

Affirmation of *Coronella austriaca* (Laurenti, 1768) on the island of Cres, Croatia

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The Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca*) is widespread in north and central Europe, but becomes more sparsely distributed in the Mediterranean area (Engelmann, 1993). While the species is one of the most common and abundant snakes in continental Croatia (Radovanović, 1941, 1964), it is rare in the coastal areas (Karaman, 1939), where its presence seems restricted to the Velebit and Dinaric Mountains and the Istrian Peninsula (Engelmann, 1993). Off the coast, recorded sightings are limited to the islands of Brač (Werner, 1938), Krk (Sochurek, 1985) and recently Mljet (Jelić, 2010) and a single sighting of Cres (Hill, 2008).

Toth et al. (2006) did not include *Coronella austriaca* in their extensive review of the herpetofauna of Cres. However, a single specimen was found by Hill (2008), in the submediterranean deciduous forest in the north of the island.

On the 4th of May 2011, at 9:40AM, we observed an adult *Coronella austriaca* specimen on the Eco-trail path between Porozina and Beli (45,118°N; 14,324°E; 388m a.s.l.; Fig 1&2). The snake was crossing the walking trail. The habitat can be described as a grazed field at the edge of an oak forest. The area has a stony underground with some patchy divided trees and shrubs. Piled stone walls were very abundant in the surroundings.

Other reptiles encountered at the site were *Testudo hermanni* (Gmelin, 1789), *Anguis fragilis* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Podarcis melisellensis* (Braun, 1877).

Given the secretive nature of the Smooth Snake, it is not unthinkable that it has been overseen in previous surveys and might be even more widespread on the island.

With only one documented record, a species presence can never be completely sure as it could be a fact of translocation or misidentification. Two records (the

present one and that made by Hill, 2008) however, spread apart approximately 2km and about 2 years, confirm the Smooth Snake as a certain addition to the fauna of Cres Island, which brings the total number of herpetofaunal species on Cres to 28 (Tóth et al., 2006).



Figure 1. Localities of *Coronella austriaca* on Cres.

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Figure 2. *Coronella austriaca* found on the island of Cres, Croatia. Photo: C. Bonte.

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