

First record of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) in the Nanošćica River basin, central Slovenia

PRVA NAJDBA MOČVIRSKE ŠKLEDNICE (*EMYS ORBICULARIS*) V POREČJU REKE NANOŠĆICE, OSREDNJA SLOVENIJA

Teja GRŽELJ, Belsko 6c, SI-6230 Postojna, Slovenija; E-mail: belenus.glass@gmail.com
Rok GRŽELJ, Belsko 6c, SI-6230 Postojna, Slovenija; E-mail: alarikrok@gmail.com

The European pond turtle (Linnaeus, 1758) is the only autochthonous freshwater turtle in Slovenia. In recent years, larger populations have been recorded in the bogs of Ljubljana (Vamberger 2008, Vamberger & Kos 2011), Bela krajina and in the Sava River basin (Poboljšaj et. al. 2008) and on the Slovenian coast (Vamberger 2009), but nothing is known about its presence in the Nanošćica River (Krofel et. al. 2009), that flows along the edge of the large depression of the lower Pivka Valley, which is part of the NATURA 2000 network (SI3000126). The first person to mention the European pond turtle occurring in the area of the Pivka Valley was Polak (2002). He provides data on its occurrence for Lake Cerknica, Cerknišćica River, Planinsko polje (Planina Plain) and Pivka Valley, but these data have not been scientifically verified as yet. He also notes that some of the local elders still remember the olive green turtles at Lake Cerknica and around the Cerknišćica River. Similar sightings have also been reported for Planinsko polje and the Pivka Valley.

In the late afternoon of August 1st 2011 an adult specimen of the European pond turtle was observed in a small pond in the marshy area of the Nanošćica River basin while searching for food on the shore of the pond. On August 2nd 2011 we returned to the spot where we could observe the turtle while basking at the edge of the pond and searching for food (Fig. 1).

The pond is surrounded with swamp meadows, small streams, areas of reed (*Sparganium* sp.), sedge (*Carex* sp.) and mixed forest. On the edges of the pond and in the water broadleaf cattail

(*Typha latifolia*) and Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) grow. In the same pond we also observed other protected reptiles and amphibians such as grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*), Italian crested newts (*Triturus carnifex*), agile frogs (*Rana dalmatina*) and European tree frogs (*Hyla arborea*) as well as sand lizards (*Lacerta agilis*) in the nearby meadows. This pond - in all probability a man-made body of standing water, with a surface of ca 30 square meters - is located approximately 1 km from the nearest settlement, more specifically in the UTM square VL37 between the villages of Zagon and Hrašće (Y=435225, X=71506; 523 m a. s. l.). As this is an open rather than an enclosed location, importation of the observed pond turtle is improbable. The area is traversed by small streams enabling the turtle to move freely along this entire part of the Nanošćica basin.

This is the first confirmation of its occurrence in the Nanošćica River basin. The discovery is not important only in terms of geographic occurrence of the species, but also in terms of nature conservation, as it is appears that the species is more common than previously believed when NATURA 2000 sites for the European pond turtle were declared (Tome 2003).

References

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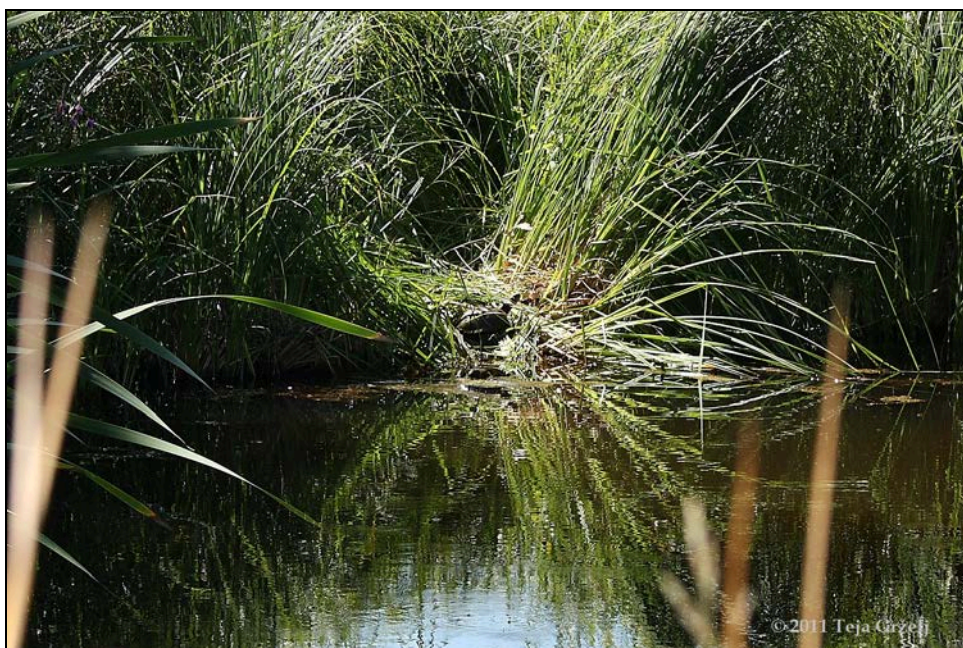


Figure 1. Photo of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) while basking at the edge of the pond (photo: Teja Grželj).

Slika 1. Fotografija močvirne sklednice (*Emys orbicularis*) med sončenjem na robu ribnika (foto: Teja Grželj)