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Scientific note

Markedly dark coloration in a Pallas' glass lizard, *Pseudopus apodus*

(Reptilia, Anguidae)

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The common name of *Pseudopus apodus* (Pallas, 1775), sheltopusik, comes from Russian and means literally "yellow-bellied". This lizard is more or less uniform in coloration and morphology across the range of distribution. However, a recent phylogeographic study has found three different mitochondrial lineages in two currently recognized subspecies (Obst 1978, 1981, Jandzik et al. 2018). Coloration is uniformly yellow to brown, the head is often lighter with slight differences between subspecies (Obst 1981, Rifai et al. 2015, Werner 2016). In any case, as we know well, no dark, black or melanistic individuals of *P. apodus* are known from the literature.

Herein, we bring the record of a markedly dark coloured individual of *P. apodus* from Israel. This individual was examined by the second author of this paper (NA) at the beginning of April 2016. It was an adult male, about 105 cm long (total length), found under a big rock near Modiin town (31.8773° N, 35.0167° E; 254 m a.s.l.) on the rocky locality with high grass. The recorded individual was conspicuous with its very dark coloration of the body (Fig. 1A) and with dark brown head (Fig. 1B). Lighter scales were distributed along the whole body mainly in ventral parts (Fig. 1C). After the examination the individual was released back to the



Fig. 1. Dark coloured individual of *Pseudopus apodus* from the southern hills of Modiin town. **A, C.** An overall view on the individual. **B.** Detail of the head.

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nature. Despite 70 individuals observed on the locality from summer 2014 to spring 2016, this was the only one with markedly dark coloration. The normal and most often colours of observed individuals were brown or dark brown, sometimes individuals with white or yellow spots on the body were found. Most of the lizards found had spots in different colours (from yellow to reddish), and were not completely brown.

Melanistic or predominantly dark individuals among the members of Palearctic Anguidae are rarely reported (Anguis, Gleed-Owen 2012). However, juveniles, including *Pseudopus*, have high degree of dark coloration or pattern having likely cryptic function. This coloration changes when individuals grow, but some adults of *Anguis* retain black ventral and lateral parts of the body for the whole life (Völkl & Alfermann 2007).

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