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FIRST RECORD OF *HAEMOPIS ELEGANS* (HIRUDINEA: HAEMOPIDAE) IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Haemopsis elegans Moquin-Tandon, 1846 was collected in the stream near Preševo (S Serbia). This finding is the first one of this largely unknown leech in Serbia and the most Eastern and Southern in the geographic range.

Keywords: *Haemopsis*, Haemopidae, Hirudinea, leeches, the Balkans, Serbia, first record, faunistics

Introduction

Haemopsis elegans was confused with *Haemopsis sanguisuga* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Limnatis nilotica* (Savigny, 1822) in the last 150 years. This species was redescribed by means of material from different countries of Europe (Grosser 2004).

The distribution of this leech is unknown and every finding, which increases the geographic range is important for the faunistics. This finding is not only the first in Serbia but also the first in the Balkans (south of the Save-Danube-line with the countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and the European part of Turkey).

Material and Methods

Material: 1 specimen, Serbia, Rujan Mt., stream between Šerbat and Svinjište (near Preševo town), 30.04.2006; leg.: V. Pešić; det.: C. Grosser; Coll. C. Grosser.

Methods: The leeches were looked for under hard substratum (stones, wood) in water and at shore as well as on submerged plants. The collected leeches were first killed in 10 % ethanol, then the mucus was washed off in 75 % ethanol preserved.

Results

The specimen could be identified by means of characteristic signs, which are given in the redescription of *Haemopsis elegans* by Grosser (2004). The ventral surface is monotonous unicoloured dark ash grey to black, much darker than the greenish dorsal surface. Dorsally, a median brownish stripe is present and laterally a pair of yellow stripes. The cranial sucker is smaller than in *Haemopsis sanguisuga*.

Place

The sampling place is an stream, without vegetation. *Haemopsis elegans* was found together with another leech species on this place, with 4 specimens *Erpobdella vilnensis* (Liskiewicz 1925) and 8 *Dina lineata dinarica* Sket 1968.

Discussion

Haemopsis sanguisuga is a very variable species. A lot of species and varieties were described in the 19th and early 20th century. Pawlowski (1936) accepted only *Haemopsis sanguisuga* as a single species without varieties. Future authors followed his opinion. So, *Haemopsis elegans* was not distinguished from *Haemopsis sanguisuga* in the past and not regarded in faunistic works. For this reason the distribution of *Haemopsis elegans* is unknown. The recently known area of distribution ranges from Switzerland in the West (communication H. Vicentini) to Serbia in the East, from North Germany in the North to Slovenia and Serbia in the South. More findings of this leech will be published in the future, if the description of this species is known better.

References

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