

First record of breeding of the alien turtle species *Trachemys scripta elegans* in the wild on the island of Krk, Croatia?

Prvi nalaz razmnožavanja strane invazivne vrste *Trachemys scripta elegans* u divljini na otoku Krku, Hrvatska?

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American turtles of different species have been, or are still sold in pet shops. Most of these species grow, especially females, to large dimensions, e.g. the red-eared slider to approx. 30 cm carapace length. Therefore they are much too large for keeping in most aquariums, for this reason many specimens are released into the wild across Europe. On the Croatian island of Krk one may encounter these turtles in many ponds. One of these is the Kimpi pond, northwest of the town of Krk. The author, together with different companions, visited this pond during most excursions to the island between 2004 and 2015. Up to 2014, only red-eared sliders have been observed in the Kimpi pond. During the 3rd weeks of May, 2009 and 2014, courtship behaviour (displaying males in front of females) was observed, but no mating has been seen.

During the last fieldherping trip from May 14th to May 17th 2015 *Trachemys scripta scripta*, *Trachemys s. elegans* and *Graptemys* sp. (probably *pseudogeographica*) were seen.

While most of the turtles have been adults, one hatchling from last year of *Trachemys scripta elegans* has been spotted. Although no egg-laying or hatching could have been observed, the author strongly supports the hypothesis that the turtle hatched from a nest, deposited by one of the female sliders, because it seems very unlikely, that a baby slider had been released there.

No red-eared sliders have been sold, or hatchlings imported into the EC since 1998, following the EC directives EC 338/97 and EC 865/06.

Vamberger, Lipovšek & Gregorić (2012) confirmed the breeding of the species in south-western Slovenia.

The author therefore has the strong assumption that this is the first record on breeding of this species for the island of Krk, maybe for the whole of Croatia.

Jelić et al. (2014) had no data for reproduction of the species for anywhere in Croatia.

Effects on the local and native turtle *Emys orbicularis* are still fiercely debated. Competition might be for basking sites, food, but also for nesting places. Jelić et al. (2014) suppose a negative effect on native *Emys orbicularis* by long term survey on the red-eared terrapin, but give no detailed information. Schweiger (2008a) observed competition on basking sites between *Trachemys scripta elegans* and *Emys orbicularis* in three ponds on the island Krk, although there would have been enough places to bask for all turtles. Cadi, A. & Joly, P. (1999) studied the competition between the two species in experimental ponds, at basking sites, *Trachemys scripta* was the dominant species. On the other hand, the author (Schweiger, 2008b) observed and filmed *Emys orbicularis* together with *Trachemys scripta elegans*, basking together on a floating tree trunk in a pond on the island without any visible competition regarding basking sites.



Figure 1. Kimpi pond (Photo: Mario Schweiger)

Slika 1. Lokva Kimpi (Fotografija: Mario Schweiger)



Figure 2. Hatchling of *Trachemys scripta elegans* observed at Kimpi pond on Thursday, May 17th, 2015 (Photo: Gerhard Egretzberger)

Slika 2. Tek izlegli mladunac *Trachemys scripta elegans* pronađen u lokvi Kimpi u četvrtak, 17.05.2015 (Fotografija: Gerhard Egretzberger)

References

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