

# A new record of *Macrovipera lebetina obtusa* (Viperidae) from south-eastern Anatolia

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**Abstract:** The viper *Macrovipera lebetina obtusa* is recorded from Nusaybin, Mardin province of Turkey. Information on morphological features and the biology of this subspecies is given.

**Kurzfassung.** Die Viper *Macrovipera lebetina obtusa* wird von Nusaybin, Provinz Mardin, Türkei, gemeldet. Es werden Informationen über morphologische Charakteristika und die Biologie dieser Unterart mitgeteilt.

**Key words.** *Macrovipera lebetina obtusa*, distribution, morphology, south-eastern Turkey, Middle East.

## Introduction

*Macrovipera lebetina obtusa* was first described from Jelisawetpol in Transcaucasia by DWIGUBSKY in 1832. This subspecies has a wide, but disjunct distribution range extending from Israel/Palestine, Jordan, the Lebanon, Syria and Anatolia over the Caucasian region (Daghestan and Transcaucasia) and Armenia, Iran, Iraq, to Central Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Baluchistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and parts of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kashmir) (MERTENS & WERMUTH 1960, TEREJTEV & CHERNOV 1965, BAŞOĞLU & BARAN 1980, LEVITON et al. 1992).

Specimens examined in Anatolia were first described as *Vipera lebetina mauritanica* by WERNER (1903), and as *Vipera lebetina xanthina* by BIRD (1936). However, MERTENS (1952) included them in the subspecies *obtus*, which was subsequently accepted by EISELT & BARAN (1970), BARAN (1976), and others.

More recently, BAŞOĞLU & BARAN (1980), NILSON et al. (1988) and BARAN & ATATÜR (1998) have reported that the subspecies *obtus* inhabits Anatolia, but MULDER (1995) and BILLING & SCHÄTTI (1984) have stated that the nominate subspecies lives in the southern parts of Anatolia.

The phylogenetic relationships of palaearctic vipers and *Eristicophis* were examined by HERMANN et al. (1992) by means of immunological comparisons, and they found that the *lebetina* group comprised four species, namely *lebetina*, *schweizeri*, *mauritanica* and *deserti*. The name *Macrovipera*, which was first suggested by REUSS in 1927 and was then accepted as a synonym of *Vipera* by SCHWARZ (1936), was validated. This nomenclature was also accepted by SINDACO et al. (2000).

In this study, the morphological and biological features of a *Macrovipera lebetina obtusa* specimen found outside previously-known localities were examined and an attempt was made to determine its contribution to the Turkish herpetofauna.