SEA TURTLES IN HERPETOLOGICAL COLLECTION OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM IN SPLIT, CROATIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Natural History Museum in Split was founded on 10 March 1924 (Ževrnja et al., 2004). From the very beginning of Museum's opening, its founder, the first director and curator Mr. Umberto Girometta, started to collect materials for the herpetological collection, the integral part of which was also the collection of turtles. Samples of sea turtles are part of this collection. His work to establish the herpetological collection continued Mr. Novak and Mr. Cvitanić. Present-day collection of amphibians and reptiles of Natural History Museum in Split is the result of work and material collection in period of 20-ies of twentieth century to the end of 2014.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During June 2013 and July 2014 the herpetological collection of Natural History Museum was analysed, the integral part of which was also the collection of turtles with samples of sea turtles. The most of samples are dermoplastic preparations; only small part of material is stored in alcohol or formalin. While working on the analysis of the collection, "Book of inventory: vertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals" of the Natural History Museum in Split was used, and to identify certain species we used available literature (Arnold and Burton, 2002, Marković, 2004, Cox et al., 2006, Tvrtković et al., 2006, Jelić et al., 2012).

RESULTS

Analysis of the herpetological collection of Natural History Museum in Split found that turtles were represented in the herpetological collection with 22 inventory numbers and 29 samples. In herpetological collection of the Natural History Museum in Split, therefore, there are examples of 4 families, 5 genera and 5 species of turtles.

The largest number of specimens (fig. 1) collected by Girrometa, U., Cvitanić, A., Ževrnja, N. and Milat, T., in Dalmatian area. However, 13 samples (45%) do not contain information about the collector and 11 samples (38%) do not contain information about the locality. The same case is with the dates of collection, which are missing for 14 (48%) samples. For 10 samples (34%) there are no data about collector or collection date or locality where the specimens were collected. The oldest specimen was collected in 1927, and the most recent in 2014.

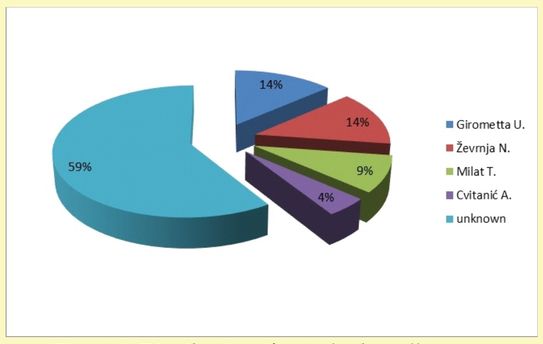

Figure 1. Distribution of samples by collectors

Chelonii

- Cheloniidae
  - Carettinae
    - *Caretta*
    - *C. caretta* (Linnaeus, 1758) **9** (pic. 1)
- Dermochelyidae
  - *Dermochelys*
  - *D. coriacea* (Vandelli, 1761) **1** (pic. 2)
- Emydidae
  - Deirochelyinae
    - *Trachemys*
    - *T. scripta* (Schoepff, 1792) **3**
  - Emydinae
    - *Emys*
    - *E. orbicularis* (Linnaeus, 1758) **4**
- Testudinidae
  - *Testudo*
  - *T. hermanni* Gmelin, 1789 **12**

Picture 1. *Caretta caretta* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Picture 2. *Dermochelys coriacea* (Vandelli, 1761)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The sea turtles in the herpetological collection of Natural History Museum in Split are represented with 10 inventory numbers (10 samples). Samples in the collection belong to 2 families, 2 genera and 2 species of sea turtles, with *Caretta caretta* being the most numerous species. The largest number of samples were collected by Girometta, U. and Cvitanić, A. in the Dalmatian part of the Adriatic. A large part of the collection doesn't contain information of collector or collection date. The largest part of the collection are dermoplastic preparations. Despite the small number of samples, this collection is an important indicator of the presence of sea turtle species in Adriatic.

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