
NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

Instructions for contributors to Natural History Notes appear in Volume 34, Number 1 (March 2003).

CAUDATA

AMBYSTOMA GRACILE (Northwestern Salamander). **EGG PREDATION.** Northwestern salamanders (*Ambystoma gracile*) share breeding ponds with roughskin newts (*Taricha granulosa*) throughout their ranges in the Pacific Northwest, USA (Nussbaum et al. 1983. *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Pacific Northwest*. Univ. Idaho Press, Moscow. 353 pp.). *Taricha granulosa* and closely related California newts (*T. torosa*) are known to prey extensively on aquatic amphibian eggs, including those of conspecifics, foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*), and Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) (White 1977. *Northwest Sci.* 51:114–118; Evenden 1948. *Copeia* 1948:219–220; Kats et al. 1992. *Herpetol. Rev.* 23:7–8). However, to my knowledge there are no published observations of field predation by *Taricha* on *A. gracile* eggs, nor reports of *A. gracile* eggs in *Taricha* stomach contents. Herein, I report a field observation of attempted egg predation by

T. granulosa on an *A. gracile* egg mass in the Willamette Valley, Oregon.

On 28 Feb 2002, I observed a mature male *T. granulosa* (ca. 65 mm SVL, 155 mm TL) swimming around an *A. gracile* egg mass in a semi-permanent pond on the W. L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, 15 km S of Corvallis. The egg mass was an elongated globe ca. 7 cm diam x 13 cm height attached to a submerged spikerush (*Eleocharis* sp.) in ca. 60 cm of water, which is a typical oviposition site for *A. gracile* in this region. During 15 min of observation, the *T. granulosa* repeatedly propelled itself against the egg mass nose-first, continually adjusting its location around the periphery of the mass. I did not observe the *T. granulosa* gleaning items off the egg mass surface, and it did not appear affected by the presence of the observer. The *T. granulosa* was observed swimming away from the egg mass after all apparent attempts to penetrate the mass failed.

The heavy gelatinous matrix of *A. gracile* egg masses is known to allow embryos to survive exposure to air associated with receding water levels (Marco and Blaustein 1998. *Herpetol. J.* 8:207–211). These field observations suggest that an additional benefit of the heavy gelatinous matrix of *A. gracile* egg masses may offer protection from their oophagous pond associate, *T. granulosa*.

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