

Typhlops vermicularis MERREM, 1820 in the Dalmatian island of Dugi Otok (Croatia) (Squamata: Serpentes: Typhlopidae)

Typhlops vermicularis MERREM, 1820 auf der dalmatinischen Insel Dugi Otok (Kroatien)
(Squamata: Serpentes: Typhlopidae)

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KURZFASSUNG

Typhlops vermicularis MERREM, 1820 wurde im Süden der mitteldalmatinischen Insel Dugi Otok (Kroatien) gefunden. Der neue Fundort liegt etwa 360 km nordwestlich der nächsten bekannten Vorkommen der Art.

ABSTRACT

Typhlops vermicularis MERREM, 1820 was found in the south of the central Dalmatian island of Dugi Otok (Croatia). This location is situated about 360 km north-west of the nearest known sites of this species.

KEY WORDS

Squamata: Serpentes: Typhlopidae; *Typhlops vermicularis*, new record, Dugi Otok island (Croatia)

During a visit to the central Dalmatian island of Dugi Otok (Croatia), a Blind Snake was collected by the senior author (PW) about 300 m SW of the village of Sali (fig. 1) in July 1977. The typhlopoid was found early in the morning (07:00, rather dry weather, 20°C) beneath a big stone in the transition zone of cultivated land (olive trees) and maquis, still outside the territory of the present Kornati National Park. Termites were seen in the area.

In September 1999, the specimen which was primarily deposited at the Institute of Zoology, University of Agricultural Sciences (Vienna) was given to the Herpetological Collection of the Natural History Museum Vienna by courtesy of Prof. Dr. E. CHRISTIAN.

At the museum, the snake (total length: 247 mm, tail length: 3 mm, diameter at mid-body: 4 mm, longitudinal scale rows: 24) was undoubtedly determined as being *Typhlops vermicularis* MERREM, 1820 and added to the herpetological collection under NMW 35897.

Sali in the south of the island Dugi Otok is situated about 360 km north-west of the nearest known records of the species (Petrovac, Rjeka, Virpazar, all located in the extreme south of coastal Montenegro). These locations represented the north-westernmost dots in the distribution map of *T. vermicularis* (see GRILLITSCH & GRILLITSCH 1993) prior to this new record.

This solitary record alone cannot reveal an overlooked 180 km northward extension of the range unless further records confirm a more continuous distribution.

However, there are some reasons not to reject this possibility: (i) *Typhlops vermicularis* is a predominantly subterranean snake, almost exclusively visible on the surface under humid conditions (under stones or when digging in soil), and easily mixed up with earth worms by non-specialists. Furthermore, its distribution pattern must be expected to become patchily towards the northern limits of its territory. (ii) There are various xerothermic snakes which exhibit a pattern of distribution which is similar to that found in *T. vermicularis*. All of them utilize the comparatively narrow stripe of the east Adriatic coast (\pm off shore islands) and its Mediterranean climate to extend their south Balkanic territory to the north as far as Istria [*Coluber gemonensis* LAURENTI, 1768, *C. najadum dahlii* SCHINZ, 1833, *Elaphe situla* (LINNAEUS, 1758), *Malpolon monspessulanus insignitus* (GEOFFROY, 1827), *Telescopus fallax fallax* (FLEISCHMANN, 1831) (see BÖHME 1993, 1999)]. (iii) The presence of termites (a favorite prey item of the snake) may be indicative for the occurrence of *T. vermicularis*. This possible spatial coincidence deserves further analysis.

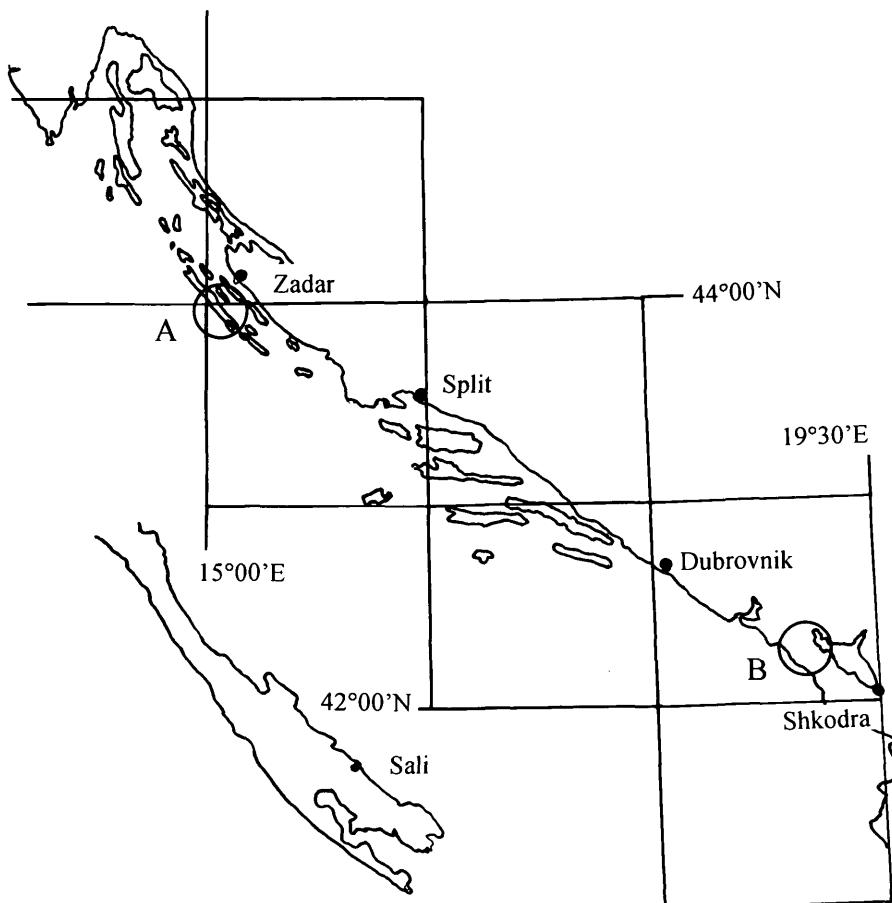


Fig. 1: East coast of the Adriatic Sea including major off-shore islands. *Typhlops vermicularis* was found near the village of Sali in the south of the island Dugi Otok (Croatia; encircled area A, magnified in the insert at bottom left) about 360 km north-west of the nearest known sites of the Blind Snake (Petrovac, Rjeka, Virpazar; encircled area B).

Abb. 1: Ostküste der Adria mit den größeren vorgelagerten Inseln. Der neue Fundort von *Typhlops vermicularis* nahe dem Ort Sali auf der Insel Dugi Otok (Kroatien; eingekreistes Gebiet A, im Insert links unten vergrößert) liegt etwa 360 km nordwestlich der nächsten bekannten Vorkommen der Wurmschlange (Petrovac, Rjeka, Virpazar, eingekreistes Gebiet B).

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