
NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

Natural History Notes features short articles documenting original observations made of amphibians and reptiles mostly in the field. With few exceptions, an individual 'Note' should concern only one species, and authors are requested to choose a keyword or short phrase which best describes the nature of their observation (e.g. Diet, Reproduction). Format details and other guidelines are available in *Herpetological Bulletin* No. 78, Winter 2001.

TRITURUS MARMORATUS (Marbled newt): POLYMELY. The cases of supernumerary limbs in amphibians are not uncommon (Borkin & Pikulik, 1986; Johnson et al., 2001), but most of the observations have been made in anurans. In the family Salamandridae, natural events of polymely

are reported only rarely. Meyer-Rochow & Asashima (1988) found seven cases of polymely in *Cynops pyrrhogaster* from a sample of 13815 animals examined from Japan. Caetano (1991) cited a case in one *Triturus pygmaeus* among 557 animals from southern Portugal. In *Triturus marmoratus* a case of polymely has been described from Catalonia (Arias et al., 1999). Some cases of regeneration of accessory limbs have been reported also in *Triturus vulgaris* (Griffiths, 1981).

On 3rd May 2002 we found in Carracedelo (Province of León, Spain) a case of polymely in *Triturus marmoratus*. An adult female presented a supernumerary hind limb growing at the left side

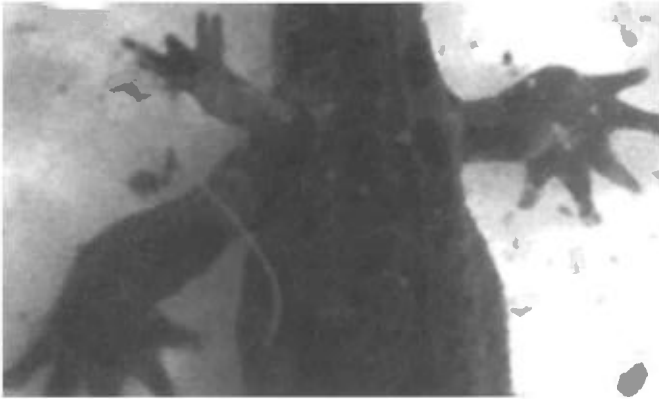


Plate 1.

between the normal limb and the base of the tail (Plate 1). This supernumerary limb was not functional and evidently less developed than the normal limbs. The foot of the limb was subdivided, comprising six well-formed toes.

The animal was otherwise healthy and evidently gravid. It was found in an irrigation ditch with very clean, flowing, half a metre below the surface in deep water with abundant aquatic vegetation. Four males of the same species and several *Triturus boscai* were found at the same site, none of them showing any sign of malformation.

The animal was released again to the water, and thus we have not established the cause(s) of this malformation. The quality of the water makes a chemical explanation improbable. Other possible explanations would be a parasitic (Johnson et al., 2002) or predatory cause (Viertel & Veith, 1992), or alternatively an endogenous cause may be implicated (genetic or metabolic).

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