

### First record of the eastern spadefoot toad (*Pelobates syriacus* Boettger, 1889) in Albania

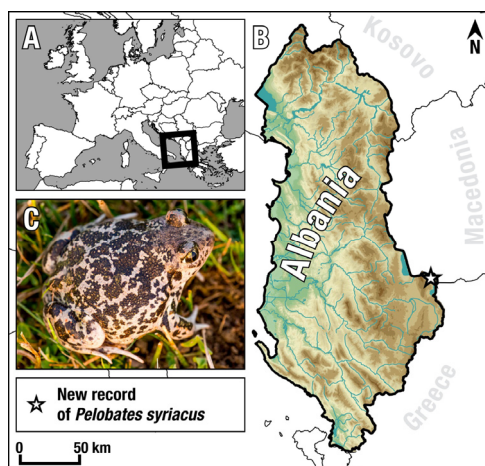
Albania has a rich herpetofauna with 58 species, 16 known amphibians and 42 known reptiles (Bruno 1989, Haxhiu 1994, 1998, Jablonski 2011). Despite the diversity of the country, intensive research and mapping of the distribution of its species are lacking (Sillero et al. 2014). To fill this gap, we started to assemble the published and unpublished records of the herpetofauna of Albania in a geodatabase, which allows us to understand the geographic pattern of species distributions and diversity (Mizsei et al. 2017).

Populations of *P. syriacus* are known from the central and south-eastern Balkan Peninsula, Transcaucasia, northern Iran, Turkey and the Middle East (Džukić et al. 2008, Budak & Göçmen 2008).

Although *P. syriacus* is included in a national register on the fauna of Albania (Dhora 2010), we were unable to find any location data by reviewing the literature. One reason for this is that the register also includes species which live around transboundary lakes or rivers shared with neighbouring countries. Bruno (1989) mentioned sightings of the species close to the Albanian border in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the shores of transboundary lakes Ohrid and Prespa, but not in Albania. However, he postulated that *P. syriacus* is present in Albania, and we decided to search for the species based on his suggestion.

On 05 May 2015, we confirmed the presence of *P. syriacus* within the borders of Albania near the village of Kallamas on the shore of Lake Prespa (N40.89°, E20.93°, 841 m above sea level) (Fig. 1.). We found the animal during visual surveys with torches at night at c. 22:00 pm, as it was moving in shallow water (~2 cm) in a grazed meadow with short grassy vegetation (~10 cm) flooded by the lake. In a subsequent visit on 20 July 2015, we found two additional individuals close to our first observation. We heard the breeding calls of three other amphibian species in May in the same habitat, the green toad (*Bufo viridis*), the green treefrog (*Hyla arborea*) and the marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). However, we did not hear the calling of *P. syriacus*. Nevertheless, we assume that the lake itself serves as a breeding site due to the scarcity of other wetlands suitable for reproduction in the vicinity of the new locality.

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**Figure 1.** The location of Albania in Europe (A), a topographical map of Albania, with main waterbodies, where the star indicates the new locality of *Pelobates syriacus* (B), and a photograph of the first *P. syriacus* found in Albania (C).

**Key words:** amphibia, faunistics, herpetofauna, Prespa, Balkan.

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