

First record of a melanistic Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*) in Slovenia

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Abstract. The article presents the discovery of a melanistic male Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*) from the vicinity of Padna in Koprsko primorje region (UTM UL93, 220 m a.s.l.). This is the first record of a melanistic Italian Wall Lizard in Slovenia.

Key words: reptiles, lacertids, Italian Wall Lizard, *Podarcis sicula*, melanism, Slovenia

Izveček. PRVA NAJDBA MELANISTIČNE PRIMORSKE KUŠČARICE (*Podarcis sicula*) V SLOVENIJI – Članek opisuje najdbo melanističnega samčka primorske kuščarice (*Podarcis sicula*) iz okolice Padne v Koprskem primorju (UTM UL93, 220 m n. v.). Za zdaj je to edina znana najdba melanističnega primerka te vrste v Sloveniji.

Ključne besede: plazilci, kuščarice, primorska kuščarica, *Podarcis sicula*, melanizem, Slovenija

In Slovenia, Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*) is restricted to the submediterranean region, where it inhabits mostly vineyards, roadsides and urban areas, up to 200 m above sea level (Tome 1996). The species is typically green, yellowish, olive or light brown with striped pattern above and whitish or greenish underside, but the colouration is highly variable (Arnold & Burton 1978). The back pattern in the subspecies *P. sicula campestris*, which occurs in Slovenia, is usually composed of streaks and spots arranged in five longitudinal stripes on the green background (Mršič 1997).

In May 2003, approximately 500 m southeast from Padna in Koprsko primorje region (UTM UL93, 220 m a.s.l.), I found a male Italian Wall Lizard of unusual colouration (Fig. 1). The specimen was completely black on its dorsal side; however, when observed more closely, an

even darker vertebral stripe could be distinguished. Ventral side of the trunk and tail was greyish with a tinge of blue, the tail being somewhat lighter. Underside of the neck and head seemed greenish-yellow on the blackish background. The femoral pores were yellowish-orange. No spots were noticed on the underside, as is usually the case in this species. Body measurements and some other morphological parameters are given in Tab. 1.

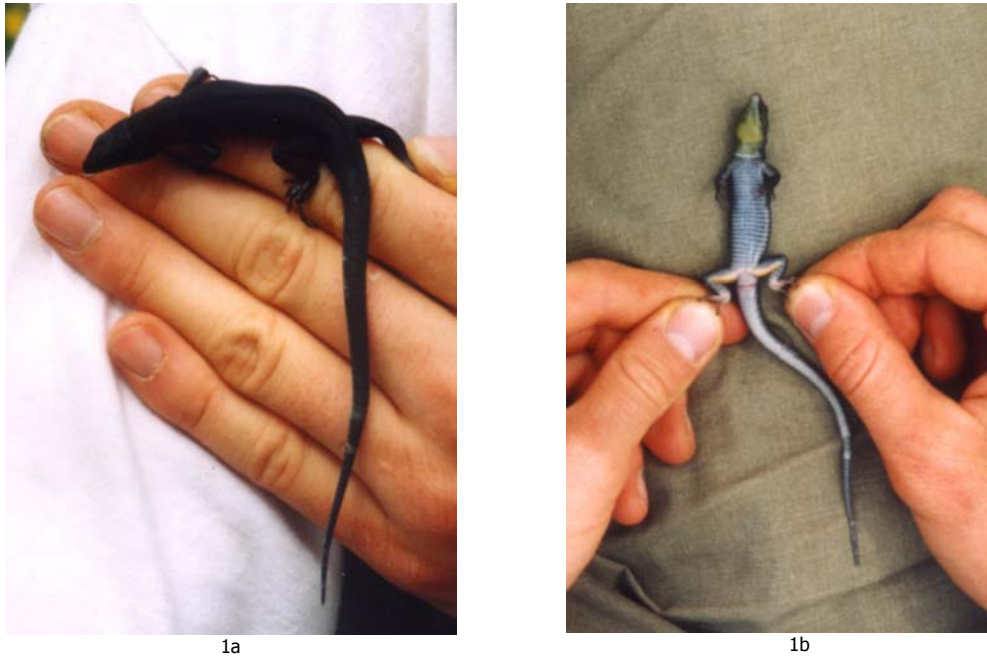


Figure 1. Melanistic form of an Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*) found in May 2003 near Padna (SW Slovenia); a - dorsal side, b - ventral side

Photo: K. Drenik

Slika 1. Melanistična oblika primorske kuščarice (*Podarcis sicula*), najdene maja 2003 v bližini Padne (JZ Slovenija); a - dorzalno, b - ventralno

Foto: K. Drenik

Such excessive development of the black pigment, as observed in this specimen, is characteristic of melanism. A melanistic form of Italian Wall Lizard had not been previously known in Slovenia (S. Tome, pers. comm.), which makes this find even more interesting.

Melanistic forms are most often found on islands. In several island populations in the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic areas, more or less dark coloured individuals are present (Radovanović 1951, Arnold & Burton 1978). Many hypotheses have been presented to explain this high frequency of melanistic individuals on islands, but no consensus has been reached so far (Böhme 1986).

The specimen was found on grassy forest edge along a cart-track. In the vicinity I also noticed several normally pigmented Italian Wall Lizards and a few Dalmatian Algyroides (*Algyroides nigropunctatus*).

Table 1. Morphological parameters of the melanistic Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*) from Padna.
Tabela 1. Morfološki parametri melanističnega primerka primorske kuščarice (*Podarcis sicula*) iz Padne.

snout-vent length / dolžina glave in trupa	60,8 mm
head length / dolžina pileusa	14,8 mm
greatest head width / največja širina glave	9,8 mm
snout-collar length / razdalja od konice gobčka do roba ovratnika	23,0 mm
tail length - original / dolžina originalnega dela repa	61,9 mm
tail length - regenerated / dolžina regeneriranega dela repa	39,8
no. of collar scales / št. lusk ovratnika	11
no. of femoral pores (right/left) / št. femoralnih por (desno/levo)	21/21

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