

Natrix maura (viperine snake) marine foraging.

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The viperine snake *Natrix maura* is native to south-western Europe and north-western Africa (Sindaco et al., 2013) where it is primarily an aquatic species that preys upon fish and amphibians (Braña, 1998; Rugiero et al., 2000). This species typically inhabits lentic and lotic freshwater habitats, but also tolerates waters with high salt concentration, in marshes and coastal pools (Steward, 1971; Schleich et al., 1996). However its presence in marine habitats is exceptional and has only been reported in a few cases, in Italy (Lanza, 1983), in southern Spain (Cabo & Olea, 1978) and in the Cies islands (western Spain; Galán, 2012). The populations of the Cies islands are adapted to the marine environment, feeding exclusively on marine fishes (e.g. *Lipophrys pholis*; Galán, 2012).

In September 2012, at the coordinates 41.41°N, 2.23°E (Sant Adrià del Besós, on the seashore in north-eastern Spain) we observed a *N. maura* on a rock feeding on an adult eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) (Fig. 1). The site of the observation is an artificial stone structure adjacent to the mouth of the River Besós but oriented to the open sea. This area is a fully saline environment, with little or no freshwater influence (because Besós is a small irregular river). We also captured another *N. maura* specimen that regurgitated a ringneck blenny *Parablenius pilicornis*. These observations extend the known geographical range of marine behaviour in *N. maura*. Moreover neither fish species was reported previously as prey of *N. maura*.

Populations of other European natricines are known to be associated with seashore/estuarine habitats (*N. natrix* and *N. tessellata*; Boulenger, 1913; Lanza, 1983; Lapini et al., 1999; Van der Meijden & Chiari, 2006; Strugariu et al., 2011; Baker, 2015). In Bulgaria, one coastal population of *N. tessellata* showed physiological tolerance to dehydration, which would allow these snakes to survive indefinitely in sea water (Brischoux & Kornilev, 2014).

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Figure 1. *N. maura* in the process of consuming an adult eel (*A. anguilla*) on the seashore (San Adrià del Besós, north-eastern Spain). Photographed by Miguel Ángel Fuentes.

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