

O 43. PRELIMINARY DATA ON SCORPIONS (SCORPIONES) OF ALBANIA WITH NOTES ON THEIR TOXICITY

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ABSTRACT: Scorpions (Arachnida Cuvier, 1812: Scorpiones C.L. Koch, 1837) are widely distributed all over the world, with an exception of Antarctica. The high diversity of the biotopes extends from the tropical rain forest, steppe, Mediterranean scrub, the deserts and the littoral zone, inhabiting all the habitats from the ground up to the tree layer. In the Balkan Peninsula, there are known 16 species of genus *Euscorpius* Thorell, 1876 and one species of genus *Mesobuthus* Vachon, 1950. Albania, as a Balkan country, has the proper climatic conditions and is very karstic, which make it preferable for the arachnid species, such as scorpions. In Albania the taxonomic situation of this group of animals is not clear yet and it is under study. At the moment only four safe species are recognized (*E. italicus*, *E. hadzii*, *E. beroni*, and *M. gibbosus*), plus at least two other populations awaiting clarification. The research field work, using the pitfall traps and the hand collection, confirmed the presence of three species, *E. hadzii* Di Caporiacco, 1950, *E. italicus* (Herbst, 1800) and *M. gibbosus* (Brullé, 1832). Large numbers of *E. hadzii* were identified (35 specimens) in comparison with the others two species. *M. gibbosus* is the only species found in Albania with a venom which is considered medically important for human. The latter scorpion has a body coloration orange-yellow and may be aggressive if disturbed. On the other hand, the brownish to blackish scorpions *E. hadzii* and *E. italicus* have a very lower toxicity. Sixteen cases of hospitalization after the sting of a scorpion, have been recorded in the last decade in the south-western Albania (Fier, Lushnje), all of them have resulted harmless to the health. As a preliminary research work, data on the field work and the hospitalized case studies will be described.

Keywords: Arachnids, scorpions, habitats, dangerous animal, toxin, Balkans