

On new specimens of *Vipera barani* Böhme & Joger, 1983, from northeastern Anatolia, and implications for the validity of *Vipera pontica* Billing, Nilson & Sattler, 1990 (Reptilia, Viperidae)

by İbrahim Baran, Ulrich Joger, Bilal Kutrup and Oğuz Türkozan

Abstract. Two females of the viper *Vipera barani* which is only known from a few specimens are recorded from Trabzon province, Turkey, and are described here. The variability of pholidosis and the dorsal pattern now known in *V. barani* encompasses most diagnostic characters of *Vipera pontica*, which was described from Artvin. It is assumed that both taxa belong to a single species whose range extends over the entire mountain range along the Turkish Black Sea coast.

Kurzfassung. Von der bisher erst in wenigen Exemplaren bekannten Viper *Vipera barani* werden zwei Weibchen erstmals aus der Region von Trabzon in Nordost-Anatolien beschrieben. Die nun bekannte Variationsbreite der Pholidose und der Rückenzeichnung von *V. barani* umschließt die Mehrzahl der diagnostischen Merkmale der von Artvin beschriebenen *Vipera pontica*. Es wird vermutet, dass beide Taxa einer Art angehören, die über das gesamte Bergland entlang der türkischen Schwarzmeerküste verbreitet ist.

Key words. Viper, herpetofauna, snake, systematics, distribution, Turkey, Middle East.

Introduction

Baran's Adder, *Vipera barani* Böhme & Joger, 1983, is an extremely rare viper known only from a few localities in Turkey. The type specimen was described from the surroundings of Adapazarı in north-western Anatolia, and later four specimens were recorded from the Silifke area in southern Anatolia. The latter locality must be strongly doubted, as the specimens were seized by customs at the Turkish border (BÖHME & JOGER 1983, JOGER et al. 1997, BARAN & ATATÜR 1998). FRANZEN & HECKES (2000) subsequently reported the species from two localities in the Black Sea Mountains in north-eastern Turkey (Giresun and Rize provinces) and were able to give information on the species' habitat. We can now add information on two additional specimens of *Vipera barani* from north-eastern Turkey. They were caught near Çaykara, Trabzon province, in 1998.

A closely related species, *Vipera pontica* Billing, Nilson & Sattler, 1990, inhabits north-eastern Turkey and probably also adjacent Transcaucasia. Two vipers resembling this species were found relatively close to the localities of *V. barani*, i.e. about 100 km north-east of Trabzon, between Ardeşen and Çamlıhemşin (Rize province), in 1995 (BARAN et al. 1997) and in 1998 (JOPER 1998). Another specimen found there in 1999 was determined by FRAN-