






FIRST RECORD OF *ARANEUS ALSINE* (WALCKENAER, 1802) (ARANEAE, ARANEIDAE) FROM KOSOVO

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The strawberry spider *Araneus alsine* (Walckenaer, 1802) is a Palearctic species that has been reported from most European countries, including several in the Balkans. In this contribution, for the first time, we report the presence of this species in Kosovo. A single specimen was observed on 24 August, 2023 in the Blinajë hunting reserve, in the municipality of Lipjan. The specimen was found on grass near a forest.

Key words: Strawberry spider, Kosovo, Araneidae

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Araneus alsine (Walckenaer, 1802) palearktička je vrsta koja je zabilježena u većini europskih zemalja, uključujući nekolicinu na Balkanu. U ovom radu prvi put izvještavamo o prisutnosti te vrste na Kosovu. Jedan primjerak opažen je 24. kolovoza 2023. godine u lovištu Blinajë, u općini Lipjan. Primjerak je pronađen na travi u blizini šume.

Ključne riječi: Kosovo, Araneidae

The spider fauna of Kosovo remains poorly known, indicating the possibility that there are many species yet to be identified. Currently, 245 spider species are known in Kosovo, including this study (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024), most of them recorded in recent years (VRENOZI & JÄGER, 2013; GECI & NAUMOVA, 2021a; 2021b; GRAPCI-KOTORI *et al.*, 2022). Data from Kosovo can also be found in MAMMOLA *et al.* (2018) and BERISHA & GECI (2023). In Kosovo, there are 15 genera from the Araneidae family, with six species belonging to the genus *Araneus* (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024).

The *Araneus alsine* (Walckenaer, 1802) body coloration ranges from orange to bright red and sometimes with some white spots on the abdomen. Their legs have black bands

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and are covered with spines that help them to catch and handle their prey (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024). The aim of this study is to document the occurrence of a flagship spider species in Kosovo, contributing to the overall understanding of spider biodiversity in the region.

During this investigation, a single female specimen was observed in a meadow with dense vegetation and exposed to sunlight. This observation and the following photography occurred within the Blinajë hunting reserve, located in the Lipjan municipality. (Figs. 1. and 2).

The species has been recorded from most Balkans countries and other European countries such as: Norway (AAKRA & HAUGE, 2003), Austria (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024), Belarus (IVANOV, 2013), Latvia (CERA, 2018), Finland (KOPONEN *et al.*, 2016), Denmark (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024), Sweden (KRONESTEDT, 2001), Croatia (BRIGIĆ *et al.*, 2009), Czech Republic (ŘEZÁČ & RŮŽIČKA, 2022), Estonia (VILBASTE, 1987), Georgia (OTTO, 2022), United Kingdom (LAVERY, 2019), France (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2023), Germany (WIEHLE, 1931), Bulgaria (BLAGOEV *et al.*, 2018), Slovenia (KUNTNER & KOSTANJŠEK, 2015), Hungary (SAMU & SZINETÁR, 1999), Belgium (BOSMANS & VAN KEER, 2017), Italy (PANTINI & ISAIA, 2019), North Macedonia (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024), Albania (DELTSHEV *et al.*, 2011) and Montenegro (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2024). Currently, the only neighboring countries where this species has not yet been reported are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece and the European part of Turkey.

In terms of studies to date, the spider fauna of Kosovo remains poorly investigated. However, as more studies are published, especially in recent years, the documentation is expected to increase (GECI & NAUMOVA, 2021ab; GRAPCI-KOTORI *et al.*, 2022; GECI *et al.*, 2023; IBRAHIMI *et al.*, 2024).

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Fig. 1. Distribution of *Araneus alsine* in Kosovo.



Fig. 2. *Araneus alsine* photographed in the Blinajë hunting reserve, Lipjan municipality, Kosovo (Photo: K. Ibrahim)

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