

NEW RECORDS OF STENOENDEMIC LIZARD *DINAROLACERTA MONTENEGRINA* IN MONTENEGRO

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Here we report new records of *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* in Montenegro. The new records are from Bor and Belić mountains (Prokletije massif), and expand the known distribution of the species in Montenegro and along the Prokletije mountain massif.

Keywords: Prokletije rock lizard, Dinarides, Montenegro

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Ovdje predstavljamo nove nalaze vrste *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* u Crnoj Gori. Novi nalazi su sa Bor i Belić planine (masiv Prokletija) i proširuju poznatu rasprostranjenost vrste u Crnoj Gori, kao i duž planinskog masiva Prokletija.

Ključne riječi: prokletijski gušter, Dinaridi, Crna Gora

The Prokletije rock lizard, *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ, ARRIBAS, DŽUKIĆ & CARRANZA, 2007) is distributed in eastern Montenegro and north-west Albania (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2016). It is stenoendemic to the Prokletije Mountain massif. The Morača River is considered the natural border to the west and separates *D. montenegrina* from sister species, *Dinarolacerta mosorensis* (KOLOMBATOVIĆ, 1886) (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2007). Differentiation between the species most probably occurred during the Miocene (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2007).

D. montenegrina is saxicolous species, it occupies open, rocky karst areas between 1200 and 1700 m a.s.l., predominantly near the edge of montane beech forests with associations of *Pinus heldreichii*, or around mountain lakes and springs (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2007; 2016; 2017). It is one of the less investigated reptile species in Montenegro. Data on its ecology are limited (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2017; 2024), and nothing is known about its population trends. It is listed as a near threatened species under criteria B1 ab (iii) (BOWLES, 2024). On a national level, *D. montenegrina* is listed as an endangered species under criteria B1 + 2ab (ii, iii, v) (JELIĆ *et al.*, 2023). According to Ljubisavljević

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et al. (2014) potential threats to the species are: livestock grazing, cultivation of vegetables, building of holiday cottages, renovation and expansion of old huts, removal of stones for building of drywalls and enclosures and solid waste, all of which can lead to decline in habitat quality. As a high-mountain species which is associated with humid areas, this lizard might be at some risk from any future climate change resulting in its habitat becoming too hot or dry (BOWLES, 2024).

Here we report new records of *D. montenegrina* along the Prokletije mountain massif. New records were collected during field surveys between 2019 and 2024, employing direct visual observation of specimens. Identification was performed according to (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ et al., 2007; SPEYBROECK et al., 2016).

Tab. 1. Overview of new localities of *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* along the Prokletije massif, Montenegro, with details on coordinates, altitudes, date of findings and habitats.

Locality	Latitude, Longitude	Altitude (m a.s.l.)	Date	Habitat
Bor, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50911 19.89459	1,754	21.07.2019	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates, on the edge of mixed beech, Heldreich's pine and Balkan pine forest
Bor, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50309 19.89572	1,789	25.07.2022	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates
Bor, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50090 19.89298	1,899	28.07.2024	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates
Bor, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50702 19.88467	1,705	29.07.2024	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates, on the edge of mixed beech, heldreich pine and Balkan pine forest
Bor-Belić, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50524 19.87366	1,793	29.07.2024	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates
Belić, Prokletije, Gusinje	42.50575 19.86165	1,737	29.07.2024	carbonate rocks with chasmophytic vegetation and alpine grasslands on the carbonates, on the edge of mixed beech, Heldreich's pine and Balkan pine forest



Fig. 1. Distribution map showing records of *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* in Montenegro and Albania, solid circle – new records and open circles – literature data (see LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ et al., 2016 and MIZSEI et al., 2017).

Previously, eight records of *D. montenegrina* had been reported for Montenegro, from Đebez mountain, Žijovo mountain and Kučka korita (LJUBISAVLJEVIĆ *et al.*, 2007; 2014; 2016). The new records are from Bor and Belić mountains on altitudes between 1700 and 1900 m a.s.l., several on open rocky ground, and several on open rocky ground near the edge of mixed beech, Heldreich's pine and Balkan pine forests (Tab. 1, Figs. 1, 2, 3). The new records significantly expand the known distribution of the species both in Montenegro and on the Prokletije massif. The potential threats on Bor and Belić mountains are tourism and recreation during summer, when mountain-climbing tours are numerous and specimens may be subject to low levels of collection.



Fig. 2. *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* from Mt Bor – 25.07.2022 (A); *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* from Mt Bor – 28.07.2024 (B).



Fig. 3. Habitat of *Dinarolacerta montenegrina* at the given locality.

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