

PHRYNOPS TUBEROSUS (NCN): DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR. Animals use various strategies to remain less visible and to avoid predation, such as camouflage, aposematism, thanatosis, among others (e.g. Stevens & Merilaita, 2009). The high mortality of juveniles and hatchlings is an important part of turtles' life history, since the young are preyed on by ants (Parris et al., 2002), fishes (Gyuris, 1994) and birds (Janzen et al., 2000). Behaviour that enables predator evasion is therefore key for survival; this note reports an example of a cryptic behaviour in a juvenile *Phrynops tuberosus*.

The observation was made in May 2012, during a field expedition to Cedro's dam, located in the municipality of Quixadá, Ceará, Brazil. A juvenile *P. tuberosus* (carapace length = 6.44 cm) was captured under a bank of floating macrophytes, marked by removal of a small triangular section of the marginal scute to enable identification (Cagle, 1939) and photographed. When returned to where it was captured, the turtle made alternating movements of its legs, which threw sand and gravel over its carapace. When we attempted recapture, the movements were increased and although more debris covered the turtle it was never completely buried. The sand and sludge accumulated mainly in the neck and at the intersection of epidermal shields of the carapace (Fig. 1).

Jennings (2007) noted that *Terrapene carolina* individuals used a similar strategy, in which they hid between leaves and buried themselves. This cryptic behaviour may be a strategy for escaping from predators, for example, as birds and carnivorous fishes.

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Figure 1. Juvenile of *P. tuberosus* partly buried. It is possible to observe the less evident orange spots mainly on the animal's left side and the accumulated sludge and sand over the margins of the carapace and the neck. Note the right forelimb throwing substrate over the shell.

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