

Morphological characteristics of *Elaphe dione* (Pallas, 1773) (Reptilia: Colubridae) on the North of the range in the Samara region

A. A. Klenina ^{1✉}, E. V. Kuznetsova ²

¹ Samara Federal Research Center of RAS,
Institute of Ecology of the Volga River Basin of Russian Academy of Sciences
10 Komzina St., Togliatti 445003, Russia
Avtsyn Research Institute of Human Morphology
of FSBSI “Petrovsky National Research Centre of Surgery”
3 Tsyurupy St., Moscow 117418, Russia

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Abstract. A detailed morphological description of the *Elaphe dione* (Pallas, 1773) in the Samara region is given. In wild-caught adult specimens that were not in a state of molting ($n = 119$), three variants of belly coloration were identified: beige (47.0%), ginger (26.9%), and gray (26.1%). Among individuals with beige and ginger bellies predominated males (67.9% and 59.4%, respectively), and females with gray bellies predominated (54.8%). The first case of partial melanism in the region was registered. The maximum *L.corp.* of captured snakes was 1050 mm for females and 930 mm for males. The average value of the index. *L.corp. / L.cd.* in juvenile ($n = 6$) and adult females ($n = 51$) is higher than that in similar males ($n = 10$ and $n = 63$), equal to 5.3 for females of both ages and 4.4 / 4.2 for males of the named age, respectively. Ranges of variability of *L.corp. / L.cd.* overlapped by one value in young individuals (5.1 – 5.5 in females and 4.2 – 5.1 in males) and did not overlap in adult snakes (4.9 – 6.0 in females and 3.8 – 4.7 in males) due to changes in body proportions with age. Males had a lower mean *Ventr.* value and a larger number of *Scd.* compared to females (191.4 and 67.2 versus 204.2 and 59.6, respectively). For the *Lab.* characteristic on the left and right five combination options were identified, for *Temp.I+II* – 7 and 10 respectively. The proportion of asymmetric individuals of both sexes ($n = 195$) according to bilateral characteristics (*Lab.*, *Temp.I L / R*, *Temp.II L / R*) was 88%. The FAMI index in males ($n = 111$) and females ($n = 84$) was 0.86 and 0.89, respectively.

Keywords: Colubridae, *Elaphe dione*, coloration, morphology, asymmetry

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✉ Corresponding author. Laboratory of Herpetology and Toxinology of the Institute of Ecology of the Volga River Basin of Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

ORCID and e-mail addresses: Anastasia A. Klenina: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8997-3866>, colubrida@yandex.ru; Ekaterina V. Kuznetsova: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9861-1878>, kuznetsovaekvl@gmail.com.

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