

First record of amelanism in the European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis*

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Skin colour anomalies occur when a pigment is absent or the production of a pigment is excessive or reduced (Betchel, 1978; Borteiro et al., 2021). Amelanistic reptiles are characterised with lack of the black-brown pigment melanin from their skin and this is different from another common trait albinism, where there is lack of melanin from all tissues including the eyes and internal organs (Bechtel, 1995). Amelanistic individuals may have red eyes caused by the lack of melanin but other colours may be visible on the body due to production of other pigments (Borteiro et al., 2021). This anomaly has been reported previously in turtles (Mora et al., 2022) but here we report the first record of amelanism in a European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis*.

On 28 March 2023, an amelanistic juvenile *E. orbicularis* (Fig. 1) was detected and collected in Veshmeh Sara village, Gilan, Iran (37° 20'45.0" N, 49° 11'28.6" E) from a paddy field



Figure 1. Dorsal and lateral view of an amelanistic European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis*

and transferred to the first author's personal collection. Its carapace was dominated by yellow pigmentation (Fig. 1) and the plastron was pale yellowish. The iris was pinkish with a reddish pupil. Normally, *E. orbicularis* has a dark brown or olive-brown carapace, head, neck, limbs and tail covered with yellow dots while the plastron is yellow, sometimes with irregular dark markings (Mozaffari et al., 2016). The species is sexually dimorphic with the colour of the iris in adult males red or orange but in juveniles and females it is yellow (Mozaffari et al., 2016).

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