

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What Can Be Said about the Number 13 beyond the Fact that It Is a Prime Number? – An Addendum

Dear Sir,

In a recent issue of *Croatica Chemica Acta*, a very interesting essay by L. Pogliani, M. Randić and N. Trinajstić dealing with the number thirteen¹ was published. In the essay, among other things, an example of an unusual alphanumerical notation of one of the authors' family names is given. The authors describe how the family name of Professor Trinajstić was on several occasions, once even on the pages of this journal,² written as 13-ić, the number 13 standing for "trinajst", the root word of his family name. In the paper, however, there is no mention of other examples of such an alphanumerical notation.

It came to our attention that such a notation, although unusual, is hardly unprecedented. In the title of his paper on the black widow spider (*Latrodectus tredecimguttatus* (Rossi, 1790)), written in 1896,³ Narcis Damin (1845–1905), a Croatian arachnologist, named the title species *Lathrodectus 13-guttatus*, where the numeral 13 stands for *tredecim* (thirteen in Latin), the first root of the word *tredecimguttatus* ("with thirteen spots"). This example of the number 13 standing in place of a word meaning "thirteen" clearly shows that the tradition of such a nota-

tion exists in Croatia, at least in naming biological species.

Furthermore, the mentioned black widow spider itself carries an interesting incidence of the number 13. The spider, habitant of the Mediterranean region, is black in colour, similar to most other widow species (genus *Lathrodectus*), and is identified by thirteen red spots on its dorsal abdomen. This is one among the very few examples of the number 13 in zoology.

Who knows, perhaps some of the infamy surrounding the number 13, at least in these parts of the world, can be attributed to this venomous arachnoid.

References

1. L. Pogliani, M. Randić, and N. Trinajstić, *Croat. Chem. Acta* **77** (2004) 447–456.
2. S. J. Cyvin, J. Brunvoll, and B. N. Cyvin, *Croat. Chem. Acta* **69** (1996) 177–190.
3. N. Damin, *Rad JAZU* **126** (1896) 110–133.

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