

Record of *Coronella austriaca*
LAURENTI, 1768 from the Island of
Mljet, southern Croatia

The Smooth Snake, *Coronella austriaca* LAURENTI, 1768, is continuously distributed across great parts of Europe, but becomes rare towards the Mediterranean zone in the south (ENGELMANN 1993; KREINER 2007). It was found to be very abundant in the continental part of Croatia, but in the coastal regions of the country, it is restricted to the more humid habitats in the Istra Peninsula and the Dinaric and Velebit Mountains (ENGELMANN 1993; VÖLKL &



Fig. 1: *Coronella austriaca* LAURENTI, 1768 from the island of Mljet, Croatia.



Fig. 2: Montokuc Hill near Soline; habitat of *Coronella austriaca* LAURENTI, 1768 on the island of Mljet, Croatia.

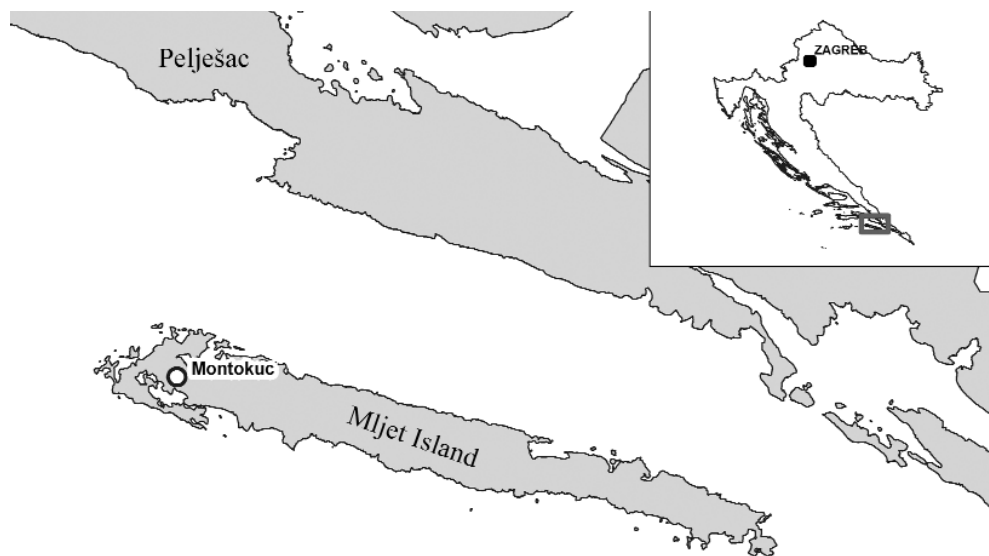


Fig. 3: Mljet Island in Croatia.

KÄSEWIETER 2003; HILL 2008). Distributional data from Adriatic islands are very rare, and only refer to the three largest islands in the Adriatic Sea: Cres (JANEV-HUTINEC et al. 2005; HILL 2008), Krk and Brač (WERNER 1891; BRUNO 1980; ENGELMANN 1993; JANEV-HUTINEC et al. 2005).

During the author's herpetological research of the Mljet National Park (west part of Mljet island; Fig. 3) in May 2007, an adult individual of *C. austriaca* (Fig. 1) was observed on the northern slopes of Montokuc Hill (42°46'20,6"N, 17°23'20,4"E; 253 m a.s.l., not far from the village of Soline; Fig. 2). The snake was a middle-sized male (total length: 49 cm), found hiding underneath a large stone amidst light *Quercus ilex* forest. The vegetation of the surrounding area was classified as *Querco ilicis* – *Pinetum halepensis* LOISEL, 1971 (forest of holm oak and Aleppo pine). The weather was very sunny, calm and the air temperature was 31 °C.

At the above site, two reptile species were observed in great numbers: *Dalmatolacerta oxycephala* (DUMÉRIE & BIBRON, 1839) and *Podarcis melisellensis* (BRAUN, 1877). As these two lizard species certainly rank high in the list of prey species for *C.*

austriaca here, their abundance constitutes a rich food source to the snake.

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