

Second record of the Bulgarian local endemic *Balea eninskoensis* Irikov, 2006 (Mollusca: Gastropoda)

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Abstract. A new locality for the rare Bulgarian land snail *Balea eninskoensis* Irikov, 2006 is reported from the gorge below Buzludzha Monument, 42°41'31.0"N 25°22'45.5"E, 569 m a. s. l.

Key words: land snail, distribution, new locality.

Introduction

On 06 August 2003, the author (D. Georgiev) collected snails in the Eninsko Gorge, near the town of Kazanlak, southern Bulgaria. A small clausiliid with a left-coiled shell was discovered. Shell samples were deposited in the collections of Dr. Atanas Irikov (Plovdiv University) and the Haus der Natur Cismar (Germany). The following year (07 April 2004), new specimens were collected and later described by Irikov (2006) as a new subspecies of *Balea kaeufeli* (Brandt, 1962): *B. k. eninskoensis*.

The subspecies was included in the list by Nordsieck (2007). In their Bulgarian checklist of terrestrial snails, Irikov & Eröss (2008) treated it as a separate species without providing any justification. It was also accepted as a distinct species by MolluscaBase (2022), whereas Welter-Schultes (2012) argued that treating this taxon as a species is “based on very weak arguments – both taxa are from the same region near the town of Shipka, but were collected at different altitudes.”

In this short note, I report a new locality for this rare Bulgarian land snail endemic - regardless of whether it represents *B. kaeufeli* or *eninskoensis* - as both “forms” are known only from single localities.

Material and Methods

Gastropod shells were collected by hand and deposited in the collection of the author. Shell measurements were taken by a caliper. Species names are according to MolluscaBase eds. (2022).

Results and Discussion

Material examined: 05.11.2020, Stara Planina Mts, the lowest area of the gorge below Buzludzha Monument, on the east bank of the stream, in detritus of leaves, mainly *Carpinus betulus*, but also *Prunus cerasifera*, *Quercus* sp. and *Salix* sp. below limestone rocks, 42°41'31.0"N 25°22'45.5"E, 569 m (Fig. 1, 2), many shells and living specimens observed; 18.04.2025, same locality, nine shells collected.

Associated land snails: *Vitrina pellucida* (O. F. Müller, 1774), *Vallonia enniensis* (Gredler, 1856), *Strigillaria varnensis* (L. Pfeiffer, 1848), *Zebrina detrita* (O. F. Müller, 1774), *Helix lucorum* Linnaeus, 1758.



Fig. 1. General view of the habitat of *Balea eninskoensis*. Species location pointed by an arrow.



Fig. 2. Microhabitat of *Balea eninskoensis*. Fresh shell pointed by and arrow.

The shells from the new locality fit with the differential diagnosis of Irikov (2006) for “*eninskoensis*” (Fig. 3): “Differs from the nominate subspecies by the lack of white colouration on the suture and on the ribs and the absence of keels. The occipital part of the last whorl is slightly rounded and greatly swollen; it lacks folds around the columella, which may be considered as rudiments of the lower lamella.”

B. kaeufeli was described by Brandt (1962), as *Laciniaria (Laciniaria) kaeufeli*, from “Sveti Nikola at the Shipka Pass in the Balkan Mountains (Bulgaria), at an altitude of 1330 m above sea level.” Even it is relatively close locality straight line, habitat and real distance are quite different and far situated. In addition, *kaeufeli* is longer and slimmer: shell height 9.7 – 11.6 mm, shell width 2.3 – 2.6 mm.

Detailed studies on the distribution of populations and the presence of contact zones are needed, as well as genetic analyses, in order to determine whether these are forms or subspecies of the same species, or distinct species.



Fig. 3. Front view of a shell of *Balea eninskoensis* collected from the lowest part of the gorge below Buzludzha Monument. Shell height = 8.3 mm, shell width = 2.2 mm.

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