

## Mali screeching frog *Tomopterna milletihorsini* range extension to southern Algeria

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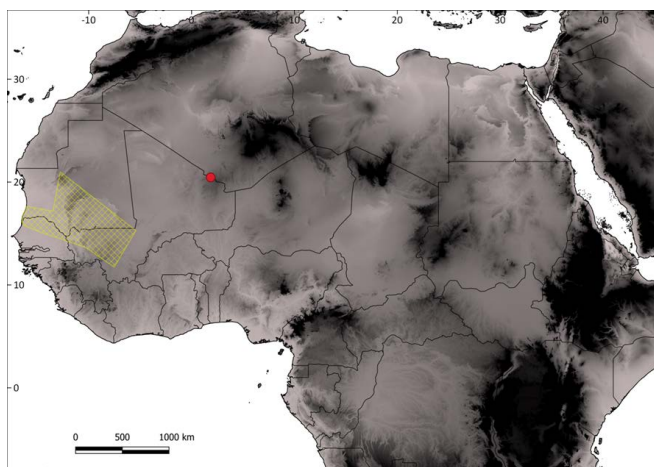
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The Mali screeching frog *Tomopterna milletihorsini* (Angel, 1922), is the sole representative of the genus *Tomopterna* in north-western Africa, although the genus *Tomopterna* comprises 18 species of burrowing frogs that are distributed across a vast expanse of sub-Saharan Africa (Frost, 2024). *Tomopterna milletihorsini* inhabits southern and central Mauritania, south-western Mali (including Bamako) and Senegal (Padial et al., 2014) and possibly might extend further east into Niger and other Sahelian regions (Fig. 1). However, the continental distribution of this species is still poorly known (Le Berre, 1989; IUCN, 2017; Channing & Rödel, 2019). Dumont (1987) reported this species from the Ghat oases in south-western Libya, but without any confirmatory details or photographs the identification remains uncertain. Therefore *T. milletihorsini* is not currently included in the Libyan batrachofauna (Schleich et al., 1996; Ibrahim, 2013; Escoriza & Ben Hassine, 2019; Blackburn et al., 2022).



**Figure 1.** The distribution of *Tomopterna milletihorsini* in north-western Africa, yellow polygon, according to Escoriza & Ben Hassine (2019), and the newly discovered population (red dot)



**Figure 2.** Acacia woodland habitat of *Tomopterna milletihorsini* in Timiaouine, southern Algeria

In 2022, during a fauna survey in southern Algeria, several individuals that could belong to this species were found in the Timiaouine region close to the Mali border (20.45° N, 1.85° E, 584 m. a.s.l.). The habitat was a typical Sahelian acacia savanna (Fig. 2). The small size (30 mm snout-urostyle), compact and robust build with short limbs and presence of a large, flange-like inner metatarsal tubercle on the feet all supported the assignment of these individuals to the genus *Tomopterna* (Escoriza & Ben Hassine, 2019) (Fig. 3). The short, vertical snout, absence of parotoids, tympanum not visible, vertically oval pupils with a small lower notch, and the presence of small tubercles scattered on the dorsum (in contrast to a densely rugous skin covered with spiny tubercles), all distinguished these individuals from other terrestrial Sahelian toads (*Sclerophrys xeros* and *Sclerophrys pentoni*). These Algerian individuals showed a uniform creamy brown dorsum with small, darker spots scattered across the back and limbs. Their overall colouration



**Figure 3.** Adult *Tomopterna milletihorsini* from Timiaouine, southern Algeria

was lighter when compared to *T. milletihorsini* individuals examined from Mauritania (Escoriza & Ben Hassine, 2019).

This new record considerably extends the northern range of this species distribution and also suggests that *T. milletihorsini* could be much more widespread in western Mali. However further studies will be necessary to confirm that these Algerian populations belong to the same species occurring in south-western Mali (terra typica of *T. milletihorsini*), Senegal and Mauritania.

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