

First record of a melanistic Dalmatian *Algyroides nigropunctatus* in Slovenia

PRVA NAJDBA MELANISTIČNE
ČRNOPIKČASTE KUŠČARICE (*ALGYROIDES
NIGROPUNCTATUS*) V SLOVENIJI

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Dalmatian *Algyroides nigropunctatus* Duméril & Bibron, 1839 is a small lacertid lizard with snout-vent length between 45-70 mm (Arnold et al. 2007). Its distribution is restricted to Southern Europe (Gasc et al. 1996). The commonest colouration of Dalmatian *Algyroides* is the adult individuals' uniform dark brown or greyish dorsal side with occasionally present small dark markings on the head and back. The body's ventral side is usually yellowish or orange, throat is coloured blue. Juvenile and sub adult specimens have whitish underside, which can occasionally be slightly blue or green (Corti & Lo Cascio 2002, Arnold & Ovenden 2002).

An unusually coloured specimen of Dalmatian *Algyroides nigropunctatus* (Figs. 1-2) was observed on March 10th 2011 at the stone cliffs near Dragonja village in the coastal part of Slovenia. In this dry, shrubby habitat we also found several normally coloured specimens of the same species and several other sympatric lizard species, like the common wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*), Italian wall lizard (*Podarcis siculus*) and green lizard (*Lacerta viridis/bilineata*).

The specimen observed had been determined to be a sub adult due to its size. It had a completely black dorsal side without any pattern (Fig. 1). The underside was also dark coloured; throat colour was dark blue with slightly orange sides (Fig. 2). Ventral side of body and tail was greyish blue and slightly yellowish on the sides of the body. This kind of colouration is characteristic for a melanistic mutation with very high levels of melanin (dark skin pigment), which is very rare among lizards, since dark animals are more prone to predation due to the lack of camouflage. This is the first record of a melanistic Dalmatian *Algyroides* in Slovenia.

Literature

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Figure 1. Photograph of the dorsal side of a melanistic individual of Dalmatian *Algyroides nigropunctatus*, found near Dragonja, SW Slovenia (photo Erika Ostanek)

Slika 1. Fotografija hrbtne strani melanističnega osebka črnopikčaste kuščarice (*Algyroides nigropunctatus*), najdenega v bližini Dragonje, JZ Slovenija (foto Erika Ostanek)



Figure 2. Photograph of the ventral side of an amelanistic individual of Dalmatian *Algyroides nigropunctatus*, found near Dragonja, SW Slovenia (photo Erika Ostanek)

Slika 2. Fotografija trebušne strani melanističnega osebka črnopikčaste kuščarice (*Algyroides nigropunctatus*), najdenega v bližini Dragonje, JZ Slovenija (foto Erika Ostanek)