Melanism variations in *Natrix natrix* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Zamenis longissimus* (Laurenti, 1768) in Croatia

Varijacije melanizma kod *Natrix natrix* (Linnaeus, 1758) i *Zamenis longissimus* (Laurenti, 1768) u Hrvatskoj

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Melanism is considered as a common and highly variable phenomenon in snakes (LORIOUX ET AL., 2008), offering a variety of advantages: faster heating rates, higher mean body temperatures, protection from overheating (LUISELLI, 1992, FORSMAN, 1995, CLUSELLA-TRULLAS ET AL., 2008, BITTNER ET AL., 2002, TANAKA, 2005, GIBSON & FALLS, 1979), but also disadvantages, such as higher predation risk (CLUSELLA-TRULLAS ET AL., 2008). In some species, melanism is a Mendelian trait (KING, 2003) and it's appearance varies in frequency due to random genetic drift (BITTNER & KING, 2003). It is not rare among Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) (Linnaeus, 1758) populations, and dark specimens can be found throughout the distribution area (JANDZIK, 2004). The occurrence of melanistic colouration among Aesculapian Snakes (*Zamenis longissimus*) (Laurenti, 1768) is also known, but is far less frequent (EDGAR & BIRD, 2006). In this paper we present several individuals of *Natrix natrix* and *Zamenis longissimus*, displaying incomplete melanistic colouration, from various locations in Croatia, found between 2008 and 2010: Diviška (Island of Krk) (two *N. natrix*, X: 5481675, Y: 4984181), Zmajevac (Baranja) (two *N. natrix*, X: 5796776, Y: 5080849; one *Z. longissimus*, X: 5795946, Y: 5080155), Jezero (Island of Krk) (one *Z. longissimus*, X: 5466553, Y: 5003106), Bizek (Zagreb) (one *N. natrix*, X: 5566555, Y: 5077558), Majkovi (Dubrovnik) (one *N. natrix*, X: 5738792, Y: 4740729).
Figure 1. Melanistic Grass Snakes from (a,c) Zmajevac, (b) Bizek, (d,g) Diviška, (e,f) Majkovi

Slika 1. Melanističke bjelouške iz (a,c) Zmajeva, (b) Bizeka, (d,g) Diviške, (e,f) Majkova
References:


