

**FIRST REPORT OF LEUCISTIC COMMON ADDER (*VIPERA BERUS*, LINNAEUS, 1758)
(SQUAMATA: SERPENTES: VIPERIDAE) IN KURMEME**

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Patterns and body coloration have multiple functions in animals, ranging from thermoregulation to mimicry or aposematism. Besides the normal color patterns, it is possible to observe individuals with numerous color variations; the most common are melanism, albinism, and leucism. Amongst the snakes melanistic individuals are the most commonly seen. Leucistic individuals present a pinkish-white coloration, with a pigmented eye (dark or blue), while albinos usually have similar coloration but with an unpigmented, reddish eye. Albinos and leucistic individuals would appear to be more disadvantaged in nature, including potential problems with thermoregulation, blindness, and greater visibility to predation. Among European vipers, the Common Adder (*Vipera berus*) is the species with the highest number of albino individuals reported, mainly from northern Europe but with recent observations in Slovakia. In vipers, studies have attributed to the zigzag dorsal pattern a camouflaging and/or aposematic function and a lack of such a pattern in albino and leucistic specimens could increase their risk of being preyed upon.

On May 2020 a pink-colored individual of Common adder was found by local residents near their house, while they were taking a walk on the side of the P128 road near Kemer National Park (57.0686°N, 23.2878°E). The habitat in this area is characterized by *Pinus sylvestris* forests and bush vegetation, at a short distance from the beach and houses. The snake was observed among the vegetation on two consecutive days, displaying evident mobility problems. The animal was reported to Riga Zoo staff and transferred to the Reptilium's facilities. Unfortunately, the snake could not be treated successfully and died in captivity two weeks after it was captured. Measurements were taken on the specimen, scale counts were taken, and scale patterns were described. The specimen (168 mm snout-vent length + 22 mm tail length = 190 mm total length; body weight = 3 g), had a pink body coloration and a darkly pigmented eye.

Although several studies report alterations in the pholidosis and ventral scales in Common adder, our specimen presented values within the limits of the species.