

## On the interesting record of the corn snake *Pantherophis guttatus* (Linnaeus, 1766) in Slovenia

## O zanimljivom nalazu kukuruzne zmije *Pantherophis guttatus* (Linnaeus, 1766) u Sloveniji

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Figure 1. Stone wall at Debeli Rtič on which *Pantherophis guttatus* (Linnaeus, 1766) was recorded, with *in situ* photo of the snake.

Slika 1. Kameni zid u Debelom Rtiču na kojem je zabilježena jedinka *Pantherophis guttatus* (Linnaeus, 1766), sa *in situ* fotografijom zmije.

This species originates from North America, where it is distributed in the south-eastern part of the country, ranging from New Jersey to the Florida Keys and as far west as Texas. This is a common species in the pet trade (Perry & Platenberg 2007), and large numbers are kept both legally and illegally around the world (Fisher & Csurhes 2009).

After its capture, the snake was taken into a veterinary outpatient clinic, where it was physically examined. The snake did not show any sign of lost muscle mass, there was no evidence of prominent dorsal spine and ribs which shows in an underweight snake. The snake was an adult female, 82 cm in total length, in good physical condition, but many old skin wounds were visible along the whole body. The snake was rehydrated by putting it in a lukewarm water bath for 15 min (Griling & Raiti 2004). After that, it was force fed with warmed minced meat. The parasitological test of the excrement (direct smear) was negative, while the faeces were green. The presence of green faeces can be a consequence of a prolonged period without feeding (Griling & Raiti 2004). The extensive skin damage may indicate that the snake had been in the wild for some time, possibly from last summer. The area of Debeli Rtič is a tourist camp, and it is possibly that the snake escaped, or was released by tourists from the camp. The good physical condition of the snake indicates that the specimen survived the hibernation period, which was disrupted by higher temperatures at the beginning of February, which the snake used for sunbathing.

As it seems, introduced specimens of *P. guttatus* are still not considered to be major pest anywhere. However, on several Caribbean islands it is in the early stages of naturalisation and population development, after being transported

with cargo from the United States (Fisher & Csurhes 2009).

The recorded specimen is probably a case of a released or escaped snake. However, it needs to be taken as a warning of the possibility that this species could become resident in the area. Of course, this would be possible only if many more specimens were released or escaped. For example, this is currently happening with *Trachemys scripta* (Schoepff, 1792), which was freely sold as a pet for several decades, and when the individuals became larger, they were released in nature. The records of this species are scattered across Slovenia, and breeding has also been recorded (Vamberger et al. 2012).

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