

A case of melanoidism in the common frog *Rana temporaria*

LEE E. BRINDLEY

North Merseyside Amphibian and Reptile Group

Author e-mail: leebrindley@hotmail.co.uk

Melanoidism is a condition characterised by a great reduction in the number of reflective cells known as iridophores, which are converted into melanophores, resulting in an overabundance of dark pigment (Frost et al., 1984). Melanoidism is not to be confused with melanism which is characterised by an overabundance of melanin and is well documented in *Rana temporaria* (Alho et al., 2010). Melanoid individuals may bear a visual resemblance to melanistic individuals, as both phenotypes are typically dark in colouration but the absence of iridophores in melanoid animals has a noticeable effect on the colouration of the eye where the reflective ring of the iris is instead dark grey.

On 12 August 2025 at Hooton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, England (53° 17.59' N, 2° 57.22' W) a member of the public noticed a small froglet *Rana temporaria* with melanoidism in the garden of his semi-rural residential property. The property contained a small wildlife pond where *R. temporaria* were known to breed and many froglets with normal colouration were observed regularly.

The froglet (Fig. 1) attracted the attention of the finder due to its aberrant colouration. It was captured and retained in captivity for identification and further study. On closer inspection, the froglet had black pupils and dark grey iris colour - lacking the normal reflective ring. The body colour had a dull, reddish hue covered all over with tiny black flecks and had a 'matt' rather than the more typical 'gloss' appearance.

Several other colour morphs have previously been reported for *R. temporaria*, including albinism (Smallcombe, 1949) and xanthochromism (Allain & Goodman, 2017). However it is believed by the author that this record is the first known case of a melanoid *R. temporaria*. It may be reasonable to assume that melanoid *R. temporaria* could be under-recorded as their muted colouration is less conspicuous than more brightly coloured albino and xanthochromic morphs. It is hoped that this record will draw more attention to melanoidism in common frogs and lead to further records.



Figure 1. Melanoid young common frog *Rana temporaria*

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