

**First data about Black rat *Rattus rattus* Linnaeus, 1758 (Rodentia, Muridae) as a prey of
Caspian whip snake *Dolichopis caspius* Linnaeus, 1758 (Serpentes, Colubridae)**

**Prvi podatsi o crnom štakoru *Rattus rattus* Linnaeus, 1758 (Rodentia, Muridae) kao
plijenu žute poljarice *Dolichopis caspius* Linnaeus, 1758 (Serpentes, Colubridae)**

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During the field work in Danilovgrad, Montenegro (September, 2010) in a urban area (N 42° 33' 00,71";E 19° 06' 24,80") a Caspian whip snake (*Dolichopis caspius* Linnaeus, 1758) was observed in the moment while it was strangling Black rat (*Rattus rattus* Linnaeus, 1758) (Fig. 1). The snake was spotted during the day at a shrub habitat where the vegetation is prevalent by pomegranate (*Punica granatum*). Caspian whip snake mainly feeds on reptiles, birds and small mammals (Ščerbak 1966). Reptiles represent 26.6% of its diet, with the dominant species being: Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Rock lizard (*Lacerta saxicola*), Balkan wall lizard (*Podarcis taurica*) and Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) (Ščerbak 1966). It is confirmed that the Caspian whip snake

also feeds on Dalmatian wall lizard (*Podarcis melisellensis*) and Slow worm lizard (*Anguis fragilis*) (Fig. 2), confirmed by dissection of killed individual by traffic around Danilovgrad (Iković, unpub. data). Birds from genus *Emberiza* represent 2.2% of its diet and small mammals represent 17.6%, including the following species: Lesser white-toothed shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Grey hamster (*Cricetulus migratorius*), Little souslik (*Citellus pygmaeus*), Wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Common vole (*Microtus arvalis*) and Social vole (*Microtus socialis*) (Ščerbak 1966). Grey hamster and Little souslik are the biggest prey known within scientific literature that this snake feeds on. Body sizes of these two species are: 87-117 mm for Grey hamster

(Kurtén 1968) and 214-304 mm for Little souslik (Kleiman et al. 2003). This is the first time that the Black rat is mentioned as a prey of the Caspian whip snake. Body size of the Black rat is between 327-430 mm (Eisenberg & Redford 1999) which makes it the biggest prey that this snake feeds on. Also this finding is a confirmation of the scientific literature data that Caspian whip snake kills prey by strangulation (Ščerbak & Böhme 1993). This is not a common type of strangulation that colubrid snakes do, it is known as “tie” which provides the strongest possible grip of the prey (Fig. 1). On the other hand, this finding further confirms the importance of the snakes in an ecosystem with an emphasis on the regulation of a rodent populations, mainly because of the structure of its settlements.

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Figure 1. Caspian whip snake is strangling black rat

Slika 1. Žuta poljarica guši crnog štakora



Figure 2. Slow worm as a prey of Caspian whip snake

Slika 2. Sljepić kao plijen žute poljarice