

Plenary lecture

Homage to Professor Milutin Radovanović: two stories on variability and distribution of lacertid lizards on islands in ex-Yugoslavia

Jelka Crnobrnja-Isailović^{1,2}

¹ Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics University of Niš, Serbia

² Institute for Biological Research “Siniša Stanković” University of Belgrade, Serbia

Fifty years ago, distinguished herpetologist Professor Milutin Radovanović, member of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and internationally respected scientist, died in an air-plane accident in Namibia. Among the attractive topics of his scientific interest (neoteny in urodeles of the Balkan Peninsula, functional skull anatomy in venomous snakes, distribution and biogeography of herpetofauna in ex-Yugoslavia) were processes involved in allopatric speciation of lacertid lizards on the islands of Eastern Adriatic. Supported by Professor Plate, his mentor at Jena University in Germany, and later by Professor Hadži from University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Radovanović started studies focused on island forms of lacertid lizards, their spatial distribution and variability on Eastern Adriatic islands. In 1956, Austrian Academy of Sciences published Professor Radovanović’s monography “Rassenbildung bei den Eidechsen auf adriatischen Inseln”. In this study, he attempted to describe and explain the fauna and ecological conditions on more than thousand islands and islets of eastern Adriatic Sea, particularly focusing on populations of Dalmatian (*Podarcis melisellensis*) and Italian (*P. siculus*) wall lizards.

The scientific interest of Professor Radovanović on insular populations of lacertid lizards was revived in the last decade of XX century, by efforts of the newly established Department of evolutionary biology at the National Institute for biological research “Dr Siniša Stanković” University of Belgrade. The team lead by Professor N. Tucić, Professor M. Kalezić and Dr G. Džukić started an ambitious project focused on lacertid lizard community (*Algyroides nigropunctatus*, *Dalmatolacerta oxycephala*, *Lacerta trilineata*, *L. viridis*, *P. melisellensis* and *P. muralis*) on the archipelago of the Lake Skadar in southern Montenegro. Exploring insular lizard community of somewhat complex historical background, we did not record straight path toward speciation but, however, were witnesses of somewhat early phases of spatial – temporal isolation.