

## **The Capture of a spectacled caiman *Caiman crocodilius* Linnaeus, 1758 (Crocodylia, Alligatoridae) in Montenegro**

### **Pronalazak kajmana naočara *Caiman crocodilius* Linnaeus, 1758 (Crocodylia, Alligatoridae) u Crnoj Gori**

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The illegal trade in protected plant and animal species has become one of the most lucrative criminal activities. Cases of smuggling reptile species are frequent (Engler & Parry-Jones 2007; Ljubisavljević et al. 2011; Pernetta 2009; Schlaepfer et al. 2005). A specimen of Spectacled caiman, *Caiman crocodilus* was found in the coastal town of Budva (Montenegro) on 12.07.2014. (Fig. 1). The specimen with a total body length of 82 cm, with tail, was found in a stream in the settlement of Bečići (42° 17' 04" N, 18° 51' 49" E). With regard to this total body length this individual falls within the category of subadult (Carlos & Diefenbach 1975). The natural habitat of this caiman is freshwaters of South & Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean (Jackson 2007, Kalezić & Tomović 2007). This species feeds on fish, birds and amphibians. It belongs to the group of small alligators, up to 2.5m long, with a life expectancy of up to 40 years (Jackson 2007). On the IUCN red list this species is categorized as LR/LC, and on CITES is listed in Appendix II. This species is commonly caught and smuggled because of its skin which is used in the manufacture of clothing and footwear (Krkalić et al. 2011). Finding a caiman in this small stream is probably the result

of a release by a negligent owner, or an escape from captivity. During summer months different exotic animals have been found on the coast of Montenegro, so discovery of this caiman in the wild is not such a surprise. These results were not shared in public or published except that they've been commented by the local and regional media. (These results were not officially published but comments have found their way into the local and regional media).

The caiman was caught by people working in "Protection and rescue service" in the municipality of Budva, and was transferred to pools belonging to a private mini zoo in the village of Krapina near Budva. The ecological inspectorate noted that this collection meets all the requirements prescribed by the "*Regulation of detailed conditions which must be met by a legal or ordinary person for keeping temporarily seized wild species of plants, animals and fungi*" (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 46/10).

This species can, with the proper licences, be imported into Montenegro, so maybe we could expect its presence in this area in the future. It is a common occurrence for this pet, after a certain

period, to be rejected and left at the nearest habitat, after it grows in size and gets too large for its aquarium. There was a similar case at the city of Mijas, Spain, where the citizens noticed an alligator next to a local road. Since this is not its natural habitat, it would soon die or adapt to it without disturbing the balance of the surrounding ecosystem. This is also a common occurrence with many other kinds of reptiles when they grow too large for their cage or aquarium, and are released into the wild, this is seen most often with the red-eared slider *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Žagar et al. 2013).

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Figure 1. Spectacled caiman in Budva (Montenegro)

Slika 1. Kajman naočar u Budvi (Crna Gora)