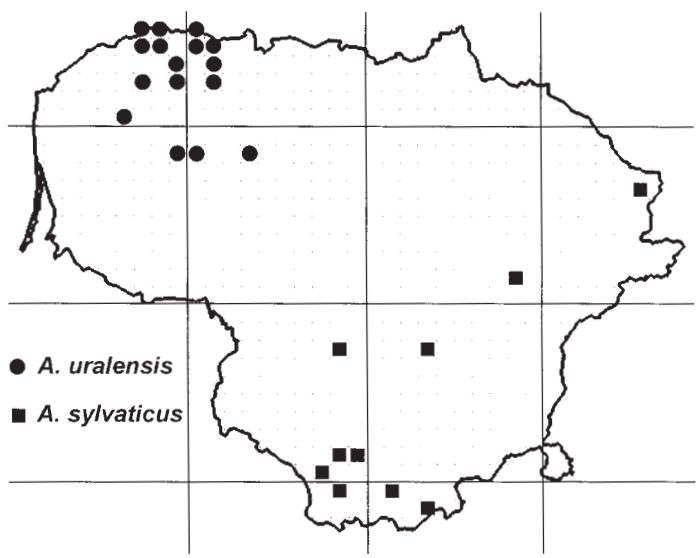

Fig. 2. Distribution of *Apodemus uralensis* and *A. sylvaticus* in Lithuania. Localities are mapped on 10 × 10 km squares of the national grid "Lithuania-94".

Apodemus sylvaticus is found more frequently only in southern Lithuania (Čepkeliai strict nature reserve, Dzūkija National Park, Meteliai and Veisiejai regional parks) and only solitary localities are known in the eastern part of Lithuania (Fig. 2). Besides the previously published localities of *A. sylvaticus* in B a l č i a u s k a s et al. (1999) and M a z h e i k y t e (2000) one further locality for this species was recently found near Kaunas (S. R u m b u t i s pers. comm.).

The collected data on *A. uralensis*' occurrence places in Lithuania show it to be an "ecotonic" species (J u š k a i t i s et al. 2001). The greatest numbers of these mice were captured in forest and open habitat (meadows, cornfields and fallow fields), ecotones and in open habitats bordering on forests or situated close to them (natural meadows overgrown with shrubs, grass-covered reclamation canals, cornfields). Rather few *A.uralensis* were captured in forests, and they were most often collected close to forest edges and in coppices. *Apodemus sylvaticus* was more abundant in fragmented landscapes with small cornfields, meadows and shrubs, as well as at forest edges in pine and mixed forests (B a l č i a u s k a s et al. 1999, M a z h e i k y t e 2000).

These new data on the distribution of *A. uralensis* in Lithuania show that this species is widespread in the north-western part of the country, whereas another species of the same genus – *A. sylvaticus* – is found only in southern and eastern Lithuania (Fig. 2). Although Lithuania is a small country (area = 65 300 km^2), the two closely related species of *Apodemus* reach the limits of their distributions here. Further investigations should show if the distributional range limits of these two species meet in Lithuania, and which factors determine these rodents' distributions.

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