

FIRST RECORD OF THE PALESTINE VIPER *Vipera palaestinae* (SEPENTES: VIPERIDAE) FROM ANATOLIA

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ABSTRACT. We present a considerable range extension, approximately 100 km to the north, for the Palestine Viper, *Vipera palaestinae* in the Mediterranean ecozone of south-eastern Turkey (Alahan village, Antakya district, Hatay province). It is also the first record of the occurrence of Palestine viper from Turkey.

KEY WORDS. *Vipers*, *Vipera palaestinae*, *Palestine viper*, range extension, Turkey.

The Palestine viper, *Vipera palaestinae* Werner, 1938 (also known as *Daboia palaestinae*) is an endemic viper species to the Middle East. It is distributed in Israel, Palestine, western Syria, northwestern Jordan, and Lebanon (Werner 1938, 1939, Disi et al. 2001, Hraoui-Bloquet 2002, Mallow et al. 2003, Werner 2016). It was firstly described from Haifa and is presently considered monotypic. Sometimes, it has been accepted as a subspecies of *Vipera (Montivipera) xanthina* Gray, 1849 (Mertens, 1952) or treated as a distinct species (Disi et al. 2001, Volynchik 2011, Werner, 2016), and referred to the genus *Daboia* (Obst 1983, Lenk et al. 2001, Wallach et al. 2014). Volynchik (2011) did the most detailed study on the morphology including sexual dimorphism of the species. However, this viper was not reported from Turkey and its most northern known distribution is the southern parts of Latakia (Cebele=Jableh, Syria – Werner, 1939).

In late September 2017, during our fieldwork around the Hatay province,

we encountered a male specimen in a streambed (Alahan Village, Antakya District, Hatay province; 36°19' N-36°11' E, 155 m asl.) located in an open forest area (shrub land) of the eastern slope of Amanos Mountains (Fig.1) as a first record from Turkey. The weather was warm (26 °C) and finding time about 17:00 pm. So, the recent record is briefly presented here.



Figure 1. The habitat of *Vipera palaestinae* in Alahan (Hatay, Turkey).

The specimen has light brown coloured dorsum with dark brown dorsal zig-zag covered with black marginal, dark brown lateral blotches occurs on each side. The head part has reddish orange coloured zones between the black stripes. Ventral colouration is reddish. Metric features are; total body length 95 cm (SVL: 85 cm, TL: 10 cm), head length 36.41 mm, head width 31.36 mm, rostral length 6.68 mm, rostral width 5.95 mm, distance between the nostrils 6.61 mm. Pholidotic features: Dorsal scale rows 25-25-19 (anterior, mid-body, posterior), ventrals 169 and 1 preventral, subcaudals 37-37 (L-R), supralabials 11-11 (L-R), sublabials 13-13 (L-R), circumoculars 13-12 (L-R) and 1 large supraoculars on each side. Morphological traits are given in Fig. 2.

In pholidosis and colouration-pattern, the Alahan (Hatay) specimen agrees with the all the descriptions of the Palestine viper given by different authors (Werner 1938, Disi et al. 2001, Volynchik 2011, Werner, 2016).



Figure2. The morphological/pholidotic aspects of the different body parts of *Vipera palaestinae* found in Alahan village, Antakya District, Hatay (Turkey).

Our record of *Vipera palaestinae* from Hatay extends its known distribution about 100 km air distance to the north.

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