

Unusual occurrence of the Bicoloured White-toothed Shrew (*Crocidura leucodon*): perspective from Slovenia (Soricomorpha: Soricidae)

Neobvyklý výskyt bělozubky bělobřiché (*Crocidura leucodon*): slovinská zkušenost (Soricomorpha: Soricidae)

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Abstract. Bicoloured white-toothed shrew was recorded in Slovenia from dry and termophilous oak, hop hornbeam and beech forests, from mainland beech forests and high altitude mountain pine stands. Although *Crocidura leucodon* seems to be more abundant in open habitats, its presence in forests is evidently not an exception, at least to the south of the Alps. The highest record from Slovenia is at 1650 m above sea level, but the species was collected at altitudes about 2000 m in Macedonia and the Near East.

Key words. *Crocidura leucodon*, habitat selection, altitudinal distribution, Slovenia, South Europe.

In the latest issue of this journal, LEŠO et al. (2008) reported on a noteworthy record of *Crocidura leucodon* (Hermann, 1780) deeply inside mature close canopy forest in central Slovakia. Their paper raised my attention for two reasons: (1) as a reminder of my similar experiences from Slovenia, and (2) because *C. leucodon* is among few small mammal species whose habitat requirements remain puzzling to me. Hereafter I report on my observations on *C. leucodon* from forest habitats in Slovenia which might be of interest to mammalogists intrigued by this shrew.

My first experience with *C. leucodon* from a forest dates back to late 1970s when I surveyed small mammals in the area of Ljubljansko barje in central Slovenia (elevation 290–300 m). The only specimen of *C. leucodon* I gathered was from a beech and fir forest (*Abieti-Fagetum dinaricum*). The animal was trapped fairly close to the forest edge, but this was unlikely a consequence of mass-effect, since *C. leucodon* was not represented in a sample of 493 small mammals collected in open grassy and bushy habitats in the vicinity.

In 2004 and 2005 the Institute for biodiversity studies at the University of Primorska sampled small mammals along the elevational gradient in Mt. Snežnik in south-western Slovenia. Pitfall traps, which are known for their efficiency in capturing shrews (KIRKLAND & SHEPPARD 1994), were set in forest habitats at nine stations between 60 m and 1650 m of elevation. *C. leucodon* was recorded in six stations, namely in oak forests at 406 m above sea level (*Ostryo-Quercetum*) and at 450 m a. s. l. (*Seslerio-Quercetum*), in a hop hornbeam forest (*Seslerio-Ostryetum*) at 700 m a. s. l., in a termophilous beech forest at 1120 m a. s. l. (*Seslerio-Fagetum*), and in a mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) stand at 1650 m a. s. l. On the other hand, this species was not present in samples from a dry and degraded oak stand (*Quercetum orientalis*) close to the coast (60 m a. s. l.) as well as in continental beech forests at 1250 m a. s. l. (*Abieti-Fagetum*) and at 1520 m a. s. l. (*Fagetum subalpinum*). Mt. Snežnik is predominantly forested at altitudes above 1000 m. Although the area was surveyed quite carefully in the past, not a single specimen of *C. leucodon* has been ever snap-trapped there.

C. leucodon was obtained in forests also elsewhere in south-eastern Europe; e.g. in oak woodlands (*Querceto frainetto*) and oak and hornbeam woods (*Querceto-Carpinetum*) in Mt. Fruška gora in northern Serbia (PETROV 1992). Records from hardwood forests are known also from Anatolia (KRYŠTUFEK & VOHRALÍK 2001). Throughout this region, *C. leucodon* was gathered from non-forest habitats as well. While *C. leucodon* is a lowland animal in Central Europe (LEŠO et al. 2008), high altitudinal records are not exceptional along the southern border of its distribution. It was found at 2100 m a. s. l. in Macedonia (PETROV 1992), up to 1950 m in Anatolia, 2000 m in Lebanon, 2100 m in Georgia, and 2150 m in Iran (KRYŠTUFEK & VOHRALÍK 2001).

SOUHRN

Bělozubka bělobřichá byla ve Slovinsku nalezena v suchých a termofilních doubravách, habrovcových a bukových lesích, kontinentálních bučinách a v borových hájích vysokých poloh. Ačkoliv se *Crocidura leucodon* zdá být druhem hojnějším na otevřených stanovištích, jeho přítomnost v lesích – přinejmenším na jihu Alp – zjevně není výjimečná. Nejvýše položený slovinský nález byl učiněn v nadmořské výšce 1650 m, ovšem druh byl nalezen i ve výškách kolem 2000 m n. m. v Makedonii a na Blízkém východě.

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