

## STRIPELESS NATTERJACKS IN ENGLAND

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The yellow vertebral stripe of the natterjack (*Bufo calamita*) is the main diagnostic feature over most of the species' range (Beebee, 1979). Occasionally, however, the stripe is weakly marked or absent (Arnold, Burton and Ovendon, 1978) and, for instance may be deficient in 50% of Spanish natterjacks (Flindt and Hemmer, 1972). From Britain, only one stripeless natterjack appears to have been described in the literature: an adult male was discovered on the Dumfriesshire coast, Scotland, in August 1970 (Boyd, 1979). In this article we report on the occurrence of three stripeless specimens found at different sites in England during 1982. One of these animals was melanistic. The only other record of such an animal was at Sutton Fen in 1869 (recorded in the diaries of F. Norgate: J. Buckley, pers. comm.).

*Specimen 1.* While collecting natterjacks for measurement from beneath sheets of tin discarded at a site in north Cumbria on 25 May 1982, A.S.C. caught a stripeless male. There was no doubt that it was a natterjack as it (1) had typical colouring elsewhere on the body, (2) moved like a natterjack, (3) gave the characteristic release call on being handled, and (4) had parallel paratoid glands and paired tubercles on the longest hind toe (refer to Arnold *et al*, 1978). It was 50mm in total length. It was photographed (Plate 1) and released. In the same sample of 19 natterjacks, a female (length 58mm) was noticed which had a yellow stripe only 5mm in length.



Plate 1. Stripeless male natterjack, north Cumbria, 25.5.82 (specimen 1).

*Specimen 2.* In mid-June 1982, S.E.D. found a stripeless toadlet on the edge of a heathland scrape in southern England. The toadlet was 8mm in length and, apart from having no yellow stripe, was identical in every respect to 'normal' natterjack toadlets emerging from the pool at the same time.

*Specimen 3.* In early August 1982, B.B. found a stripeless melanistic natterjack at a site on the south Cumbrian coast. Except for its unusual coloration, it was identical to another young natterjack of the same size (15mm).

We have studied natterjacks at these sites in previous years without noticing stripeless individuals. Doubtless other stripeless natterjacks will turn up occasionally in the future.

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#### REFERENCES

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